

Almost Never Lost

My story of Vietnam 1969-1970

By

Bob White

Book 2

Table of Contents

Chapter 21, Not All Teams Are Alike,.....	3
Chapter 22, Near Court Martial	9
Chapter 23, Top Richards	11
Chapter 24, Bad Month.....	13
Chapter 25, Hairy Night Extraction	16
Chapter 26, On the Shit List Again	22
Chapter 27, Bad Ranger	24
Chapter 28, Good Friends	28
Chapter 29, You Never Listen to Me.....	32
Chapter 30, Split Second Decisions.....	37
Chapter 31, What do You Want From Us	40
Chapter 32, Spooks in company area.....	52
Chapter 33. Not all wounds heal	53
K/75 Killed In Action.....	64
Interesting Facts & Myths about Vietnam and her Soldiers.....	67

Chapter 21, Not All Teams Are Alike,

Romeo 5 had received a mission where we were to go back into VC Valley with another team, split up after insertion and find the enemy and map movement, find their basecamp, and of course avoid contact or being spotted. The team we were to be inserted with was a team run by SGT K, (rather not say his name) Romeo 2 his team number. I really didn't like this guy as a team leader but I never had pulled any missions with him, but I heard from a few of my friends who were either still on or were at one time on his team. His was a book schooled Sargent and did not earn his strips from the field. We described these type of Sargent as; "Shake and Bakes," I did not have a problem with most, Dave Bristol was one and he was great as a TL. It was just some of these shake and bakes had no skills for the Jungle and in my mind were somewhat dangerous.

I had a team that I was very pleased with, I trusted each man with my life and they trusted me as their Team Leader. Most had volunteered for my team and I was proud of that. Sgt. Russ Temple was a second tour Ranger. Russ had knowledge of the Enemy, the Jungle, and Ranger tactics. He was a hardened veteran and a veteran in battle, Russ was my ATL and we thought a lot alike, I enjoyed working with him. Russ would spell me at Point Man and was good with Artillery, and calling in gunships. Next was Specialist Kohler, he was a very intelligent reliable Ranger whose only fault was he was too reluctant to share when I asked his thoughts. It seemed like the bush over whelmed him, he was wide eyed the whole time on the Jungle Floor, but I knew better, I seen him react during a fire fight and he was very calm and knew his position and responsibility. The youngest guy on the team was PFC Mike Steponic; an 18-19 year old from Midwest clean cut but always looked like an unmade bed. For some reason that he could not give me a good enough answer he always wore regular Army Jungle uniform (not camouflaged Tiger Strips) he stood out like a sore thumb but he liked it. Mike had come over from a line company (regular Infantry) so I guess he was comfortable in his Jungle Greens. We took out a heavy team this mission our fifth man was Sgt. Cruz a man I knew little about but I had a feeling that I needed to watch him, I just didn't feel comfortable around him. As the mission progressed, my suspicion was well founded he panicked during a battle.

The other team had a heavy 5-man team whose personnel, a Vietnamese scout, a SGT. G____ who was teams ATL and my friend (Angel) Fatten and a

SPC4 B___. Therefore, they had four out of 5 guys I didn't know how they would act in the field and I didn't trust on the second team. Was not looking forward to this mission and I could not wait until we split on the LZ and went separate ways. If the TL's were not thinking alike, it was a dangerous problem until one TL just took control and ran the mission. A 10-man team was difficult to conceal and operate as a Ranger team on a recon mission. I was on a 10 man team before on what we called the Red Shorts mission so I knew how difficult it could be but I also knew how comforting 10-men rather than 4 could be in a fire fight.

