



Almost Never Lost

My story of Vietnam 1969-1970

By

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Book 1

This is just a short writing for my wife, sons, and grandsons, and a select number of friends to understand what I did in Vietnam. I do not profess to being a writer so this is crude and in my own words. This is a sample of things from October 2, 1969 to October 2, 1970. The stories are true and to the best of my ability, I will try to depict them as accurately as possible. Emotion, fear, and life threatening events are hard to depict and can be different depending on where your position and relevance to the team.

I hope you enjoy reading this and it helps you to better understand, the War, the 60s, me, and the problems/troubles I had adjusting to normal life. I need to say that I lived my life to the best of my ability and tried to be the best husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, brother and Son. I know in many ways I fell way short of that goal. I never wanted to hurt anyone, but as I learned later in life, PTSD and my depression together, aided in my confusion. I struggled in life and was not the person you or I wanted me to be. The Battle's, missions, pressure of being in Leadership and The War in the Jungle never left me and by suppressing my feelings I sunk deeper into my demons, night and day terrors, and anxiety. Anger was my only known defense, but anger afterwards lead to my dwelling on how I hurt others and my depression would sink deeper.

I had a hard time showing my true feelings and my frustration of not being able to feel happiness, communicate my needs, and make people care that did not care! I have been diagnosed with PTSD and in the last 10 years, I have been struggling to understand what PTSD is and how it affects me. It is a battle I fight daily and will probably fight until the day I die. Maybe this might help you to see why.

I need to mention that not all photos in this story were taken by me some I have copied off our K/75 web page.

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Chapter 1, Greetings

It was not a bad day at work, as a matter fact, it was warm, the sun was shining, and I had a good day at work. They routed me that day with nine hours of work, I got it done about 7 ½ hours. I got home and immediately went to the mailbox and waited for Cathy and my parents to show up as we were going to have supper together. As I went through the mail, I opened a letter addressed to me. It happened to be from the draft board when I opened it and started to read the first line said greetings from your president.

When Cathy and my folks showed up for supper, I never said a word to them about the letter. I figured since it was my birthday I was going to wait until after supper to spring the news on them. It happened to be my 20th birthday April 11, 1969, Cathy and I had not been married for even a year, and my world was going to change forever. I had to leave my life the way it was now. I had a car that I liked and it was safe to drive unlike my first car. It was a 1965 Ford Galaxy 500XL two door hard top, with a 352 cubic inch, 4 barrel carb, with factory dual exhaust. About 325 HP, Dark Blue, white interior, nice car, a car like I had always dreamed of! I especially enjoyed my time with my new wife and both of us growing up together as husband and wife. I was finally getting comfortable in my job working for Northwestern Bell and damn this letter just punched me in the gut.

After dinner, while having our cake and ice cream, I decided that it was time to spring the news on to my wife and folks. I started to read the letter to them, it said I had to report for a physical and leave for the military on May 5, 1969, Cathy and my mother started to cry. I hated to see both of the women in my life crying, especially over me. At that moment, I realized I was not alone in all this turmoil. This was going to affect more lives than just mine. I was upset, I was afraid, and I was mad at my father. I walked out of the driveway to have a cigarette and my father followed. We stood there looking off in the distance, and finally he said to me, I would like to pay to send you and Cathy to Canada to avoid the draft. I looked at him and said I am not a coward, and I will do whatever my country wants me to do. I looked him straight in the eyes with anger. I was upset for two reasons, one, he would not let me go to college. I had passed the entrance exams to the University of Minnesota, but he said I was not college material, and would not help pay for or let me go. At that time, if you did not have the college deferment, you were drafted into the military. If you did not have the money to go to college, you would go for one semester, and then take off a semester to earn enough money to send yourself back to school. In between that time, they would draft you while you're out that one semester working.

Second, for him to think that I would run away with my wife, go to Canada, and leave everything I love behind, was just asinine. He had sent my brother away to Seattle, Washington in the same manner, as he now wanted to send me. That just made my blood boil, and I could hardly look at him, the rest of the night. It was only small talk, and quick glances, the rest of the evening. After my parents had left, Cathy and I cleaned up the kitchen and then went to bed. Cathy cried in my arms all night. I hated hurting her so there was nothing I could do. I was hurting just as much as she was, but there was one more feeling, emotion, that I had, utter terror!

The next couple weeks went by fast we had so many things we had to do and get ready for that day. I had to set things up at work that I was going to be away and that I needed a military leave of absence. I also had to get the paperwork all lined up for Cathy, and we had to pack up our rented house, and move everything to her folks house. Yes, my poor wife would have to move back in with her folks until I came back from service. It was humbling for her to have to go back home and stay with her mother and father as if our marriage had ended. I knew my folks would try and pick her up and take her up to the lake cabin, as much as possible, but she would still be home alone with her folks, and they really didn't understand the Vietnam war, nor did they care. The war in Vietnam was a whole half a world away. I do not even think they knew what Vietnam was about, but they see it on the news every night and now their daughter was home living with them because of it.

The whole irony of being drafted was that I was old enough to die for my country, but I was not old enough to drink or even own land or vote. I wanted to buy some land so that I would have something material to come home to, besides my wife, and starting over a new life. I soon found that I could pay for the land, but I could not own it, had to be in my dad's name because I was not old enough. This just frosted my nuts. To think that in the eyes of the law I was not a man, but as far as dying for my country, I was more than a man. So I bought two lots up on Briggs Lake and Cathy and I decided that after the war we would start a family and raise our children in Clear Lake. We had a plan, and now I just had to live long to make it work.

Soon it was the night before I had to report for physical and induction. We held each other all night and never said a word. Cathy did not cry that night because she knew how much it upset me. Morning came excessively fast!



Chapter 2, Fort Lewis Washington

In the morning of 5 May, I reported to the induction center at 6:30 AM as was written in my draft notice. There were over 100 of us poor devils, scared and unaware of what was next. We all were looking around at the walls, doorways, and if you made eye contact with anyone you each gave and returned a half grin and nod. It was not long and the waiting was over.

People in white lab coats screaming orders as to how they wanted us lined up and what numbered stages each group was to start at surrounded us. When we reached a stage, they would start too physically, and mentally evaluate us. Hearing, eyesight, blood, balance, testing your depth perception (Very important in being a pilot) everything was exposed, cavities were searched, testicles were squeezed and handled, feet and toes checked, and of course your teeth were x-rayed and looked at by a Dentist.

Some people washed out and given a medical deferment; the rest of us just kept rotating from staging to staging. Finally, it was lunchtime, and they told us we had to find our own place to eat. I just stood outside and watched people and traffic go by until it was time to return. At the start of the afternoon, they would call out names of people they wanted to retest because one area was not looking right. I was called out to have another hearing test. After the test a Navy Chief Warrant Officer screamed at me that I failed the hearing test twice, he felt I was cheating and marked me passed. They called me out of line again and told me I had to see a Doctor. It was about my having migraines and the letter I had from my Doctor. The military Doctor told me, migraines were not a reason for deferment from the military and marked me pass. Two years later when I was taking my final physical to be discharged I again failed the hearing test and after the Doctor read that I had migraines he looked me in the eye and said, "Sargent you never should have been allowed in the military with your hearing and migraines."

About three o'clock they lined us up and had us walk down the hall to two doors. Every other man was to enter the left door next person the right. At that moment, we were ordered to raise our hands and be sworn in. After reciting the oath, we were then soldiers in the US Army and the people who went thru the left door were now Marines.

It was now 4:30 and we were told to go home pack a small bag with change of underwear and socks and report to the train station at 8:30 PM for 9 PM departure. I called my wife and she and my parents picked me up and took me to supper. I could not eat much I was too upset.

Then it was time to board the train. It is so hard saying good-bye to loved ones. You try not to show any emotions because you are boarding with 35 other GI's and you don't

want them to see you cry. Besides I was always told, "big boys don't cry" by my mother and father.

The Biggest Change in life was about to begin and I was not ready for it. It hit me like a freight train!!! There was no turning back now. I was missing my wife and was frightened of what would happen in the next two years. I was used to having my life in order and me being in control. I was not in control anymore, the Army now has control of my life and I did not like.

It was a 31-hour trip to Tacoma WA. The train ride was for the most part uneventful. We did have a thief on board that took money and some personal items, but for some reason my stuff was intact. We were restricted to two cars only, our sleeping car and an eating car, so we knew that it had to be one of us was the thief. Later, about midway through training, we finally did find out who that person was. However, I will get into that in more detail later.

I started my Army career with eight weeks of boot camp. Boot camp is designed to tear you down mentally and physically. Then after several weeks into the program, they start to build you up physically and give you confidence. If we knew that going in, it would not have been so hard on us. There is no way on God's green earth that the military was going to tell us what was going to happen to us. That would definitely put a monkey wrench in what they wanted to do, what their task was, and how they were going to accomplish it.

We started the first week doing close order drill, that is where they teach how to March, stand in formation, and when to salute. They also started giving us all the shots we needed and brought us into a room where they administered a battery of tests. The tests are designed to test your intelligence, aptitude, and your ability to comprehend (to understand orders). Now the way they did this was after they had exercised us, ran us, and they bring us into this stuffy hot room expecting us to be at our best. We would later learn the consequences of all these tests.

The second week they issued an M-14 carbine, which we had to carry everywhere and I mean everywhere. Heaven help the recruit that left his Rifle behind and the DI (Drill Instructor) took it. They taught us how to tear the rifle down and put it back together, repeatedly. This was also the week that we would start target practice. Many of the men had never shot a rifle or even held one, it was very strange to them, but they were expected to learn how to shoot, and how to be accurate. At the same time, they would take us through pits filled with mud. We had to low crawl on our belly through this mud trying as hard as we could to keep our weapon dry and clean. Naturally, we would fail at this and that meant hours of cleaning our weapon. During this week, they were still abusing our bodies, making us go through obstacle course, and testing us with a stopwatch to see how long it took us to get through.

One day they marched us down the road up to a big white building where they had us stock our weapons and grab our gas mask. They then proceeded to show us how to wear a gas mask, how to seal it so it had no leaks, how to change filters, and the proper way of storing it. Then they proceeded to order us into this building with our gas masks on. While we were inside the chamber, they proceeded to tell us there was gas in the room and they wanted us to see how safe these masks were. Then all of a sudden they started to pop more canisters of gas, it was so bad our skin was burning. Then they did the worst thing I have ever seen to that point in my life. They made us take our mask off, eyes immediately started the burn and water like crazy, and then I made the mistake of taking a breath. My lungs slammed shut, my body convulsed, and pure panic took over my body. We all started heading towards the door, but of course, they had it blocked. We could not breathe, hell, we could not even talk, and we just walked around unable to see, unable to breathe our skin burning and snot hanging out of our nose about a foot long. Good thing we could not see that would have been quite a disgusting sight. They finally allowed us out the door, where most of us stood with our face down, hunched over and gasping for air. Some men were actually throwing up. They told us not to wipe our eyes, but we did not listen. We did not know we had the CS gas on our hands and skin and that made our eyes worse. Oh the joys of being owned by the Army. They had a saying in the Army. If the Army wanted you to have intelligence, The Army would have issued you some. Moreover, that saying was used for just about everything. From that moment on, we learned a good lesson not to trust anyone in the military.

They took us out right after that, on a 5-mile march. Down a road that was thick on both sides and wouldn't you know, the bastards gassed us again. I think most of us ran; only about, a quarter of us got their gas mask on. The lesson they were trying to teach us was, always be prepared, for a gas attack. They then marched us to an area and started to give us a class on biological warfare. They explained all types of gas from mustard gas, nerve gas' and CS gas. With the mustard gas and nerve gas, they taught us first aid plus how to survive from a biological attack. However, to most of us all we heard were, "Kiss your Ass goodbye, because we would never be able to get the gas mask on in time."

We always were doing physical training of some sort, push-ups, sit-ups, and another form of Army training exercise using our rifles we never stood still. If we were not exercising on the ground, they had us running or marching to some place where we would receive more training on weapons. One of those weapons was the hand grenade, nasty little weapon. Each one of us would have to walk out with the drill Sgt. pull the pin on our grenade and then tossing as hard as we could to try to hit a target. Some men actually froze trying to do this, but luckily, we had no one drop the grenade after they had pulled the pin. I enjoyed this part of training, I found out I loved blowing shit up!

The next weapon that they taught us to shoot was the M-1911 45 caliber pistol. I was surprised at the recoil of this gun, I had never shot a pistol, and this gun was powerful! I rather liked it, sweet pistol to be in a gunfight with. About three times a week they

would teach us hand-to-hand combat, both with our hands and with the bayonet. This type of training was for defensive purposes only. We also worked on bayonet training with our rifles.

Getting back to all that testing. If you had a GT score of 110 or higher and you were 19 and single, you were eligible to go to West Point. I had a GT score of 121 and they persuaded me to go but I was 20 and married, they told me I could get that waived. I decided to let the Army give me a college education and volunteered. As I was literally, getting onto the bus they pulled me off and said they could only get one waiver and I of course needed two. My luck was running the same as it always had. I thought of my Dad saying I was not College material.

One evening I was halled up to headquarters where three Drill Sergeant's attempted to convince me to go to Warrant Officers flight training. They told me I could even spend a week on the flight line and fly with the chopper pilots. I guess I must have answered them in the wrong way, pissed them off I did. They proceeded in roughing me up for 20 minutes trying to convince me. I could take just about anything until they would turn my dog tags so the sharp side edge was pointing towards my chest right at the breast bone and proceeded to constantly pound the tags into my sternum while smacking me around. The effect of the dog tags was taking its toll on me, but I held fast. The next day I had a straight-line black bruise in my chest right over my heart making it very hard to breathe and move my arms; this pain lasted for a week. One day during PT I could not breathe while doing pushups, so a big ass Black Drill SSgt, stomped his heel into my back as he chewed my ass out. He did this to another person and kept assaulting him because he was a fatty. When he was done with him he came back to me, but the two other Drill Sargent's stopped him. Someone turned him in to the commanding officer and he was never seen again. We were told, he was charged with cruel and inhuman treatment of recruits.