Both birds came in one after the other into the LZ, my team in the lead bird, after setting down we moved northeast which was forward and to the right of the LZ. The other team was to move northwest, which again was left and forward of the bird. We came in on the low ground, like a prairie, and had to traverse uphill about 2000 yards in open waste high grass. Once on top of the plateau, we were to continue northeast and start to zigzag to recon the area. We moved in a half moon figure on the Map. About 2 ½ hours of being on the ground, I was being called on the radio by the other team leader. They thought they had found a base camp, pulled back before they were spotted and said he would feel better if we linked up and used the same night location just in case they had been spotted. I reluctantly agreed and shot a bearing to their location, when we had linked up they were sitting in the open just about 25 feet off a very well fresh and heavily used trail.

As soon as we linked, he took his radio off and he and his Vietnamese point man went looking for a night location. "Without a RADIO," who does that? I told him to take the radio with him but he outranked me and took off. They had been gone about 10 minutes when two NVA (North Vietnamese army) officers came walking down the trail from east to west. They stopped right in front of me; it looked like I could reach out and touch them, every one of the team members looked at me and waited for the sign to take them. I had to make a decision and make it quick! It was a standing order to take any and all prisoners we could, but I had two men out in the Jungle and not knowing where they were we could have them in a cross fire if this went wrong. I chose not to take those two and let them walk out of sight right down to where the suspected NVA basecamp was.

After about 5 more minutes the two lost team members showed up, sure as hell if things would have went sour they would have been right in our line of fire. I knew then I had made the right decision. We moved out behind those two to the worst LZ you could ever pick. There was sparse trees all around

us, and this was a small thicket for us eight to hide in. We could hide but our claymores would be in the wide open. We had a choice of 1.) Not putting them out, 2.) Putting them closer than should be, we would be in the blast zone, or 3.) Putting them out so the back blast was in the safe range and pray they would not be spotted. The people who out ranked me decided to "not to put the claymores out at all!" Myself, I had my team put them out but at right angles to our position as close in so they would not be found. My reason was you only used your claymores as the last ditch effort to kill as many as you could before you were over ran.

By now, I was starting to doubt this Team Leaders ability to get us through this unharmed. I was certain that in the morning I would take my team out on our own and finish our portion of the mission. That night we had torches going up and down the trail, they were not searching for us, and it just seemed to me they were bringing in supplies or more NVA were moving into the area. From what information I gathered from the TL, I started to work up Artillery pre-plots for the base camp to the west that the other team had sighted.

As daybreak I had my team eat something, we planned covering a lot of ground today towards the east side of this plateau. We picked up our claymores, packed up our gear, did a radio check, and gave a sit-rep (situation report) to Zero and gave them an approximate route we were going to move and when I would do my next sit-rep. The other TL really did not want us to break up the teams, he was certain that it would be safer to link up. I just told him that we would not be that far apart and we would come to them if they were in trouble.

We moved south back to where we spotted the two NVA officers, checked the trail and found evidence of a large amount of enemy activity. We crossed over the trail making damn sure we left no sign we were there and after 200 feet I turned, the team east and we began our assigned recon. We moved about 1 kilometer when we came upon two very large rocks with the trail running between them downhill into the valley to the north. It was triple thick Canopy very dark and foliage so close together you would not be able to see very far so you had to walk near the trail paralleling it. Not a good situation, just too many things to go wrong. As we were about 1000 feet from the rocks, I spotted two NVA coming up the trail towards us. I tried to get Temple's attention as he was walking point at the time and I could tell he did not spot them. I motioned for the team to stop and drop to one knee but Russ kept walking. I enemy spotted us and ducked behind the large

boulders for cover. I finally got Russ's attention but now he was about 150 feet in front of us. I used hand signals to alert him that he was walking into an ambush. I motioned him to come back to us and we would cover his movement. Russ got down as low to the ground and duck walked back to us. We set up a defensive position, stayed low and waited them out. After about ten minutes, they got nervous and bolted. I contacted the other team and asked their position and here they were making a loop towards us and they were just about to walk into that ambush. They were closer than we were when the enemy took off back down the trail.