When the eight weeks was complete, the Drill Sargent would shout out your name and then announce what your new next duty station was to be. I having the luck of the White's, was told that I would be marched across the parade field and be going to advanced infantry training right there at Fort Lewis. "Oh joy!" They also announced that, I was promoted to private E2, my first promotion, Yea! Maybe they felt bad for what they did to me. (Yeah right)

Oh, and about the thief that we had on the train, he continued to rob us in our barracks. This person from South St. Paul could not do a damn thing. He could not run, or March, he would fall out of formation and while the Drill Sargent was trying to get his lazy ass up of the ground all of us recruits had to do pushups till he caught up. I affectionately named him "the Oxygen Thief". Well one day during an inspection, they found in his footlocker all the belongings that he had taken. He was placed in the stockade, and eventually given a dishonorable discharge.

We had another shit head that used to piss me off all the time. This little shit brain could not keep in step when marching and I being in file right behind him would get out of step. I, being 6 inches taller than this piss ant, was the one who was always caught for being out of step and had to do extra PT. I had to get him back, so at night when I was on fire watch I would take a butt can (a coffee can we used to place cigarette butts in) and place warm water in it. See this person never slept under his sheets; he would lie on top of his blankets, so that way he did not have to make the bunk next morning. Laying there in only his white boxer shorts and me being me, I would take this warm water, pour it in his crotch while he slept, then stand back in the shadows where he could not see me. He would wake up feel his crotch quietly get out of bed open his locker, take off his shorts, wipe himself with a clean towel and proceed to put dry shorts on and get back in the bed. You see being a bed wetter was something that the Army really frowned on. I would volunteer to take another person's fire watch night after night just to make sure I could get him to think he was wetting his bed. He never caught on to what I was doing, and I even elicited a friend to do the same trick when I was not around. I think I drove the little bastard to go nuts!

Chapter 3, Advanced Infantry Training (AIT)

We packed up all our belongings, headed out across the parade field, found our barracks and preceded immediately to start our 13 weeks of training. They still ran us, they still punished our bodies, but it was a lot better than Basic Training. We were now

advancing up to handle more advanced weapon training, hand-to-hand training, and bayonet training. They issued an M-16 rifle, the weapon of choice in Vietnam, and we started immediately, learning about our new weapon, and of course how to tear it down in the dark and put it back together. I was intrigued when I learned that we would be firing a M-60 machine gun, and M 72 law (a hand held anti-tank weapon), M-79 grenade launcher (had a 40 mm projectile), and the granddaddy of them all, the M2 (Ma Duce) 50 caliber machine gun. We would have to become proficient with all these weapons, tested on them, and rated as an expert, sharpshooter, or marks man.

The 13 weeks went by lot faster than eight weeks of basic. Do not get me wrong, I still hated the military for taking me away from my wife, but it was becoming easier. By easier, I mean our bodies were in shape, we just continued to build and strengthen, the food was a lot more palatable, and I loved shooting all the weapons. We also had training on explosives, land mines (how to set, identify, and how to remove them). Hairly shit and its one training that you would not want to make a mistake on a real mine. That would be life altering, to say the least.

In every barracks, it seemed like you always had to have one or two people that thought they were the tough guy and wanted to prove it. Well this barracks was no different. We had this person from Wisconsin and for some reason did like me. I think I pissed him off in another life. I do not know why but for some reason he always had to pick a fight with me as soon as we fell out of formation and went back to the barracks. Moreover, each time I would punch him in the mouth and walk away. I am telling you this went on for about three weeks; finally, the last time he did this. I told him my hands were getting sore from hitting him in the face. Therefore, I kicked him in the nuts, which seemed to work. There was another person who boasted he was the toughest man in the barracks. Moreover, I believed him. He was a big man, broad shoulders, a lumber jack by trade. I was not going to fight him; I tried to avoid him by all costs. Well, as luck would have it, one night we came out of the showers and one of my so-called friends snapped me with a towel. Well, you know how that goes. I had to pay him back. As I wound up my towel and took a good hard snap, I seen he had moved. Behind him was Scotty bent over wiping his legs with his nuts hanging down and as luck would have it, my towel snapped him right in the nuts. It was the hardest towel snap in my life. I saw my life flash before me as Scotty's nuts slapped up into his belly, there was nothing I could do except to run outside naked and keep running as fast and as far as I could. Scotty chased me for probably a block until his nuts hurt him so bad he had to stop. He returned to the barracks and I did too. After I knew he was calmed down, I finally apologized. Thank God, he liked me for some reason, he had every right to kick my ass, but he did not. Seem like this was an ongoing story throughout my career in the United States Army. I do not know why this always would happen to me, being the quiet, shy, gentle man that I was, but I always seemed to find trouble or should I say it found me. (I only bring these two stories up as a reference to fellowship that was present in Vietnam. Never once did I witness any discrimination, fights, name-calling, or threats against

fellow Rangers. We were all in the same situation; we all relied on each other for our own wellbeing. Without teamwork, our missions would have failed and more men would have died. When I returned to the states and was station at Fort Carson for my last 6 months in the Army, I witnessed many situations where Race was a contention for fights and there was insubordination towards leadership on both sides. The men causing the issues had not yet faced combat. Times had changed while I was away, it didn't seem to be as gentle a country as I had remembered only a year and a half earlier)

I was on the same plane on the trip over to Vietnam with these two tough men from AIT. The man from Wisconsin was sent to the Americal Division and Scotty from Idaho was sent to the 4th Division with me. At the replacement depo, Scotty was assigned a desk job because he knew how to type. The biggest and toughest man in AIT was now a Remington Ranger. (The name we gave to clerks in reference to their Remington typewriters). When I left Nam 12 months later, these two jokers were on my flight back to the states. Neither one of them ever seen a second of combat. The man from Wisconsin was also assigned a desk job because he took typing in high school.

When the 13 weeks were over we all were lean, mean, fighting machines, and we had the attitude to prove it. As like basic, when the training was complete we were assigned our next duty station and my luck was still holding true. I was sent to the Republic of Vietnam Oh, Joy! Cathy had been out in Tacoma, while I was going through AIT, but I only was able to see her the last five weeks of my training and then only Saturday night. Now we were given 17 days leave before I had to report for departure to Vietnam. The plane ride back home was the first time either one of us had been on an airplane. And oh yeah, I was promoted to Private First Class E-3 out of AIT, I was making rank very quickly in my mind, little did I know that every E-2 when they landed in Vietnam was promoted to E-3.

Chapter 4, MAC V Pre-Recondo Training

My father showed his normal form by getting pissed at me because my grandmother, his mother Hazel, gave me a hug and kiss before I got on the plane to leave for Fort Lewis and then on to Vietnam. Can you believe that shit! He got jealous because his mother

never seen him off when he was drafted. That made it a somber flight back to Tacoma. As I got off the plane, my brother Jim was waiting for me and took me back to his house to spend the night and then he drove me the next morning to where I needed to be on base. We did not talk much; in fact, we had hardly talked at all in the past four years. See, that is what my father wanted. For some ungodly reason he disliked my brother and did not want anyone in the family talking to him ever again. I got out of the car when we got to where I had to report on base and as my brother drove away, I realized I never told him that I loved him. I had hoped that I would get a chance to say those words to him again someday.

There were about 300 men in this area waiting to be manifested on a flight to Vietnam. What they would do is call out your name at all hours of the day and night and tell you to board the buses to go over to McCord Air Force Base for departure. Just like the Army, hurry up and wait, but my name was finally called after two days and I left for Vietnam, October 2, 1969 on my mother's birthday. Our flight first took us to Anchorage, Alaska. There we took on fuel and a new crew, they told us we should get off the plane while they refueled for about a half-hour, but they made sure the doors were guarded, so we could not leave the airport. Most of us had taken our boots off during the flight because the jungle boots were hurting our feet, but no one ever explained to us that your feet swell when you are on an airplane. Therefore, we had to walk around the airport in our stocking feet. Once we got on the plane, we were able to put our boots back on again after gaining altitude. Next stop Tokyo, Japan.

When we landed in Japan, we again changed flight crew and took on more fuel. They let us get out of the plane onto the flight line walk around for about an hour to stretch our legs. It was about midnight and a stormy night. It was very warm and a lot of lightning. I thought to myself, man, I finally made it to Japan and all I can see is darkness, lightning and rain.

Our next leg of our flight took us to Cam Rahn Bay Airbase, Vietnam. It was about midafternoon touchdown. We got off the plane, hot, was very hot and muggy and the smell of jet fuel invaded our lungs. There were fighter jets taking off and landing, helicopters, and other flights taking off and landing all the time. It was a hot, noisy, and confusing place, with troops getting on planes and getting off planes all the time. It looked like mass confusion to me, but I guess everything had a purpose. We went into a large building where they gave us a briefing and told us to listen to this loudspeaker as it announced names both day and night telling you what plane you were going on and what division you are assigned to. I was one of the lucky ones. It seems like they called my name right away, loaded 25 of us onto an Air Force C-130 Hercules and off we went to Plieku, right smack in the central highlands of Vietnam. It was a Rough mountainous area of the country with triple thick jungle and hard to move. Many, many area's for the

enemy to hide. In other words, "this was their backyard and we knew we had to go find them."

I must say, being on a C-130 Hercules is not like being on an airliner, it was noisy and shook but it kept us in the air. It was about an hour and a half flight to the airfield; there we disembark the plane and stood there on the runway waiting for someone to tell us what was going on. Finally, somebody walked over and told us there were trucks coming to pick us up and bring us to Camp Enarie. Again, here we stood in a combat zone with no weapon. You would think when a big ass Air force plane lands someone would be there to greet them and make them feel safe, not the Army.

As we rode in on the duce and a half trucks, I couldn't help but notice the red ground, the rice paddies, and the Village people who had hardly no clothes on, I thought to myself, "wholly shit, where am I in a National Geographic magazine." It was out of the Stone Age, and these people lived in grass huts. We did not have shit like this in Northeast Minneapolis! The words of Dorothy came to me, "well, we're not in Kansas anymore!" I hated this country already, and it was just day one of 365. Oh goody!

Trucks drove us onto the base and brought us to an area called The Repo-Depo, meaning it was a replacement area, for all us new GI's while we waited to be assigned different units. Was only a day and I was assigned to C company 2/68, 4 infantry division as mortar man. I went through 1 week's crash training on how to fire and maintain 4.2 inch and the 81 mm mortars. We even had to have fire missions in the middle of the night for a team that was in a firefight (battle). Nevertheless, that soon changed as I heard that Charlie Company had turned in their tubes and were humping the bush, (out in the jungle) just like any other grunt.

As luck would have it, two Sargent's from K Company Rangers, a volunteer unit, were recruiting volunteers and I started three weeks of their pre-Recondo training. This was unlike any training I had been to before. The fifth Special Forces, Green Berets, trained our instructors to lead Recondo Training. We woke at 4 o'clock in the morning. We did PT (physical training) and miles of running until 6:30 AM. Had breakfast, did some more PT, then six hours of classroom, followed by hand-to-hand and more physical training. You see, you had to not only been a volunteer for this group, but you had to pass physical tests to see if you were strong enough to even start the training. Some volunteers could not complete the physical requirements. Like 25 pull ups, 50 sit ups, 100 pushups and run an obstacle course.

Everything we learned in this class, either taught you how to kill, with your hands, a knife, a piece of wire, or anything else you could find. In addition, there was defensive training, both with hand-to-hand combat and/or knife. It was all about survival in the Jungle. How a LRRP/Ranger team operated, and what your role would be in all of this. Training to be our own medics, administer Morphine, atropine serrates, Blood expand-o units, keep a person alive until help could arrive. Procedures to call in artillery,

helicopter gun-ships, Jet Fighters, and Bombers if necessary. We were given exact training on map reading, how to use a compass, how to find out where you are in the middle of the jungle, and anything else needed so that you could survive being lost and alone in the jungle.

We also went out and had even more complex training with live ammo on a target Range. We learn how to identify, shoot, and use any of the enemy's weapons from the AK-47 to the Chi-com (Chinese communist), machine gun. It was fantastic training! More elite than any training I had to date. Advance Explosives training and training on actual booby traps, did I mention, "damn I loved blowing shit up!" We had training on using our codebooks and calling in Night locations using proper date and time coded messages. (James Bond shit, wow). We also learned how to repel down a rope from a hovering Chopper 40-50 feet off the ground. The jungle was excessively thick to parachute into, so we were airmobile and 98% of the time inserted into or extracted out of the jungle by UH1 (Huey) helicopters.

All the time we were going through this training, we still had physical training to get through. Tested in our classroom training and tested on our physical abilities. Each week we would have a few men washout of the class, the class getting smaller. We had to do 6 runs with a full 40 pound rucksack on our backs, fully loaded ammo pouches with 18 rounds of ammo in each magazine and twelve magazines, and of course our trustee M-16 rifle. Our first run was just a mile run, we had to do this in less than eight minutes a mile, and this is while wearing combat boots and all your combat gear. Next test was 2-mile run, again timed at eight minutes per mile. More people were dropping out now, the pace quickened to 3 miles than 4 miles, and then they gave us a break. The next run was a five-mile run and would be without rucksack. Nevertheless, you can only fail two runs, after the second failure you washed out. This was the only run that I failed.

My friend Wilson got sick about 300 feet from the finish line, you have two involuntary things working on you at the same time. You are throwing up and gasping for air and you cannot control either. We had men in training die of this; they panicked, trying to breath and inhaled puke into their lungs and drown on their own Vomit. I turned around when I heard Wilson gasping for air, and tried all I could to get him to relax and breathe. I kept him bent over and kept hitting his back until he started to breath. I then helped him across the finish line, the instructor looked at me and said good job going back and helping a fellow teammate but you failed. I passed the last two, a five mile and a 7 mile with 45 lb. rucksack, ammo, and M-16.

Once we pass the physical tests and passed the classroom, our final test was an actual mission with the instructor along as mostly an observer, but ready to take over the mission if we got into heavy contact. The Army classified this as the most dangerous training with more instructors and students killed in all the branches of service. Things were reasonably quiet on this first mission but we were all so flipping nervous I do not

think any of us slept a wink. We had to each pull an hour on guard while the others slept. No one fell asleep on watch, how did we know? Well every 15 minutes our headquarters (called Romeo Zero) would call us on the radio and we would have to give what was called the sit-rep (situation report). You could answer back with a negative & green, meaning no movement and the mission is still on, or we would just give two clicks of the microphone on our radio. It wasn't pretty when it gets light and you find out no one has reported in all night and they are about to send a team out to get your dead bodies. The people in headquarters really got pissed when this happens, "Not to mention your teammates." Well I passed my Pre Recondo training and I was a full-fledged LRRP/Ranger, ready to scratch my nuts and bark at the moon. I was an even more effective killer than when I first arrived.



Chapter 5, K/75th Ranger

After graduation, I was loaded on a truck sent 65 miles by road that had the two bridges blown out and vehicles on the side damaged or blown apart by enemy fire. They assigned me to a platoon of Rangers, who were on loan to help pull missions for C/75th

Rangers and the First Field Force Division at An Khe in the Central Highlands.



The Charlie Rangers did not want us helping them and let us just say they were less than friendly. They had a huge area to cover and we had 10 teams up there of first brigade LRPS. I was assigned to SSgt. Rick Williams team number Romeo-2, stood for Ranger team two, which was a four-man team. I was assigned rear security to the team, meaning as we move through the jungle. I would walk backwards looking to make sure that we were not attacked from behind and also trying to cover our trail, so we could not be followed. I was also did split missions on other teams because we were short-handed. I would come in from a mission and immediately go back out on another mission with a different team. I hated it, one I was always odd man out no one really spoke to you, second I was not learning that much because the Team Leaders knew I was just a replacement for that mission, and third I was tired and scared shitless!

Rick Williams as team leader, SSgt. Dave Bristol, who was also fairly new to the field but had probably four missions more under his belt than me, was the ATL (assistant team leader), and we had PFC Washington, who was our point man. Washington was a

strange man who hated the bush so bad he would try desperately to contact a venereal disease because it meant five days of getting shots for VD and he did not have to go to the bush (jungle) during that time. When this routine of his stopped working, he tried a more desperate measure. Our first two missions require us to sit in the valley, near the Mang Yang pass, and watch for movement and explosions. The battle for the Mang Yang pass was the last big battle the French fought and lost. The determining factor made the French leave Vietnam. To this day, there are French soldiers buried on top of the Mang Yang pass and the French government was allowed to cover the gravesites with cement. It was always an eerie sight when you flew over the pass in a helicopter and looked down at the graves.

The area we were in had been defoliated and was a very spooky area at night. The NVA and VC use the Valley near Mang Yang pass to carry all their supplies, ammunition, knowing this, the area was scattered with land mines, and our mission was to listen for explosions both day and night. Keep a log of what direction and approximate distance to the explosions, and to look for troop movement by observing flashlights and/or torches at night. We heard and observed many explosions and also seen flashlights and movement and called in Artillery on their position. We were never seen nor attacked by the enemy, and that is exactly what we were sent out to do.

Couple missions later we were sent on to an abandoned patrol base to recon the area, look for signs of the enemy, and see if it was safe to take this patrol base back into US hands. We were about 6-7 Kilometers from a large firebase named LZ Hard times; we were on the side of the mountain and had a perfect view of the firebase. Helicopters brought us within a kilometer of our patrol base and we had to hump the rest of the way in up the mountain to the patrol base. We did a spiral going up the mountain looking for signs of the enemy as we moved. The mission was only supposed to be a 2-day mission, and that is what we had packed for. The second day of our mission the firebase hard times was under attack, being probed by mortars and rocket fire. At night, the enemy would attack the wire that surrounded the perimeter of the firebase. As we would say, "we have gooks in the wire". That was something that you never wanted to hear over the radio. We were ordered to stay at our current location on the third day; they did not want us to go up on top of patrol base while this battle was going on. So we set out our Claymore Mines, took up defensive positions and waited and waited. We had started to ration our food and water knowing we would have to make it last. Late that third night we were told to prepare ourselves for an arc-lite, which was codenamed for a B-52 airstrike. They knew we were closer than 8 km to the firebase, and that the arc light was going to be between the firebase and us. Normally, no troops were within or any closer than 8 kilometers of a B-52 strike unless being overrun. Because we were not as important as the 80 or so soldiers on the firebase we were expendable.

We hunkered down, laid flat on our backs and waited for the bombs to fall, it did not take long for the ground started to shake, there was lightning in the sky, the huge booms of the bombs bursting, and the pressure on our ears and lungs from the

concussion of the airstrike. We never heard the planes, we sure as hell felt the aftermath of the bombs. I never wanted to go through an arc light ever again. On the fourth day we were able to move up closer to the top where the patrol base was located. We were told they would take us out by helicopter, the next day, which was our fifth day on the ground, and remember we only packed food and water for a two-day mission. We decided that about an hour before the helicopters came in to pull us out, we would finish recon the rest of the patrol base. They were going to set down an infantry unit by helicopter to reclaim this patrol base and set up artillery to protect the firebase LZ Hard times. Our orders were to come out on the last chopper.

That fourth night we set up a night location near the top of the patrol base, and immediately we had movement and seen signs of the enemy all around us. That night while on guard I watched as PFC Roosevelt took some canned beef from his C-rations and rubbed the juice on his wrists, face, and belly. I whispered to him, "What the hell are you doing?" He whispered back, that he wanted to be bitten by a rat, because the rabies shots were a series of shots that took 10 days. I tried to talk him out of it, but it was too late, he already covered his body in juice. That night PFC Washington got his wish, he was bitten on his face and hands. We received a radio call at first light, that said, the choppers would be leaving the ground in about an hour with the troops on board. Therefore, we packed up and continued with our mission.

As we moved around the top where the French patrol base used to stand, the area was covered in pungy sticks stuck into the ground and were made to fly through the air from the down draft of the helicopters rotor blades. In other words, infantry was going to be impaled by the pungy sticks as the helicopters tried to set down. We reported this fact to headquarters and we also reported the signs we had about all of the enemy movement, but they must have fell on deaf ears. We took cover as the first helicopters came in over the side of this hill. Bigger than shit, when the first grunts came off the choppers they were either stabbed, or impaled just as we predicted. We went out on the second to the last bird. We were informed later in the day that patrol base was under attack, no shit. That was our mission, to inform them of enemy action and they ignored our intelligence given them.

When we got back, I told the Team Leader what Washington had done to himself, and I was ordered to escort him to the field hospital for him to start rabies shots. After this little stunt they court-martial the PFC and we never seen him again.

Our team changed, we no longer have a point man and as a punishment for not telling the team leader sooner, I was the "new point man." Lord help me to learn what I needed to know before I got my ass shot off or someone else on my team killed. We always called the new guy a cherry, or FNG (fucking new guy), but I was never to be called a

cherry again. I now had to get my shit together and be the best, this team has ever seen. It would not take long for me to make my first mistake, and it was a big one!

Chapter 6, My first Mistakes at point



This mission started out like any other mission, four men, rations pack for four days just a standard old recon mission. We came in on the LZ with team leader and rear security on the left side of bird, the ATL and I right side of the chopper. We flew west-northwest for approximately 45 minutes until we finally reached our Area of Operations, AO as we called it. There were two slicks, (hueys) one that we were on, and the second one usually inserting a second team in another location. Our bird dropped to tree top level flying at 60 knots and as we came to the LZ we drop fairly quickly down into the LZ with the skids at least 2 feet off the ground. The reason for not completely setting the bird down was that if it was a hot LZ, in other words, we were taking fire; the helicopter could get off the ground faster. As the bird quickly went into a hover, we would either step off the skids, or jump off depending how close to the ground he got us. We would all take a knee on the LZ each facing a point on the compass, in other words, one would face North, one face East, one West, one south until the bird left then I would lead us into the tree line. We would sit there for a while just monitor the LZ to make sure there was no enemy movement on the LZ. After the TL decided, it was clear to move he pointed in a direction and I took us out on a very slow deliberate walk.

The point man's responsibility during movement was from top of his head down to his feet and 180° from left shoulder to right shoulder. Team leader would walk behind the point looking from the point man's right shoulder 180° to the rear security looking treetop level down to his feet. Next was the ATL and his responsibility was from the point man's left shoulder 180°, to the rear security from treetop level to his feet. The rear security would walk backwards looking from the top of his head to his feet and 180° from left shoulder to right shoulder covering up the trail as they moved and watching for an ambush from behind. We would move that way for about a half-hour to an hour. Then, we would sit, and listen for noise, for movement and at that time, we might possibly change direction and start the dance all over again.

We had been moving this way for about three hours. We came out into the open, with only one extremely large tree in the middle. I motioned for the team to get down right on the edge of the tree line, and there I surveyed the opening looking for an ambush. Once I determined that the area was okay to walk through I started moving. Out in front was an extremely wide well-worn trail cutting right through this opening, I intersected this trail and started to zigzag back and forth from the elephant grass across the trail down 50 yards cross the trail walk on that side for 50 yards and then cut back in again. You never walked directly down a trail because if there were an ambush they would set it up pointing right down each direction of the trail. In addition, and more dangerous we would leave signs of our movement, direction and size from the marks our boots made on the trail.

At one point as we were zigzagging trail we came very close to that big tree and so did the trail, as matter of fact it came within 5 feet. TL touched me on the shoulder and said as we get close to the tree walk trail for a bit, and that is exactly what I started to do. As I got parallel to the tree, I felt the TL's hand grab the back of my rucksack, in my training I had learned to immediately freeze when that happened. I froze in place with my right foot hanging about 6 inches off the ground and right above a trip wire. I moved a step back and followed the trip wire with my eyes as it went to the tree and up the tree with a 155 MM artillery round hanging upside down with the pin removed and armed to go off. This was a live round and a 155 MM round had a Killing radius of 35 meters which would have wiped out the whole team. I stood there and shook, my knees trembling and my heart pounding. I never seen the trip wire, I was so concentrated on the wood line that I forgot to look at my feet. Lesson learned I never made that mistake again!

I slowly stepped over the tripwire looking very closely at the ground and moving even slower than I had before. The reason I moved so slow I was looking for anti-personnel mines. They would set up booby-traps that way if you made it past the tripwire than you'd step on an anti-personnel mine and blow your leg off. I slowly moved everyone towards tree line, and as I was within 5 feet of tree line a bird flew out of the vines and I hit him dead center with a five round burst from my M-16. We kept moving through the thick brush for over a half hour to get out of that area. They now knew we were there! However, that f-ing bird that scared the shit out of me was KIA. (Killed in action)

We set up a defensive position and monitored the area for about an hour taking a break and trying to get an exact position where we were in case we needed support. Our only support on a mission was artillery and or helicopters. No one else was going to come out and help us we were on our own. It was now about 3:00 3:30 in the afternoon and we decided to continue for about another hour, and then look for a secure night location. We were still paralleling that trail when I turned the corner and there across the very small opening, was hooch, two bunkers, and a cooking area that had a very large cast-iron pot. I monitored the area for about 10 minutes and decided it was safe to go in. We moved slow and very low checking out the bunkers and then the hooch. All

seem to be empty, but the area was well used, in less than a couple days ago. Rick wanted to throw three canisters of CS Gas one into each bunker and one in the hooch. The rest of us took up defensive positions, mine was looking west covering a dried up area. I was about 30 yards away from the bunkers and up wind, suddenly my lungs slammed shut with a breath full of CS gas that was coming up from a hole between my legs. I hate CS gas so much I started to run, Dave Bristol tackled me and put my face into the wind and washed my eyes out with his canteen water. It hit us then that this was not just bunkers; we were on top of a tunnel complex. We moved back slowly and proceeded to leave the area.

We moved back into a second location about 100 yards away from where the bunker complex was in an intersection of two trails. Rick reported on what we had seen and gave them the coordinates of the Camp with bunkers and then our night location. We ate cold c-rations that night, and no one lite a cigarette. We hunkered down in our thicket of trees and vines set out our claymores and tried to relax and take in what happened on this first day. No one slept; we had movement and voices all around us, and action on both trails but it seemed like they did not know we were in the area and so close. They were not searching for us, for a while, we thought we were safe.

About two hours before daybreak the movement and voices stopped, all was quiet and we started to breathe easier. Each one of us pulled an hour guard duty and then you would sleep three hours and another hour guard duty all night until daylight. I do not think anyone feel asleep at least they didn't sleep soundly. I think I nodded off for about two hours one time, but that is about it for sleep. About an hour after sun up Rick got orders that we were to proceed back to the bunker area and observe the area all day. We waited about a half-hour then I slowly, very slowly, started back to the bunker complex. As we came close to the area moving from the southwest to northeast as I rounded a large tree I abruptly stopped, motioned for the others to get down and hold, as I stared down the barrel of my M-16 Rifle into the eyes of a NVA soldier cooking over a fire. He heard my TL move and he suddenly picked up his AK-47 and as he started to point it at me for what seem like 10 minutes our eyes met and I immediately wondered if he had a wife at home like me. It was only a split second but your senses are so heightened that things seem to move in slow motion. I was just going to motioned to this soldier, put your hands up surrender and move towards me. As I motioned Rick was coming around my right side to see what I was looking at he stepped on a twig. The NVA soldier turned, started to run, and hollered something and out of the grass hooch ran two NVA soldiers.

Rick was only carrying a M 79 grenade launcher, he fired into the hooch it blew up, knocking one of the soldiers flat on his face. I started opening up with my car 15 and to my surprise I had it on semi-automatic instead of full automatic, what an asinine rookie mistake, my second of the mission. I shot at both soldier's still running, I hit both, then I turned to the man who ran away from me, and I shot him in the back. He went down, face first into the thicket, I froze for a moment then I felt Rick smack my rucksack with

his hand and scream at me that we are under attack “ Let’s get the hell out of here!” I pivoted around facing south and took off breaking into the brush on a dead run, with the other three following right behind. We were being shot at and chased, and I had to run through the brush as fast as I could and watching so, I would not run into an ambush. I now realized why they had us running so far with a full rucksack, ammunition, and rifle in training; “hope I’m up to the task,” were the words echoing in my head.