I told the other team to move backwards until they were a safe distance, we would back off and then move after gaining a safe distance from the ambush and I would link up with them. On the way to the link up I knew I had to tell the other TL that I had to be part of any decisions affecting our team.

When we linked up with them, they had not moved out of ambush range, when I questioned why I was told they did not know where the gooks had set up. Christ, you could not miss the boulders they were right in front of them. I could not believe it! I took over and moved both teams back a safe distance. I found an old bomb crater that had growth around it, we made that our night location and we could set up an ambush right there. I asked the TL if he wanted to work up pre-plots for artillery and he said I could do it. I do not think he had ever done that before, if he had it was not a standard procedure. I worked up coordinates on top of the Boulders, down the trail about 100 yards to our left, to our right and behind us. I called the pre-plots in, numbered them and we were set. We watched a squad of NVA come up the trail through the boulders, fan out in front of us, and hid behind cover. Soon after that, we had more men come from our right and set up position for attack, the other TL started to panic but I told him to hold tight I felt they knew we were somewhere but did not know exactly where. We stayed in our cover and we observed them until it started to get dark, as night fell they started moving towards every thicket and would open fire into the brush, we called this "recon by fire." It was sometimes effective for them if someone panicked and fired back they now knew where you were. It was a very strong urge to fire on them but you just had to stay low and let your artillery do the work for you.

I called in one of my pre-plots dropped five rounds of 155 MM high explosive rounds and took out ½ the squad. The others were wounded and headed back towards their base camp. But, there was still another squad out there just waiting for us to make a mistake. As it got darker, a full moon came out

and instead of helping a whole lot, it made shadows that made us even jumpier. Stumps looked like Gooks crouching down looking at us. We could hear movement in the woods but we just could not see shit! A couple of hours passed and they started in again to recon by fire. By now, the other TL was freaking out and wanted us to make a run for it in the opposite direction. I was certain I could keep a handle on this and I would call in arty every time I seen a muzzle flash. Five rounds then stop, wait, and when they would open up in another area I would just call it in again.

It got silent for about 2 hours again, we could hear them talking but it was hard to make out direction and distance. All of a sudden, they started recon by fire to our front (west) and now to our right (south). That was it, I was not going to play around anymore, and they were too close to try to run so I called in three batteries (three guns per battery) of 155 MM to our front and to our right. Moreover, I kept walking the rounds in closer to us. I fired 10 rounds to our front and 10 to our right. I halted the barrage and monitored our situation, we had no signs of Enemy movement to our front but to our right I had walk the rounds in to the point where I moved the enemy towards us. Right to my right was their ATL, he shook my arm and I looked up to see a NVA soldier standing 7 feet in front of us. I could see he was looking around but he had no idea of where we were. The new team member on my team started to lose it, I tried to hold him down but he wanted to run. I stuck the barrel of my Car 15 into his left ear, moved the selector to rock and roll (full automatic), and leaned over to him and whispered, "settle down or I will blow your F'in head off." He became more afraid of me than he was of the NVA and settled down while I called in artillery closer in on our position. One landed so close it exploded and a large piece hit the tree to the side of Steponic and it came down and landed on his leg, he let out a groan, and when I checked I grabbed the hot shrapnel off his leg and kept calling it in. The concussion from the rounds felt like a kick to the chest and lungs. I moved the Arty so that it was now to our left and kept working it out farther away from our location. My thought was if I stopped as it got close to us, they would finally figure out that we had to be close to that stoppage. My plan worked, they moved down hill to the North and never came back.

We stayed alert all night, sleeping four men two hours than waking them and they stood watch while the other four slept. I do not think anyone took me up on the sleeping arrangements most of us stayed alert all night. I had checked out Steponic and it was not bleeding badly, it was just a first-second degree burn from the hot casing. He kept the piece for a souvenir.