As we ran Rick was calling on the radio for support, but he could not give them a current location where we were. David and John were shooting backwards and throwing hand grenades as we ran, I was taking us through the extremely thick jungle and then occasionally we would break out into an opening. I think it was on the second opening there was an airplane, a prop piston engine that was circling up overhead. He was looking for us and he contacted Rick on the radio. He told Rick that he was carrying six white phosphorus rockets under his wings and he told us we were going to go in and out of three more clearings and he would watch us as we went through the openings and he would tell us how far back the enemy was or if they were still in pursuit. Wham, it was like hitting a wall, I was back in the jungle again running as fast as I could thru that thick shit until I broke out into the opening again. Pilot radioed Rick and said they were right on our ASS behind us, that we needed to continue to move and he would try to slow them down with his “Willy Pete” rockets. He told us we had damn near two squad size formations chasing us, as he fired two rockets behind us, and I again ran us back into the jungle, rushing towards the next opening. As the NVA came through the last opening that we had just passed through he would fire two more rockets. He said he had killed a few and that he slowed them down quite a bit, but they were still coming. Dave and Rick worked up artillery plots and worked the Arty in on our 6 o’clock. Pilot contacted two fast movers, which was codename we gave the fighter Jets and they were going to be on site shortly.

Rick hollered that out to all of us. It seemed like just after he got it out of his mouth, I hit another opening and this one was huge. It was elephant grass. Elephant grass grew very tall the blades were very wide and they are serrated on the edges. It was not fun at all running thru the elephant grass but had to be done; the shit was as tall as a man was, and extremely thick. The spotter plane circling above us, and the fighter Jets racing to the site we started to feel that we just might make it. I soon ran us into a group of trees that had 3-inch thorns, we were told by the pilot to sit tight and take a break. We could hear him fire two more rockets behind us and then all hell broke loose. We could not hear them until after they passed over, but the two fighters had started to work out with 20 mm cannon fire and rockets. One would come in dump his load of rockets and peel off as he started a sharp bank to the left, then the second fighter would role in from the right guns and rockets blaring, full afterburner on, pull-up into a sharp angle to the right.

Just as the Jets rolled in for their last run two cobras and two Huey helicopters came in on our position, made radio contact and told us they were here to pull us out. We moved out into the elephant grass as the cobra helicopters circled around the LZ as the slick came down to pick us up. After we boarded the bird and well on our way back, copilot turned to me and said, "Man are you hit?" I said no and asked "why?" He said, "You are full of blood, your face, your arms, you look like you have been hit!" I looked down and realized that the elephant grass as I was breaking the trails shredded my arms and face. I was tired, bruise battered and bloody, but all four of us were alive.

When I walked in the barracks I was given a lot of shit for the mistakes I made, I was called single shot for a couple of missions and then things were OK. It was a Small price to pay for two such big screw-ups.



I would only pull 2 more missions with Rick.

Foot note; Dave Bristol in a recent book he wrote remembers this event differently and that he was the Team Leader. I know for sure that Rick Williams was on this mission because Dave never carried a grenade launcher. Dave might have been training as TL. There was another mission that I was ATL & walking point for Dave where we had to escape for our lives in the same manor. Only I was dropping back at the end of our formation every now and then and dropping grenades both 4 & 8 second delay fuses, Then I would fire a 18 round magazine of ammo, load my weapon and move to the front formation taking over point again. When the pursuit stopped, we were ordered to walk

out to Highway 19 and catch a ride on a convoy on the way home. Never learned how many NVA I took down that day but it kept the enemy from overrunning us.



M-79 Grenade Launcher, 40 MM ammo, M-16, steal pot, poncho liner.



Enemy hooch (top) tunnel entrance/bunker (bottom)



Chapter 7, Romeo Tango 8

Romeo Tango 8 (Ranger Team Eight) had new team members; Dave Bristol as TL, Wayne Mitch as ATL, John Figaro as Rear Security, and I as point man. Dave was a green team leader but I had complete faith in Dave. He was Ranger trained in the States, NCO (Non Commissioned Officer) school graduate, and he retained his training and was smart enough to throw out what training did not apply to a Ranger Team and modify his training and knowledge to the Jungle. At the time, the Army was still teaching conventional war tactics where there was a front line of battle and a rear area for Artillery and safe area called behind the lines. We were fighting a Jungle Warfare where we made up the rules and tactics as we went. There were no front lines, no safe areas, enemy would attack and slip back into the jungle. Ambush, booby traps, bunkers, and tunnels, were new terms used in Vietnam. Dave was straight laced from a small town in Western Colorado. He did not drink, swear, do drugs but what amazed me was he never judged anyone on his team who did. He became my friend, mentor and I trusted him with my life, and I know he trusted me. You had to rely on each other to become an effective team. It didn't take me long to settle in under Dave's leadership.

Wayne Mitch was one of those deceiving looking boy next door. Handsome, smart, quite, and gentle demeanor, but in the bush Wayne was a tremendous soldier who knew his stuff and could be a killer if needed. However, he liked using artillery or gunships to do his bidding. Wayne became a very close friend, I trusted him with my life, and he trusted me. We knew we had each other's back, no questions asked.

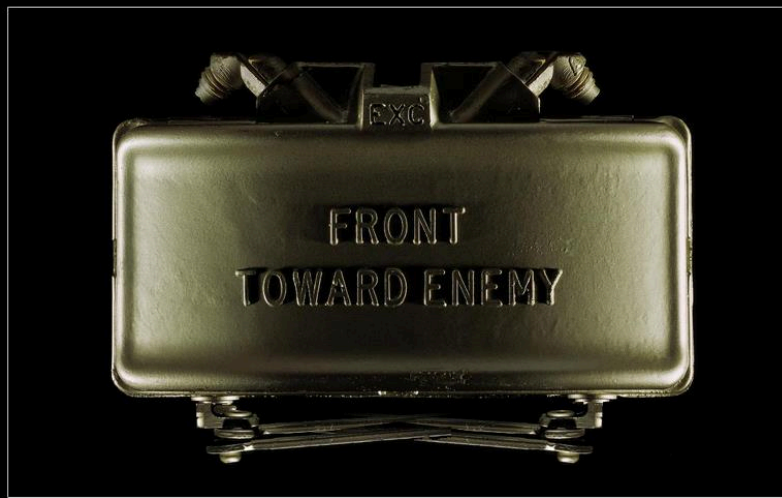
John was a strange type who were two different people depending on if he was in the bush on a mission or in Base on stand down. In the bush, he was very professional and knew what he had to do. He was very silent and did not communicate, mostly hand signals and whispers. When in camp he would open up, drink until he passed out, and talked and smiled all the time. I quickly learned that it was John's way of releasing all the tension from the mission. John was my friend and I would follow him anywhere and trusted him. John was my mentor as far as the everyday tasks of a Ranger team member. He schooled me in setting out claymores, camouflage and concealment, tricks to keep warm or cool, keep bugs from driving you nuts, basically all the little things that were never taught in training.

On our first mission we were assign a recon mission just off Hwy 19 between two bridges that were constantly probed at night and attacked many times. Our mission was to observe the area and report any strange movement. The first evening I had first watch, the road had a curfew of 6PM meaning no civilian vehicles could be on the Hwy after 6PM.

There was a group of Villager woodcutters working across the valley from the mountain where we had set up our observation point. I had just whispered to Dave that it's getting way past the time these guys should be heading out before the road closed when these 4 guys pulled a mortar tube out of the back of their bus and dropped two mortar rounds on one of the bridges. They through their Mortar tube in the back of this old blue bus and headed down towards the HWY. Dave got on the radio and contacted the road security force which happened to be two M-49 Tanks. The two tanks had the bus blocked off about two miles after the VC woodchoppers drove down the road. The tanks ordered the Buss to stop and when they kept coming the tank fired a 90 MM round into the bus and the bus was gone. Literally blown to pieces. Our first mission was completed in a matter of hours.

This was our team for the next three missions and then John went on R&R and we picked up Siglow to our band of brothers. Dave Siglow was one of the sharpest Ranger Jungle fighters I had ever met. He wanted to take over point from me and it did not break my heart to give it up. The pressure was just too much for anyone to handle mission after mission. Siglow thrived on it, he was only happy when he was walking point. When Dave came into base camp for a stand down, he was gone as soon as his boots hit the company area. He would find what we called the "Heads", smoke a little weed, and tell stories until the night before our next mission. He was foggy headed on the bird coming in from lack of sleep but he was squared away once we hit the ground.

On one of our first missions together, Dave snuck out of our night location about 1 hour before dark. Dave had to take a dump but I noticed he had a food bag (from his LURP ration) in his hand. When he came back, the food bag was rolled up tight and he asked me to cover him while he checked on his claymore. I crawled out with him and covered him with my weapon. I peeked over to look at Dave just as he opened up his food pouch and set it in front of his claymore. When I asked him what that was all about he smiled and said, "if the little bastards come sneaking around my claymore and they try to turn it around pointing at me they will get a handful of shit before they get to the claymore". It was not unheard of the NVA or VC to turn your claymores back at you if they spotted you before dark. They would then make noises, walk near your location as if they were searching for you in hopes you would set off the claymore and kill ourselves.



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bearings in front of one pound of C-4 explosives.

We worked as a team for many missions; Dave Bristol started to train Wayne as a TL. I walked rear security and Dave Siglow kept us out of trouble. We were a very affective team, pulling mostly recon missions. We never got into real trouble until we went on a large team operation. Dave Siglow would take breaks and let me walk point so I stayed sharp. If Dave went down, I was to be point and get our asses out of there, alive! I trusted them and they trusted me. We had each other's back without that a team lost the ability to trust!

Chapter 8, Gook in Red Shorts

It was to be an 8-man mission; resupply choppers carried us in just as a Cavalry Unit from the 1/10th 1st Cav. was pulling out. As the last APC (Armored personnel Carrier), following a Tank pulled away into the jungle we started to have movement. We knew that this was common as the enemy would look for ammo and items the Cavalry, and Infantry units would leave behind. That was our mission to observe and destroy with Artillery if possible. As we moved towards better positions, we were spotted by a NVA soldier in Red Shorts. He was not a bit concerned with the sighting of us and in a short while we knew why, he had a whole bunch of little friends following him. We moved again as a unit (8 men) trying to find a defensible position, but as we moved we spotted more NVA.

We finally found ourselves with nightfall fast approaching, and no real places to hide and set up a night location. We were spotted, our mission compromised, and we were out in the open halfway up a hill when things got very hairy. We spread out on this hill in a half moon position; I being rear security was last man facing to our left of our makeshift defensive position. We had on Romeo 8 Dave Bristol, Wayne Mitch, Dave Siglow, and I; the other team was TL Rick Noble, Quick, Wadley, and my friend Roger Crunk. I was carrying my M-16 and I had an M-79 grenade launcher with 25 rounds of high explosive.



M-79, 40MM grenade Launcher

Soon we had movement; they were maneuvering into position for a frontal attack using two Water Buffalos as cover. I loaded my M-79 with one round of HE (High explosive) and got the nod to shoot. My first shot hit on the back of the first Buffalo taking him out and one NVA. That took the fight out of them and they soon turned around and left. This gave us time to set out claymores and try to make this position as defensible as possible. Dave called in Artillery rounds and created Artillery plots ready if we needed to fire. He worked the area over and we just knew we took a few more out with that barrage.

We felt we were going to be in a fight and we knew it was a terrible position to defend but we were prepared to fight until the last round. Things were quiet for the first few hours; we were carrying a starlight scope that was able to see movement at night using

existing light. The thing was huge, about the size of the biggest coffee thermos you could imagine. It was heavy and you had to place it up to your eye before you turned it on or it would light up your face with an eerie light green glow. I hated the son-of-a-bitch and could not see shit through it, but I must say it was the determining factor, plus Dave's skill at calling in Artillery and Cobras. The others could see through it, thank God, and they directed our firepower before they could ambush us.

All night long, they would mount an attack and either Arty or we firing our weapons would keep them off us. No one slept that night. We must have fired at least 60 rounds of 8-inch Artillery guns and expended the total firepower of 4 cobra gunships. As daylight broke I had one magazine of M-16 ammo with only 6 rounds left, fired off all of my 25 rounds of 40 MM grenades. I don't know how the hell we survived that night, but at first light Rick Noble and Wayne Mitch and Siglow went down to check on bodies. They could not find a one! Only thing they found was 1 Water buffalo, and hundreds of Blood and drag trails. We knew we hurt them bad but we never realized that there were so many they were able to drag their dead and wounded off.

Rather than sending in choppers in to pull us out, the Master Minds sent in 2 M-49 tanks and 1 APC. They were to pull us out and to recon the area using the tanks and us on foot. As soon as the tanks pulled up on the top of the hill we were on, we walked up the remainder of the hill and when we reached the top, the tankers resupplied us with Ammo and grenades.

We started to move out with the tanks in the direction we last seen the enemy escape. As we moved, we hitched a ride sitting on top of the tanks. Our tank was soon under fire by a sniper, and the Tanks stopped and shut every hatch and left our sorry ass on top with no cover. Siglow jumped on the 50 machine gun blasting every treetop in sight while Wayne grabbed the M-60 machine gun on the left and sprayed the trees until he was out of ammo. At that moment the Tank fired, its 90 MM cannon at the last known position and blew the tree to pieces. However, the concussion from the gun peeled Dave and I off the back of the tank and we landed on our head and shoulders. We came up laughing, what else could we do.

We all dismounted from the Tanks because we felt they only helped to make us a bigger target. We moved out in the direction of the sniper and we soon came to a camp area with large hooch full of rice and an eating area. I set the hooch on fire and we moved out toward the area that would take us out of this nightmare. I took up rear security as we moved out behind the tanks and I was probably 100 feet behind the rest of my team. They were heading out faster than I was willing to move as rear security, I just had one of those feelings that we were about to be in deep shit again. As I turned to look back at the tanks and my guys I spotted in front of me a spider trap (a name we gave the trap door to a VC tunnel) lift up and a AK 47 was pointed at Dave Bristol. I just opened up on the enemy with a full burst of 18 rounds and the guy slowly slipped back down his hole, dead and full of lead. We knew then where those little bastards were coming from last

night, they had a tunnel complex and that is why we could not get a body count.



APC

(Armored personnel Carrier)



M-49 Patton

Tank Central Highlands 1969.

Chapter 9, Raid on POW Camp

It was February 16, 1970; we were flying on the first wave of helicopters on our way into a company size attack on a POW camp. We had been training for over a week as a company size Ranger attack force and SSG. Dave Bristol picked as the NCO in charge. We had one point element, two flanking elements followed by Dave and his group, which I was a part of. Dave handpicked his 5 man point element, followed by our five man group. I was fourth carrying the M-79 Grenade Launcher. My assignment was to blow every building in site with High Explosive rounds. As the point came into the compound, they were spotted by the tail end of the escape team of VC guards. We moved in close to the camp and I opened up taking out the first building. It blew and started on fire, I continued as fast as possible to blow up the next 4 buildings, as I shot at the last building the furthest away one of my rounds hit a tree and came back at me. You see I had to raise the front sight rather high for the round to travel that far to the building. Luckily, I had the newest rounds that needed to travel and make 14 revolutions before it would arm. Earlier rounds, and they were still out there, were armed as soon as leaving the barrel. If I had had one of those rounds, I would have exploded that round into all of us.

I kept pumping rounds into that last building but it would not start on fire. In between rounds I heard an explosion out to my side, did not know which side, I just heard it but I was too in tune with my mission to observe my surroundings. I started to search the buildings for wounded, while the rest of the team one by one opened the pits where the prisoners were kept. That shitten fifth building was not burning, and for some reason that upset me. I had blown the shit out of one wall but I still wanted it burning. I walked over to it, looked for wounded and then started to lite a cigarette while I used my Zippo lighter to start that building burning. I felt a cramping feeling on the front left side of my stomach and I drove my hand down over my M-79 vest my hand became red with my blood.

Dave was about 75 feet away from me when I called out to him saying, "I am hit." Dave came over to me with a stunned look on his face he asked where and I took my little finger and stuck it into the hole up to the first knuckle. Dave called for our medic but it was time to move out and block for the 2 teams that went out after the POWs. The medic told me I was not bleeding that bad and he would finish when we set up our night location.

We moved hard and fast for about two hours until we met up with our tracking force. They killed some of the guards but were only able to free one POW. We felt like shit that after all the work we never freed more. When we got back to Base Camp, we would learn the whole story.

Dave was ordered up to HQ about an hour before dark and was told he had to put out his best group of men to act as a listening post to identify an attack ASAP. He came back and handpicked the group, I was not only picked I was also placed in command. Dave told me later he hated to do that to me but he needed trustworthy group out there that knew radios and artillery. It was an uneventful evening with minimal movement and at first light, I had been up over 24 hours with no sleep. That afternoon when the resupply choppers came in, I was sent out and to report to the field hospital as soon as touch down. I did not do that, I hiked back to the company area and got some sleep, by now I had been up over 36 hours. The next morning I walked about 2 miles to the hospital had x-rays and the surgeon-starting cutting away on me removing dead tissue, it is called debridging. I was at the hospital 5 hours and when it was time to leave, I walked the 2 miles back to camp.

The company commander decided he wanted everyone back to Camp Enarie 60 miles away. We were loaded onto duce and 1/2 trucks and we headed down highway 19. This highway was not much of a highway and all bridges were blown up. The only way to cross the Bong Sa River was to drive down the embankment cross the river and climb back up the bank. With all the bouncing, I started to bleed to the point that when we arrived at the company area I had to be helped off the truck and I passed out when I tried to walk. Next thing I know I'm in a jeep on my way to the hospital. I spent 4 hours again in the operating room getting blood and more debridging was done only this sick Doctor said "oh you're a Ranger, you don't need the wound numbed" and he proceeded to cut. At one point, I punched him in the head. He had orderlies hold me down. Dave heard all the commotion and he came rushing in and forced the bastard to numb the area or Dave was going to knock him on his ass! I never had seen Dave that mad. Dave got me back to the company area and the only thing I was given for pain was Darvon. I later learned it was that Doctor who put me in for the Purple Heart.



I walked around for 6 days letting the wound drain with the whole wound wide open. On the sixth day, I returned and they stitched it up. This doctor numbed it before he stitched it back together. Three days later, I was sent to the top of this mountain with Roger and a Navaho Indian Irvin Mariono to be radio relay for our teams who were deep in the valleys. We used FM radios called PRC 25's, FM was a line of sight transmission meaning if you had a mountain between you and HQ the radio waves would bounce off the mountain. To prevent this we had teams on top of mountains relaying what was said between team and HQ. It was a dirty nasty place! On the 5th day after being stitched, I removed the stitches myself and treated the infection that had started. It was all healed and infection cleared up by the time they rotated us out.

One morning one of our teams was ambushed and needed assistance I had just come off the radio and it was Irvin's turn to monitor the radio. Irvin had to relay orders and info from the team to HQ and relay coordinates for artillery if you relayed any portion of the teams information it could mean death to a team member. Well the more action that went on the more his dialog changed to his native Tongue and no one could understand him, I grabbed the mic from his hand and worked with the team getting artillery and gunships. When the firefight was clear and the team was safe and extracted, Roger took over and finished the shift so I could get some sleep. Roger and I took 6-8 hour shifts at night from that point on. During the day when Irvin was on duty, we made sure at least

one of us would be available to help him if a team came in contact. No one wanted Irvin to relay for them, worrying he would get excited during a fight and go back to his Navajo Tongue. He was a good person, just would get so excited and into the contact he would slip up.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HAS AWARDED THE

PURPLE HEART

ESTABLISHED BY GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON
AT NEWBURGH, NEW YORK, AUGUST 7, 1782
TO

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS ROBERT L WHITE, ~~XXX-XX-XXXX~~, UNITED STATES ARMY

FOR WOUNDS RECEIVED

IN ACTION

IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM ON 16 FEBRUARY 1970
GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS 30 DAY OF APRIL 1970

Glenn D. Walker

GLENN D. WALKER
Major General, USA
Commanding



Stanley R. Resor

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

Chapter 10, Birth of Romeo 5

Soon Dave Bristol was training Wayne to be a team leader, when Wayne was ready he took over Romeo 8 and Dave and I started Romeo 5. Siglow went with Wayne as his ATL. Our new team was Dave as TL, I as ATL, Russ Temple for a while, and Kholer as rear security. By now I was a totally squared away Ranger. Nothing seemed to bother me, I knew my mission and I knew I had to trust the others behind me to keep me safe from attack from the rear as I had to assure them that I wasn't going to walk them into booby traps or ambush. I like walking point and really did not trust anyone else. Dave and I made this team into a well-respected team. In addition, we drew some shitty missions and damn near got ourselves killed in the process.

There was one mission where once we were into the AO (area of Operation) assigned us; we could not find a safe and large enough LZ (landing zone) for the choppers to safely pick us up. I think I mentioned earlier, I loved blowing shit up, so when we needed a LZ I would rig up an explosion where all the trees I had wired would blow at once. Damn I liked doing that!!

There was a mission where a team was supposed to be inserted and do relay for a very large operation being performed by Tanks & APCs but they would have no radio communication back to the base camps if we didn't put a team on a mountain top to relay.

Weather could be so much different on a mountaintop with winds and up drafts, as the team came in for insertion the wind became very fierce and the pilot could not hold the bird steady. The bird was jumping side to side and up and down, two men were thrown off the skids and slammed down into the hill. The men were hurt badly and suffered broken bones. The pilot fought hard but he safely brought the chopper to a safe landing so the TL and point man who fell out could be rescued. The mission was scrubbed and the two men had their wounds taken care of. We had just come in from a mission that morning and by the afternoon; we were packing for a mission back into that area the next morning as early as first light.

Richie Fairhurst was a big 6' 5" skinny, pimple faced, brainy person from New York who was only 17 but already had his bachelor's degree in English and had 1 year under his belt working on his masters. Richie just was not on his game on our last mission and I was concerned he was not able to do back to back missions. He assured me he was all right and we packed extra water because it was going to be hotter weather coming. Probably 100 plus and 90% humidity, you would sweat just breathing.

As the chopper started its final into the LZ I waved off the pilot and signaled for a go around. I had this very strong feeling that there was something wrong with that LZ. Dave was looking at me as if I was nuts but he let me direct the Pilot as to where I wanted him to land. We inserted without incident and we started to pull our mission on the side of this mountain sitting right on the top of a cliff.

We were not on the ground more than 4-6 hours when Richie started to sweat immensely and running a high fever. It was a flare up of his malaria he contacted the first few weeks in country. We hoped it would be a short mission because we would run out of water soon trying to keep Richie hydrated or we could lose him. We were on the ground for 3 ½ days till extraction, in that amount of time Richie had drank his ration of 8 quarts of water, half of everyone else's 8 quarts and I had given him my 8 quarts of water the day before.

About a half hour before the birds came to pull us out Dave and I crawled up to the top of the mountain to see if my suspicions were right. What we found when we looked over the edge was a hole dug and a piece of 3x3 tin placed over the hole covered with a lite cover of dirt and grass. I crawled up to the hole and I found that the area had been boobie-trapped not only with trip wires but with a pressure detonator meaning if the chopper would have come either the down draft or the skid hitting the tin would have caused it to blow and take us all out. This boobie-trapped LZ wasn't this way the day the first team came in, but overnight they wired it up to kill us.

I crawled down to my rucksack (very large back pack) got a claymore mine, detonator, blasting cap and I crawled back up alone and wired the claymore so I could blow the boobie trap. Dave contacted the choppers, I was only 100 feet away, and we told them we were going to blow this just before they were on final. I set the detonator off and blew a hole so damn big you could drive a Volkswagen into it. The dirt flew so high in the air that the fall out came down on top of me. Guess I was just a little too close, damn near knocked all the wind out of me. I picked up my gear; we all climbed on the chopper and homeward bound. When we landed, the Pilot asked me what the hell that big explosion was with the large cloud. I just laughed and said guess I used to much dynamite.

Just another day in a LRRP/Rangers life! Oh and Richie, he spent two weeks in the hospital with IVs in his arm. Guess the damn malaria needs to run its course every time it flairs up. We got him home safe and that was all that mattered!



Insertion by helicopter

Chapter 11, Ranger Saves Team

On April 11, 1970, we inserted into our AO to start our mission. We came in on what I called the tail of the mountain, picture a dog lying on its belly, and picture his back down to his tail. Now from the tip of tail to the top it is a gradual climb to the back. Well we came in on the lower tail and started walking up the windy curved tail heading towards the top. We had to climb a very steep area, as we got closer to the top. As we came up the tail, we were in the open (exposed) 50% of the time.

I signaled to Dave that I wanted the team to halt. Motioned everyone to sit and take the weight of our 70-80 lbs. rucksacks. All morning long, I kept telling and bugging Dave telling him I did not want to spend my 21st Birthday In the jungle in a huge ass firefight. Shortly after that just ahead of me in the direction of where I was heading the team, I had a feeling we were not alone and that soon we would be in contact (a firefight). I motion by hand signal that I had suspected something in front of us. We all hunkered down and waited and sure enough, I heard a bolt of an AK-47 rifle slam forward and then there was talking just in front of me. Shit, I damn near walked into an ambush.

On the way up, we had passed a bomb crater that was the only thing I thought we would be safe enough to use as a defensive position. Where we were sitting right now, we would surely die. I whispered to Dave to lead the team downhill to the crater and I would cover them. By now, we had voices coming from the top of the mountain on the ridgeline. Holly Shit what did we walk into.

As the team made a run for the bomb crater, the enemy started shooting. I opened up with my CAR 15 on Rock and Roll and started firing as many clips of ammo as fast as possible, till I knew they were safe. Now it was my time to run the gauntlet, I dumped another magazine, got my ass up off the ground and started to run. Bullets were coming from everywhere, how big a force did we walk into?

As I reach the crater I pulled off one side of my Rucksack and jumped into the whole, rucksack first and me diving head first over it. Dave was on the radio calling in artillery, adjusting fire and calling in rescue choppers. I directed the firing of the team and started lobbing hand grenades. As the bird came in to extract us, we were told to "Pop smoke". I threw out a yellow smoke grenade on Dave's orders, but we noticed the extraction Huey, was coming in on top of the ridge on the purple smoke. Dave told the pilot to identify the smoke and they said they spotted "Goofy Grape" the name we had for purple smoke. Dave said "No, we popped banana" (yellow) Dave radioed that the enemy was the purple and fire on that position and the cobras worked out hitting the area hard.

Our bird flew down to where we were fighting and pulled us out taking fire as we ran for the bird. When we all were on board the chopper and the bird was taking rounds I think we all were afraid we would be shot down. We were all positive the bird had to be

damaged bad, but she wasn't. It was a true miracle no one was hit by a flying round. That is what you call "A-nasty-HOT-Extraction."

The bird took us to LZ Hard-times; Dave climbed into another chopper and went back up on the mountain to direct fire from the 105 MM guns on the Firebase. Four Cobra Gunships were working out (firing on) that ridge and after every run they radioed they were taking fire and hits from the ground. They kept working out until they expended all their weapons and Dave kept calling in the Artillery until the fighting stopped. Intelligence estimated we ran into at least a company size force. (100 plus)

When we made it back to camp I started having the team repack, reload our rucksacks to go back out when Dave came to me and said they would not accept my radio at supply. I asked him why and he showed me the bullet hole right through my radio. Shure enough there was a hole going right through from the front to back of my rucksack. If it were not for my rucksack being off one shoulder as I jumped into the crater, I would have been shot right in the back. As soon as it hit me mentally, I started to shake. Way to dodge the bullet. I should not have survived my 21st birthday.

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FIGHTING FOURTH

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Ranger's Feeling Saves Team

By SP4 Phil Kenny

CAMP RADCLIFF - It was his 21st birthday and Private First Class Robert L. White of Minneapolis, Minn., an assistant team leader with a Ranger team of Company K, 75th Infantry Battalion, had a "feeling." This "feeling" saved his life.

PFC White was walking point up the ridge of a barren hill ten miles east of Landing Zone Hard Times. The team was moving toward a tree line to set up their night location. They had not seen any enemy activity. PFC White said, "Suddenly I had a feeling. I can't explain it. It was weird. I just felt something was wrong."

PFC White called the team to a halt and they sat down to listen. Staff Sergeant David Bristol of Fruita, Colo., continued, "No sooner had we gotten down when we heard movement. It wasn't loud; just like the safeties clicking on weapons and rustling noises. I called for artillery to keep them down so we could get a better position."

As the artillery started landing on the enemy positions the enemy began sniping at the team. Said PFC White, "We returned fire and pretty soon a heavy fig-fight was in progress."

"The fire fight lasted for five to ten minutes," said Sergeant Bristol. "When it slowed down we moved down the hill and took up positions in a bomb crater."

As the team huddled in the bomb crater, "Gambler" gunships from Company B of the 4th Aviation Battalion went to work on the enemy. "At first they had some trouble identifying us," said Sergeant Bristol. "The bad guys were popping smoke at the same time we were. Unfortunately for them they popped a different color than we did."

As soon as positive identification of the team had been accomplished the gunships worked out on the enemy positions.

When the first pair of gunships had finished their run, a "Blackjack" slick, also from the 4th Aviation Battalion, went in to extract the team.

"That pilot sure made it a happy birthday for me," joked PFC White. "Those pilots have a lot of guts." The extraction was completed without incident.

Chapter 12, The Enemy Wasn't Always Human

Dave Bristol and I went on many missions where nothing was spotted, nothing found, no movement, and these missions were as Dave would always said, "Are the missions that you could easily make a mistake and get the team in trouble." That is just the way the Vietnam War was like; you had days/weeks of boredom followed by minutes/hours of pure terror." If you let your guard down the Jungle, enemy, or the jungle creatures would kick the living Hell out of your day.

The Jungle would fight you every turn you made, it would be so hot it would suck every drop of moisture out of your body in a matter of half a day and you would suffer, possibly die from heat stroke. Heat exhaustion was almost a daily occurrence, there just was not any breeze to wick the sweat off your body and keep you from overheating. Hydration was your only salvation. The jungle floor was full of insects that wanted to bite, sting or eat you. Many of the insects were poisonous. There were ants that would sting you and it felt like your skin was on fire, the pain was excruciating and the longer they were on your body the more they stung. One day a centipede that was the size of a ballpark frank, purplish red, with bright yellowish/orange legs, stung me. Hurt like hell, made my leg feel paralyzed for about an hour but it really wasn't.

We had two poisonous snakes; one was a bamboo viper that was the color of bamboo so it blended in so you could not see it. Its bite was deadly; Viper's venom is hemotoxic, destroying blood cells and tissue, but a victim's chances of survival are good with medical aid... The second was the; Common Cobra or Asiatic Cobra; its venom is highly neurotoxic, causing respiratory paralysis with some tissue damage. The GI's affectionately named this snake the, "the two step." It was called the two-step because it was said if you were bit, you would only go two steps before you dropped.

We had tigers in the Nam that were big enough to carry a man away and eat him. There was a Tiger attack on one of our men in 1968. On one mission with Siglow, Bristol, Mitch, I was almost drug off by a Tiger in the dark. I heard something sniffing my boots, I gave a kick and hit the Tiger, he growled and we all started to shake. The story that went around Nam was that the M-16 5.56 Cal. bullet was not powerful enough to stop a Tiger. The Tiger continued to walk and sniff as it circled us, he came back to me and Dave decided to call in a 155 MM Artillery round near us in the Jungle hoping the sound would drive him off, well I'm happy to say it worked. The next morning at first light we seen the tracks of this big killer and we all started to shake again.

Then there were the Mosquitoes and land leaches. The mosquitoes were so relentless at dusk and until two to three hours after dark that they damn near would drive you nuts. They would bite through your clothes; bite any piece of exposed skin. We had a repellent

that we called bug juice, that worked very well but it burn like hell if you had any cuts or sunburn. If the bug juice worked, they would not bite but the buzzing was deafening. The little bastards were the carrier of Malaria. We took two pills to try to prevent malaria, a huge orange one on Mondays and little white pills every day of the week. Some guys said it was the big orange and some argued it was the white pills but which ever it was it gave you the shits so a lot of guys wouldn't take them for that reason. You just couldn't pull a mission safely and have the shits at the same time. Nothing was worse than being in the jungle, following the enemy and your Malaria pill gives you the shits!

When you woke and you were deep in the Jungle and hiding in a thicket your face, arms, necks would be covered with leaches. Black, ugly, blood sucking, huge leaches. If you had a rip in your clothing, they would crawl inside and attach where ever on your body they found warm and moist. You could only pray you did not have a rip in your groin.

The Enemy was relentless; they had fought the French for 10 years before us. Some of these young soldiers never knew peace; they were born during War and would probably die during wartime. The NVA were very well trained, they were home in the Jungle, and they knew how to survive and thrive in this God forbidden Jungle. They fought a gorilla war unlike the US had ever seen. There was no front lines, no safe area, and we had to adapt to them, not them adapt to us. The more the Officers would tell the men to fight as if they were in a conventional war, the more GI's were killed. They were bold enough to search for you at night with flashlights and torches, and be cunning to sneak right up on you and wait for the right time to ambush you. They were experts at making what we called boobie-traps, now called IEDs. The Vietcong were fighters who would attack and then blend in with the villagers and farmers. You never knew if the south Vietnamese were friendly or enemy.

To their leader Ho Chi Min they were fighting a war of attrition. The more US soldiers that could be killed and the longer the war went on, the more the pressure in the states would be to end the war. He was so right and our leaders were too pompous and self-serving to make any changes. I had all the respect in the world for the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) and the rebel force the VC. (Vietcong) The news media would show the American soldier as a poor Army, lazy, unmotivated, and did not believe in the Vietnam War. They were never so wrong. We fought for each other, not the Politian's at home.

The terrain and the Weather were also killers. Sometimes you were working in triple thick canopy Jungle. It is Dark, foreboding, and so difficult to move in. In the central highlands as you were climbing the high ground it was steep, wet, muddy, rocky and had vines that we affectionately called; "wait a minute vines". They were very strong and once your weapon or rucksack was tangled with vines all you could say was; "hey guys, wait a minute". If you were tall like Richie Fairhurst 6 foot 5 then they would usually say; "wait an hour guys" and we would have to cut him out. Most Rangers would slip

around the vines but Richie felt the only real way to get from point A to point B was to just push forward. I never saw a man be so stuck on so many vines. As I said, we had to cut him out of them.

Then out of nowhere, you were in grass up to your waste or elephant Grass about a foot over your head. Many grass, plants, and trees had sharp edges that would cut you deep like a razor blade. There was one certain tree that had 4" razor sharp needles, and if your path took you through a grove of these trees, they would rip your clothes and shred your arms and legs. There were low areas, not quicksand but just wet slimy dying vegetation that was so much fun to walk through. Your feet were wet all the time and everyone at one time or another developed Trench Foot, which was a very painful fungus that would make your skin crack and extremely painful to walk. The Jungle had fungus and microorganisms that tried to infect you. We moved all the time so we never built a shelter, we slept on the ground. Ringworm and other skin infections were common. Oh, I almost forgot, during the dry season there were huge wood ticks, termites and billions of ants. We had lizards that would call out all night, and move slowly through the Jungle. Some FNGs would see one and report it as a crocodile. We had boa constrictors, I seen two that were 14-16 feet long, and if you weren't watching above you as you broke a trail through the bush you may have one of those big bastards drop down on you.

One of the dangers of the climate in Vietnam that most people in the states would not think of was hypothermia in the Jungle. During the rainy season known as Monsoon season it would rain for days and get down to about 65-70 degrees in the mountains. Think about being wet every minute for 4-6 days and sleeping on the ground. If the air temperature is even 85 degrees, being wet sucks the heat out of your body. If your body temperature drops below 94 degrees, you are suffering from hypothermia and you need to get your body temperature up quickly. What we would do is placing your poncho liner (a very light jungle blanket) over our head and while sitting up right we would place a small piece of C-4 explosive on the ground and lite it. The explosive was safe when lite and gave off tremendous heat; we would also use the c-4 at the same time to make coffee or hot chocolate. If you had neither we drank hot water.

Then there was the water, the hotter and humid it got the more water you needed. Water was a weight of 8 lbs. per gallon. The more water you carried the less food and ammo you could hump through the bush. Therefore, if you ran out of water you had to find some quick. One way was to hump down to a stream or river and fill your canteens. The water was not safe for GI's to drink, there were all kinds of bacteria, parasites, and worst of all dead animals and human remains up river. We needed the water so we would fill our canteens and drop two Iodine tablets shake it up and wait twenty minutes before you could drink. When you have been hours/days without water, 20 minutes seemed like eternity.

Chapter 13, VR Overflights

Dave and I went on some very dangerous and crazy VRs. (visual reconnaissance from a helicopter) Two of the craziest started out as an everyday routine VR, we were to fly out to our next mission with just the Team Leader and Assistant Team Leader with another team TL and ATL. You would fly out to your next (Area of Operations) from the mission briefing you just attended. The Pilots would get you out to the site; you would circle in a very large circle at about 1000-2000 feet. There as you circled you and the Pilots would verify the area, using binoculars we would Pick our insertion LZ and our extraction LZ, we would chose alternate sights. The Pilots and we would make marks on our maps and as we moved away if it was possible, we worked up some artillery pre-plots. Then we would go to the other teams AO and they would do the same, and we would then head back to base camp to work out a plan to accomplish our mission.

Well on this day, we were asked to drop off some supplies at LZ Snipe. Did not seem so difficult, so as we finished our over flights we headed to the LZ. As we came in and hovered about 7-10 feet above the one bunker, we started to drop down to our waiting radio relay team their supplies. All of a sudden I heard this loud bang in my ear unlike anything I had ever heard, I turn to look in the direction of the bulkhead about 3 inches from my head and there was a bullet hole. Instantly we had rounds coming in; you need to understand that a helicopter was made of lightweight magnesium and aluminum, nether were bulletproof.

I heard someone cry out and it was the person next to Dave, his name was Kermit Jones and he was shot. I moved forward tapped the Pilot on the shoulder and told him we were under fire. The Pilot that we called "Animal" was probably the best Pilot we had flying for us. You see all the pilots and there crews were volunteers, the same with the gunships. Our missions by far were more dangerous than any other flights they made so knowing this the officers in charge asked and got the best of the best.

Animal took our bird and literally bailed off the side of that mountain, it was a shear drop about 500 feet. As we got close to the bottom, he pulled hard on the stick to pull us out of the dive. We normally cruised with a Huey at 80 knots but he had this bird rocking at 100 plus knots. We stayed at tree top level all the way to the Medevac Hospital. As we came into the base camp, we shot right across the airfield, and straight into the helipad. The air controllers had cleared all aircraft from our path. During this whole time, Dave and the other TL were giving Jones first aid.

As the bird touched down on the pad the two others ran to get a stretcher, the Pilot tapped me on the shoulder and said dump him off there is a medevac Chopper above us and the guy was shot in the throat and they needed to land. I picked Jones up and carried him to the front of the bird, set him down and we took off.

We went to the refueling dump and that is where we set her down and checked for damage. She had about 7 holes in her but luckily none had hit any vital areas. One of the faults of the H-1 (Huey) Helicopters was that the fuel tank was in the belly and it was not self - sealing, so if they had hit the belly tank we would have lost all our fuel on the way in and crashed. After we refueled, we went back and picked the other two up at the pad. When we landed on the runway, the Pilot was amazed at how calm and how fast we reacted to the attack.

On another VR, we were just about to get to our AO when our bird was diverted to an AO where a Ranger Team was under attack. As we came in behind the Cobras that were strafing the area with Mini-guns, grenades, and rocks, we came in shooting. We were on full automatic and the door gunners were firing wide open until there 200 round belts of Ammo ran out. The team was on my side of the bird; I jumped when the bird was about 8' off the ground and grabbed the first wounded man. He was shot in the shoulder/chest and had a pongee stick in his left leg. I carried him on the bird and from behind me Dave was leading, the second wounded. The rest of their team jumped on the chopper with us. All I can remember was that noisy ass M-60 machinegun firing over my head as I ran out and back. I was worried that he was going to shoot me not the enemy.

We got the wounded to the Medevac Hospital, went out to the fuel dump, and checked the bird over for bullet holes, which there were quite a few. Then after the Crew Chief certified the bird airworthy, we finished our VR, flew back to our Company area and finished planning our mission. It was just another day for us. 38 years later at a Ranger reunion in Tacoma Washington a man came up to me and my wife during breakfast, he called out my name and proceeded to shake my hand and introduce his wife to me. He said to her "Honey this is Bob White he is the one I have told you saved my life in Nam."



Ranger Extraction



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AUTHORIZED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER, MAY 11, 1942
HAS AWARDED

THE AIR MEDAL

TO

SPECIALIST FOUR ROBERT L WHITE, ~~XXX-XX-XXXX~~, UNITED STATES ARMY

FOR MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT
WHILE PARTICIPATING IN AERIAL FLIGHT

IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM DURING THE PERIOD 20 NOVEMBER 1969 TO 15 AUGUST 1970

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON

THIS 23D DAY OF AUGUST 19 70

Wm A. BURKE
Major General, USA



STANLEY R. RUESS
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

Chapter 14, Downed Chopper and Crew

Dave and I with another teams TL & ATL were about halfway between base camp and our designated AO doing a VR when the Pilot turned back to me and said we were diverting to an aircrew that needed to be rescued that had just been shot down and wounded. I passed the word to the other Rangers and we prepared for the flight. As we came into the area there was the Bird, she had stayed upright but the nose was smashed into the ground. We jumped off even before the Chopper set it skids down and each took a crewmember of the downed bird back to our bird. I had grabbed the co-pilot who was on the right side of the bird and busted up but was not critical just broken bones. I had to carry him back because he could not walk. The door gunner on the right side was the next wounded man that we got into the chopper. He too had broken bones but he had hit

his head hard and was bleeding. I jumped over to the left side of the ship and Dave and the other person had those two taken care of.

The Pilot told us we had to stay on the ground guarding the ship, I thought, "are you nuts we are only 4 guys and someone was close enough to shoot this Bird down". We grabbed our rifles and took up defensive positions, we were all alone, and no air cover, no artillery and no one was coming for us. 20 Minutes went by and finally two cobras flew over and circled us, and next was a Loch observation helicopter. These birds were fast and hard to shoot down. Their mission was to fly low and slow looking for the enemy below and when they spotted them, they called in the deadly Cobras to strike.

The little guy started circling us real low and slow and started doing a pattern moving further out every time. It was his job to keep those little bastards from sneaking up on us. He did his job well, there was no attack and in another 15 minutes, a rescue force and ground crew were on the ground and preparing to get the down bird out of there by being lifted by another chopper.

That night we were the honored guests at the Pilots barracks and treated to cold beer, pop, mixed drinks, and steaks on the grill. That was a sweet treat, and just for getting them people rescued. Didn't these people know that was just a day in a Rangers life, we would have walked thru hell and back for these guys, they saved us many more times than we could count.



AH 1 Cobra

Chapter 15, New Generation of Weapons

We were to be the most advance Army the US ever had, we had helicopters to ferry us anywhere, but not anytime. We had the lightest and shortest advanced rifle in the US arsenal, fast firing but not always. We had sensors you placed in the ground, that could hear movement, and tell what direction, speed, and proximity to you, but not always. We had a new advance hand held tank killer that was lightweight and worked well against Tanks, sometimes but not bunkers. We had a medium fighter/bomber that could fly 700 MPH at treetop level, but just not in Vietnam.

I will try to explain each item. Our helicopters were rated to carry a squad of men 12 plus crew of 4. That was at sea level, we were in the central highlands way above sea level and the humid air caused drag on the blades not lift. They were never tested in a Jungle setting nor were they asked to carry the same weight at altitude in the mountains as at sea level. The hotter and more humid the air the less lift the rotor blades would generate. The floor, and pilot's area, was not armored against the smallest caliber round. In fact, nothing was armored, meaning all personnel were subject to bullet wounds just sitting on the floor. The belly was where the fuel tank was located right under the passenger compartment, the tanks were not self-sealing tanks which meant if hit you could burst in flames or lose all your fuel and crash. The birds could not fly when the clouds were low, or no light conditions at night. It had a compass to guide you but nothing to prevent you from flying into mountains when visibility was poor. Meaning there were days we needed the choppers support and they were unable to fly. They called that VR (visual reference) only flying.

Our advanced M-16 rifle was a 5.56 mm 55 gram bullets (223 calibers) it was immensely fast, the fastest round made. The bullet was extremely accurate and did not drop in elevation until hundreds of yards out. That was the selling point the Defense Department sold the weapon to the Army. They were correct in all references to the bullet but what they did not say was it was not tested in the Jungle and had no idea of how it would stand up under these conditions. The gun in actuality wouldn't fire if it wasn't cleaned, the bolt would not come all the way forward at times due to residue from the gun powder so in the middle of a fire fight and you were on full automatic you may get one to five rounds off before she would jam. The bullets were made at the Twin cities Arsenal in Minnesota, but to save money the Defense department tried to use up over aged none smokeless black powder rather than use the new advanced smokeless gun powder, the result was disastrous; the rounds would dirty up the bolt, chamber, and barrel so bad the gun would jam or misfire. Our magazine was made to carry 20 rounds of ammo but you could only load 18 rounds because the magazine spring was too weak.

Our enemy was using the Russian AK-47 automatic carbine. It was a crude simple weapon by US standards and all it would do is fire all 30 rounds no matter how dirty it

was. It was unstoppable and like I said it came with a thirty round clip. Would the US change the magazine size during Nam, hell No!



Russian AK 47

We had a supper light weight Tank Killer the M-72 LAW (Light Armored Weapon) now the name should have told the Army everything when the Defense Department sold it to them. Light Armored, hey dickheads the Gooks had heavy armored Russian tanks!! Therefore, as you can imagine the first time a grunt needed one, the rocket bounced off. We needed something with real explosive power to bust up bunker complexes; the LAW could not do it. So that meant some poor bastard had to get close to the bunker and plant explosives to blow it. We had no standoff weapons as the WWII GIs had. We would have given anything for something like the bazooka with the Bazookas firepower and with a compact size. Oh and the greatest thing about the M-72 was that it could not be reloaded. Once fired you simply dropped it on the ground and stomped on the barrel. In addition, if you missed with the first shot you were shit out of luck.



M-72 LAW

The sensors we had were sweet, you had four of them and you set them out one at each corner of a compass. Each one gave off a different beep, with North being 1 beep, east 2 beeps, south 3 beeps, and west 4 beeps. You had a receiver with headphones, which when you had the headphones on you could not hear the radio check every 15 minutes. This seems simple, but what you would have is many personnel walking by you had constant beeps and you really did not know direction or speed. If a large animal came through you would think it was two men. They even suggested we set up ambush's using the sensors. Could you see at night killing a group of monkeys going through?



Sensors

The Air force brought over their latest medium bomber the F-111. Beautiful plane it was so advanced it had ground following radar meaning it could fly at tree top level at 700 plus MPH and it would climb and dive as you went through the mountains. Well it was never tested in a Jungle as humid as Nam, result they flew a couple into the mountains before they pulled them back to the states never to return. Jets made for Dogfights were equipped to carry small bomb loads. This made them easy prey to SAM missiles.



F-111 Aardvark

Chapter 16, No Control

I found that some of the scariest things to me were situations that I had no control over. If we were in a firefight, ambush, being stalked, or even being shelled with 122 Russian rockets, I had some form of control, it might be very little but I felt I could find a way to survive and keep my fellow team members Safe and alive.

The first time something happened that I had no control was the first helicopter crash. It was sunny and very warm morning, we had just been dropped off at the airstrip and our chopper was going through its preflight. All seemed well with the preflight, the Pilot was one we had flown with many times and we trusted him. As we climbed onto the chopper we all took our positions, we were not assigned these positions, we as team members had determined on our own what position went where depending on the exiting of the bird. The TL and the point man shared one side of the bird and the ATL and rear security the other. I happened to be rear security so I was seated on the right side of the bird with the ATL in front of me behind the copilot.

We lifted off the flight line, climbed to about 300 feet, flew to the other end, north end, of our base camp, and started a steep turn to the west. We then climbed to about 400 feet and turn sharp to the south heading about ¼ mile from the west perimeter of the base camp. We keep heading south past the camp for about 6-7 miles when the transmission started to make the loudest shrillest sound I had ever heard. The crew chief and the right door gunner started to pull panels on the side of the engine/transmission trying to find the problem. At the same time, they were talking to the Pilots and the bird was already turning around heading back to the airfield. We were losing power, altitude, and the pilots were worried we could not make the runway.

The Gunners worked on the bird while the pilots flew and we sat in terror not knowing what to do. If we crashed short of the base camp without injuries we knew we could make it back ok, but if we were short and we had wounded it would be a longer trip.

The bird was really howling now and we smelt smoke, as we flew over the wire into base camp we flew directly over our company area. Our mates had heard the chopper calls on the radio and word spread quickly. We were only about 75 feet above our buildings as we went over and we had a quarter mile to go. We just made it to the runway when she gave out; our girl was done with no lift left. We hit hard and skidded for about 100 feet till we all jumped and ran as far away as we could. You see with the big huge blade on the Huey if the transmission bound up completely it tore the rotor off and we would have had parts flying everywhere. She eventually froze solid about 30 seconds after we were clear, the rotors just slammed to a stop and the torque made the chopper tip to her right side, the blade hit the ground once and it drove her back upright slamming her again onto her skids very hard and then on her left side till the rotor hit again. We were all just plain lucky that day. We had sore backs and muscles from the hard hit but it

could have been so much worse. The chopper did not fare so well, the skids were smashed up into her belly, the rotor was smashed, windshield was gone, and transmission was burning.

The second crash was not that bad. We were being extracted and as the bird started to lift and move forward at the same time we were at 20-40 feet above the ground and only going about 40 mph when our bird lost all lift. I had my own team at this time and I was closest to the Pilot. A couple of us were thrown out but the bird did not bust up or catch on fire. In fact she was still running, rotor was turning at full rpm and she sounded fine. We were told later that she was an older bird, engine was tired and with the humid hot air, she just lost lift.

I checked on the two that were knocked on the ground and they were just a little banged up. We always flew with two Hueys just for this reason, so the second chopper picked our LRRP team up and we hovered above and to the right of the down chopper. The Pilot was able to get lift and he and the co-pilot flew here in. Her belly damaged but she would fly again. That is one scary moment as you are going down; you have no control and not enough time to kiss your ass goodbye.

Chapter 17, Team Leader of Romeo 5

For about 6 weeks Staff Sargent Dave Bristol Team Leader of Romeo 5 had a plan in his head he was going to make me a Team Leader. I learned about all I was going to learn from Dave and he was a very educated Ranger School Graduate and could take battlefield theory and turn it into a workable task. Dave was just relentless, he would have me go to briefings, work up pre-plots for artillery, when on the ground, he would have me take over the mission and when complete he would have me do the debriefing with Combat Intelligence. He knew I was ready and I knew I was ready, but I would not take a team.

Finally one day Dave sat me down and we had a frank talk, he asked me directly why I would not take on my own team. I finally looked at Dave and started naming off Teams & Team Leaders and I said to him what do all these TL's have in common. Dave thought long and hard and still could not come up with the right answer. Therefore, he asked me, "OK what do they have in common." I said to Dave "what rank is every TL out there right now running missions; I said either Sargent E-5 or Staff Sargent E-6."

"Look Dave, I was one of 5 total promoted to Private E-2 out of basic, and 1 of 5 total promoted to Private First Class E-3 when I graduated AIT training. I have now been in country for 5-6 months and you want me to take a Team when everyone forgot to promote me if I'm so damn good." "I have a wife at home and I send her money from my paycheck to live on, it would sure be nice to send her a little more."

Dave's face turned red and he looked down all the time as he said to me, "it was my duty to promote you and I never thought of putting the paper in. I'm so sorry I was so worried about my own self I forgot you about you." He promised he would put the papers in and place it on the fast track. Dave did what he promised, it was a matter of a week and I was promoted to Specialist E-4. Nevertheless, Dave went one-step better, he had them make the effective date two months earlier giving me back pay and it also meant I could be put into a pool for the Sargent E-5 board. Dave put me in for that too. Therefore, Dave came through for me and now I had to eventually put my rank where my mouth was.

If I was going to take a Team of my own, I knew I had to be at my best because one of the best trained me. Dave and I had been through many missions together; we seen did and lived many good and some not so good missions.

We were one of the first teams to link up with another Team who could not break contact and was about to be overrun. Dave guided this team to our location without giving up where we were in the middle of the night. Once we linked up with them the enemy was still in hot pursuit and they were not going to give up anytime soon. There was a bounty on any Rangers/LRRPS head of \$2500 and these guys were hungry.

We could only imagine the shock on the enemies face when they went from contact with a small force of four to now an Infantry size squad. All nine of us opened up at the same time, see we had brought out a heavy team with an M-60 Machine gun. There was an exchange of fire for about two minutes until they broke off and when Dave started pounding 155 MM Artillery Rounds down on their heads. That really broke their backs and their will to fight. The other team was finally safe and it was all Dave, who did that.

One of the teammates on the other team was Bob Wilson the man I helped on the five mile run during training. That was his last mission; he had a broken eardrum on his left side that kept him dizzy and unstable on his feet, but not good enough to get him a trip home. He did small jobs and radio relay on firebases until I heard he was wounded again and then sent back to the states.

I had never seen such fear in a Teams eyes as I had in that team. Night contacts were one of the worst, as I would soon find out for myself. Nevertheless, not to be able to break contact was even worse yet; you know that if something does not change and change soon you were going to be in a world of hurt.

Chapter 18, My First Mission as TL

We pulled a mission that was to be strictly Reconnaissance, we were to set into a very steep area and watch for movement and launching of 122 Rockets at LZ Hard Times. Dave and I agreed we would bring along a 60 gunner, make it a heavy team because we did not know what size force we would come across. We packed for 5 days because we felt that if they hadn't attacked Hard Times by the 4th day, we would give it one more day just for good measures. It was during the dry season and we knew it was going to be dry, hot, and windy, we knew we had to pack more water because on the VR we spotted no streams or rivers nearby and the map confirmed that.

That early afternoon about 3-4 clicks away there was a line company that had come under heavy fire. They called in artillery but that only brought the enemy in closer, so the troops called in an airstrike. An airstrike was only called when a company size formation felt they were about to be overrun.

We were in the flight path of the two F-105 Thunder Chiefs as they roared overhead making their dive they opened up with bursts of 20 MM rounds from their guns and the empty shells were raining down all around us on both sides. One fast mover would come down our left side and shortly afterwards the second would roll in on our right. As they pulled out of their dive and started to climb in full afterburner, we felt the heat and the strong fumes of JP jet fuel. They came in for one last run and dropped their bombs. As they radioed, they were on their final from east to west we were all praying one of those 1000 pounders did not fall short of its mark.

Just like the Air Force bragged, they were right on and the Company was safe and pulled back into firebase LZ Hard times. All was quiet but it took a while for our nerves to settle down. We were on full alert knowing there was a rather large force in the valley moving in some direction. Let us pray it is not in our direction.

Dave was busy twiddling on something with his Army K-bar survival knife when all of a sudden he let out a little yelp, not as if a dog would do, more like a yelp of pain when you want to keep noise down to a whisper in the Jungle. Sure as hell, Dave had cut himself clear down to the bone. I did some Jungle first aid and tried to prevent infection. In the Jungle, about 100 micro bugs would love to infect your blood, I was worried about Dave.

That night was uneventful; we heard some movement but ascertained it was animals. We continued watch with 1 on and 3 off, we never missed a single Sit-rep all night. I remember dawn was exceptionally beautiful that morning. One at a time we took turns having something for breakfast, I never did breakfast and kept myself to one meal a day. No particular reason for not eating more other than my stomach was always upset due to stress.

After doing our last sit rep in the morning, during the day we checked in about every hour on the hour. I asked Dave to see his cut; just as I thought it was infected. I told Dave we would clean it again, I would put some anti-bacterial ointment on it and we'd check on it later in the morning. I worked the team down into the North side of the valley and to the peak of the next hill, we took a break, did our sit-rep and I moved in a circle down over the hill West then turned South in a sweeping circle. We took another break, I shot some azimuths with my compass and made notes in my log and on the map, I carried. I called headquarters (Zero as we called them) and gave them our position using the proper date and time on the codebook, I carried. I informed them we were going to take a break and I would call them when we were on the move again.

I asked Dave to show me his hand again; it had been a little over two hours. Shit! His hand had gotten worse. I had to do something or by nightfall, he would be one sick SSG. In addition, I told Dave I was going to turn us back East in a sweeping motion and then head us down to the LZ we came in one. Using the same Landing Zone so close from insertion, spelled disaster. The NVA and VC 90% of the time headed to the area near the LZ, would monitor for movement, and set up an ambush if the LRRPs came back. Usually in two to three days, if they could not pick up your trail off the LZ they were bored and moved on. I was praying they moved on!

Dave argued with me about being Medevac'd out; he felt the infection wouldn't get any worse and besides that LZ was the only one in the area and I needed it in two days to get the team out. I pulled some weight, as the TL and pretty much had to get rough with Dave. He finally gave in, I called Zero and told them of my plan, and in about 1 hour to 1½, I would need a chopper to get Dave out. I started to move us to the LZ in a long sweeping motion so we would be going around our last night location and came into the LZ from the East.

We made the 1½ Kilometer in about an hour; the Jungle was only double to single canapé so the going was not extra rough but the underbrush was still thick. We made it to the LZ, we set up on the East side of the LZ and monitored for about ¾ of an hour checking for movement. After I felt it was safe I called Zero, requested the Medevac, and asked if they could try to get the same pilot that had set me in the day before.

About 20 minutes had passed when all of a sudden a Blackjack chopper called me. We talked the situation over, I asked him if he felt he could make it in without smoke and he confirmed. He came in fast and at treetop level, when he came to our clearing he dropped the chopper in with no hover, Dave jumped on, and he just cleared the trees as he went out. He did this so professionally that if you were not on the LZ you didn't know he landed. He headed back at tree top level for a few miles before he came up off the treetops.

Later that afternoon I received an update on Dave, he did have an infection that had started to turn to blood poisoning. They said that the higher ups told them to tell me,

“good call on getting Dave out, and that Dave had never heard of an extraction like that and said it was real sweet. “Good Job!”

We moved out and I set up a completely new Night Location. We set out our claymores, ate something and got ready to settle in for the night. We had movement that night, they were searching for us. That is one of the scariest things to have happen in the dark Jungle, enemy searching for you with torches and at times firing into the thickets. We called this maneuver “Recon by fire” meaning every time they shot into a thicket they hoped they would get us to panic and fire back. If we did then they knew where we were and they would surround us. We just weighted them out till morning.

No one slept that night and if we did, it was just a catnap. At first light we started to breathe a little easier, at least we could see the little bastards if they came close to us. I informed Zero that I was going to stay put in our night location till I felt it was safe to move. No one questioned my decision and we laid low till late afternoon about 3 hours before dark. I moved the group closer to our objective and we found a very cozy night location to rest our heads. I worked up our location and I worked up some Artillery pre-plots just in case we needed them in a hurry.

This time the night was quiet and we prepared to move and recon a very large piece of our AO. (Area of Operations) It was first light we packed up our belongings, (claymore mines, poncho liner, food, water) and did a final radio check,. I walked point and made way towards our objective.

It was about a half kilometer when we came upon a small clearing, just large enough to fire something without hitting trees. We found large pieces of Bamboo split in half and mounted on a bipod facing the Firebase LZ Hard times. There were two; they had charred burnt marks going all the way from the bottom towards the top. I set up a defensive position and then I started to draw our findings. We also found burnt torches discarded in the trees and were around the area where we found the bipods. I worked up a six grid coordinates of the location, coded that information and transmitted what we found and what coordinates. I also asked for our extraction Choppers to warm up and be on the way. We humped up the steep embankment to a different clearing for our extraction from the one we were inserted on and medevac’d Dave off of. Our extraction was without incident and I now had my first mission as TL under my belt.

When I went into a debriefing with intelligence they were skeptical of our findings being a launch site for Communist 122 rockets, they told me they thought they would be more sophisticated than what we found. I asked the Officer if he had any knowledge or pictures as to how the NVA or VC would fire a field expedient 122 Rocket. They asked me what do you mean by that. I told them in the Jungle you have to improvise. Say they did not have a proper launching pad. Would they just toss the missiles away?

I never knew what those intelligence officers thought till 40 years later I was able to obtain the actual classified after action report and it was sent in just as I stated with the recommendation that it was a possible 122 site with all my drawings.

Chapter 19, Not Letting Go



Dave Bristol, An Khe, Vietnam, fall 1969.

Dave Bristol never stopped worrying about his old team, he tried to listen in on team briefings, and debriefings if he was in camp. He wanted to know all that was happening and how I reacted. It never once bothered me, he was my friend I knew it was hard to let go. Teaching another person to take over is really trying and then when you let go you question whether you missed something they may need someday. He would say good luck as we walked to the helipad, and he would greet you on the way back. A couple of times he would say to me "see you in a couple of days," and I would sometimes say to him, "maybe sooner than you think or I'll be right back." I honestly had feelings if we were going into what we called a Hot LZ, meaning there is VC or NVA on the LZ and have set up an ambush.

If they hit us before we exit the choppers we and the bird open up with all we have and the Pilot does all he can to get us up and off the LZ. The way most of our hot LZ's the Enemy would let the Bird land, wait till we exited and then open up on the bird trying to bring the Chopper down trapping us and the Huey Crew on the ground. With a full LZ other Choppers wouldn't be able to extract us. We had an agreement with the Chopper Crew that if hit after we leave the Bird just get the bird out and let us defend ourselves. They would have to rely on me getting the Enemy to break contact and then we would E&E (Escape and Evade) the enemy on route to an alternate LZ.

We had three missions where we were set in and before the bird could lift off we were hit. As the Door Gunners laid down covering fire, we would move to a defendable position and then we would take over the fight. I felt more at ease with this type of Hot

LZ, my survival was in my hands. I would not let a Huey come in to pull us out unless I was positive the LZ's secured.

Once the bird was safe, I would use the escort Gunship Cobras to work out in the area of the attack, with Mini Gun Fire and 2 inch rockets firing from each side. They would come in one at a time at intervals where as one was pulling out the second bird was making his run. They would end the run by firing missiles and 40 MM grenades until both Cobras were expended. If the Gooks were still in the area they always fired at the Cobras as they pulled out of their attack, if we heard that and their runs were over, as they called in fresh Cobras I would work the area over with artillery that would usually break their back!!

Hot extractions were just as bad, but if we had movement, or we see signs that they had or were around, we alerted the birds. The Huey came in hot with guns blazing, we would fan the team out in the front of the bird laying down cover fire and the Cobras would fly on each side of the Huey firing all they had. This had to go very fast and everyone had to know his or her role and position. If we were too far right or left of the bird the Cobras would get us, if the Huey came too far forward when you stood up to run to the bird the door gunners would wipe you out. We had two extractions like that when I was running the team each one almost were my last. I was on two such extractions on Dave's Team. Each hot extraction made your ass pucker more and more every time.

In the middle months of 1970, our missions were changing, and we had more chances of moving into hot areas. Our missions were changing from strictly recon, to recon/ambush, to strictly Hawkeye Mission where you took out a larger team and set up only to ambush and stay to get body counts.

We pulled a mission on the North Eastern side of our base camp I had not pulled any missions on this side of our area of operations; usually my team worked the areas towards Laos & Cambodia. In the briefing of this mission, I was told it would start as recon but if we found the enemy, we were to engage them. I picked my team and had Richie Fairhurst as my M-60 gunner.

We had the first insertion of the day and we were on the ground moving before 9 AM. I was walking point because I had the feeling we were going to make contact and at times I only trusted myself on point, the reason being I had a quicker chance of reacting and making a decision if I did not have that one person in front of me. That probably was a lame excuse, but it was the way I justified it, I was a control freak and I think I was enjoying the rush of being point man. Damn, was my mind changing and I was becoming something I did not like, a killer? I weaved us in a snaking pattern crisscrossing trails, staying for the most part in the thick of the jungle, and avoiding large open areas. We took our usual breaks and I moved us in a purposeful manner, something was pulling me in this one direction and I sensed we were going into an area where we were very likely to make contact.

Late afternoon we came upon a clearing, I set the guys down and I told them we were going to monitor this clearing for a few minutes and then move across it one man at a time moving low and slow. I crossed first and set up a defense for the next guy, one by one the five of us made it across. I never had a feeling of danger in this area it was up ahead that I feared. I moved us forward about two hundred feet and then a broke to the right where the jungle was opening up and it was easier to move. We had not moved far and we came upon a very large well-worn trail. We set up for a while, monitored the area and when we knew it was quiet we moved down the trail. I had told everyone to be ready that we were walking into something, we had not moved far on this trail when it opened up into a small NVA base camp.

We moved back into a position where we could monitor the area, I started making drawings of what we observed and took inventory of supplies, food, the two large huts and the animals. (Chickens, water buffalos, and pigs) We moved in a while after we knew it was not inhabited now and searched the huts, baskets, found rice, and a supply of AK-47 rifles. I told the guys to back out and back out fast. We moved to an area just off the edge of the trail and another opening/field. There was a small clump of trees about ten foot in diameter and we set up an ambush right there. I called Romeo Zero and started to report all we had found, map coordinates, and worked up pre-plots for Artillery, and we waited.

I was not sure we would use this site for a night location so I was studying the map when I got this feeling we were in for a fire fight. I actually called headquarters and asked them to warm up the choppers for extraction. I was asked, "Romeo 5 are you in contact right now?" I reported back, "Negative but we will be very shortly." They asked me again if I was in contact and as I keyed the microphone to answer Richie opened up with the M-60, over the sound of the 60 giving bursts of fire I said yes!

Richie and the other Team Member stopped shooting and I asked what happened? Where they came from? How many? Richie jumped up and was trying to clear a jamb in his 60 machine gun, so he and the other team member reported what they saw. They had five NVA walk out of the jungle walking towards the Huts and us. They killed two of them and Richie said they wounded some of the others but they ran off in the direction from where they came. I called in two batteries of 105 MM artillery one to work out on the base camp and the other to work over the area they had come from. I pounded the hell out of the area for several minutes until the choppers arrived. Richie had jumped up and ran towards the area where the two soldiers had dropped and I see arms and legs moving as he searched the bodies. We moved out towards him and I popped smoke for the chopper as he came in. I asked him to verify how many bodies we had down so we could give a body count that "was confirmed."

As the extraction chopper came in over the bodies, the left gunner started to vomit at the sight of the dead. We finished searching the bodies and boarded the choppers. Once back at base camp we turned in all documents from the dead bodies and the drawings,

and information I had for my debriefing. Intelligence confirmed they were both NVA officers, one was a doctor and in his pouch he had a lot of medical equipment that was from the United States, this was from the stuff Jane Fonda had sent over to North Vietnam. They were carrying M-1 carbines and we brought them in with us hoping we could take them home, but the Army confiscated them saying they were going to the ARVN troops.

WE heard later that the Army sent in LOCH helicopters and did a low fly recon on the NVA base camp and the Artillery that I called in had almost destroyed the area. I was told good job on the Arty and the documents the two officers had on them were very informative. Guess that was our at-a-boy for doing a good job.



Mission as Team Leader for Romeo 5, I was calling in coordinates for night location.

Chapter 20, Welcome to Cambodia

In the last two weeks of April, 1970 a few teams started drawing missions where we were told not to wear any identification, no US Army insignias, and our Topical Maps had no markings on them, provinces, roads, rivers had no names. We pulled long hard recon missions that had strategic objectives to search for Enemy movement, Base Camps, trails, and look for Enemy Caches of Weapons and food. We were to only recon and avoid contact at all costs. The real gut wrencher was when they told us if captured we could be tried or shot as spies.

“No Enemy Engagement” was rather scary to all of us, it meant there would be NO Extraction if spotted, we were to E&E (escape and evade) until they broke contact. Most of the missions were 5-6 days in duration, and we took out a 60 machine gunner on every mission. The more the fire power the better the chances of breaking contact and survive. We were also told that we were outside Artillery Range or at the very best right at their furthest reach. That meant we were at least 30 miles from nowhere. The Army’s largest artillery piece was a 175 MM and it reached out 31.5 Miles.

We identified large well-used trails some had truck travel on them, we found many areas of bunkers and base camps, and we found large amounts of Rifles, RPG’s, ammunition, and Rice caches. After two weeks of walk, searching and observing we were pulled back to camp Radcliff and the next day we were told the US had Invaded Cambodia and we had done all their recon. Then the next thing out of their mouth was we had 4 day stand down. My memory feels there were four teams picked to go in, so that meant the rest of the company teams had to keep pulling missions.

We had several Rangers on R&R, (rest and relaxation) in Australia, and when they read the headlines, “US Invades Cambodia” they thought very hard about deserting the Army and stay where they were. They all showed up on the day they were expected back. I completely understood their feelings, they did not know if now we would be at war with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Extend the war with other countries and we probably would not see home for several years.

The US advance into Cambodia would change the US Involvement in Vietnam forever. Just two days after entering Cambodia College Students all over the US started major protests on campuses. One such protest at Kent State University turned deadly when protestors became violent and the National Guard was called to control the protestors. Somehow, shots were heard and the National Guard returned fire, shot and killed four protestors, and wounded eight others. Days after the Kent State incident colleges both students and faculty protested for days. Buildings burned, campuses destroyed all in the name of peace. The war was now in the hands of the people back home, the protesters, the students who had deferments, were making their voices heard and it changed the war and how the American people looked at the US soldier. President Nixon promised

the American people that the troops would only enter 19 miles into Cambodia and set a date for when they would leave. This seemed to settle the protestors fury on campus, they marched on Washington. The majority of the US citizens just let the protestors take over. People stopped supporting the troops, they wouldn't publicly admit they had a son or daughter fighting in Vietnam.

*With the revelation in November 1969 of the *My lie Massacre and now Kent State Massacre the Younger Generation of students and war protestors had many more reasons to hate anything that had to do with the Government and Vietnam War. This included the soldiers who were over there fighting. Movie stars such as Jane Fonda started joining in on the protests, Fonda and her husband actually made many trips to North Vietnam in support of the NVA soldiers and families. Veterans such as John Kerry sat in front of congress telling of atrocities that they witness US Soldiers performing against civilians. Problem was with Kerry he only spent 3 months in Vietnam, and was on a River Boat in the Mekong Delta.*

The attack into Cambodia was one of the best combat decisions made during the war. For the first time we took the fight to the enemy, destroyed their supplies and disrupted their ability to mass on the border to place insurgents into Nam. We all knew that, but Nixon knelt to protests and sealed the fate of the future of South Vietnam.

*My Lie Massacre happened March 16, 1968 347 Villagers were killed by US Army Americal Division under command of 2LT. [William Calley](#).