As daylight broke I already had the choppers in route, the Cobra gunships were the first to arrive and about 8-10 minutes later the Huey's showed up. I took one man from the other team and left Russ to take out the second group on the second bird. Once my Huey was in the air we circled and watched as the other team was extracted. As their bird lifted off the LZ there was one man left on the ground, Russ Temple. I told our pilot to go down and get him, by now he was on the LZ all alone for 2-3 minutes. We went in and pulled him out, I was so pissed and I could not apologize enough to Russ. Russ being the man he was just blew it off, as another safe extraction. I could not believe the other Team Leader told the pilot everyone was on and lift off> You never did that till you did a headcount. What an asshole!

When we came out of our little bomb crater we only had to walk a few yards to be in a clearing for the birds to pick us up. I had blown down all the trees around us for about 200 yards. We did not see any bodies on the ground but when we got back, the pilots told us there were bodies lying all over but we could not see them from the trees blown down. Guess the Artillery did its job and we never fired a shot!

Chapter 22, Near Court Martial

I stayed on the LZ with my team while the other team went back to base camp. I wanted to make sure they cleared their weapons of Ammo and to tell them how proud I was of them. As we came strolling in to our barracks and we started to get ready to clean up our gear, I was jumped by the Platoon Sargent, The Platoon Leader LT. Martin, the First Sargent Richards, and even Dave Bristol. First word out of the Platoon Sargent's mouth was that I was going to be court marshaled. They told me to get my ass down to headquarters right away.

I grabbed Russ and we reported to the CQ and there was everyone again and now I had the CO & XO standing in front of me too. I was certain this was about me sticking a barrel of a gun into an outranking NCO. I was wrong; it was about being a coward and not taking the two NVA officers as POW's. Coward? I had never been accused by anyone as being a coward until now. I just kept my mouth shut and let all of them tell me how I was going to be court marshaled, busted in rank, and spend some time in the stockade.

Finally, Dave Bristol stood up for me and asked for my side of the story. The other Team Leader was sitting on the end of the table with his head down; he could not even look at me. I started telling what happened and Russ confirmed all I reported to them. They looked at the other team leader and said, "You went out looking for a night location with no Radio?" "Are you f-n stupid?" Then they asked me about the battle to keep them off us, "why didn't I let the more senior NCO run the mission?" my answer was simply, "I asked if it was ok if I called in Artillery and he said it was fine with him." Hell why would I drag down a fellow Ranger in front of his superiors, I just did not see any benefit in doing that. Besides, I was so pissed that I could hardly hold back my anger.

Russ and I gave our full mission after action report and were excused. I was sitting on my bunk reading letters from Cathy when Dave and the platoon leader Lt. Martin came in and said that I was being put in for the Silver Star medal for saving both teams. I was still pissed and had not calmed down so I said; "you were just going to court martial me and now you want to give me a medal?" And here is where my White Family flair came in; "you can take your medal and shove it up your ass! My team knows what I did and that is all that matters!"

I was immediately reminded that I was talking to an Army officer and I could be punished for that kind of talk. I answered that I understood and it would not happen again, I actually knew it would happen again. It had to, I was becoming too confident that they needed me and would overlook my arrogance.

Later that evening I was visited by Top Richards and Dave Bristol, they told me my actions were right on and that in all reality I saved both teams. They said I blew it when I was pissed off with the officers and told them how I felt. The TL from the other team would not be going out again as Team Leader; he did not have long until he rotated back to the States. I never wanted that to happen, I was never going to say anything about the other Team. It caused quite an uneasy feeling in camp and drew sides between some teams and me.

I never told anyone my side of the story, if they wanted blood I was their scapegoat. It eventually calmed down and I think my team and other team leaders who knew me made everything go away. I think that was the first time ever that two teams got in trouble like this. In later years when I was able to see the actual filed after action report there was only one small paragraph about the whole mission and the use of artillery to ward off attack, no mention of who called in the Artillery or enemy strength or sightings. The whole report wiped clean of facts. Was it the Company Commander, Division Intelligence, or CIA at work again? Whomever it was felt the incident needed to be very clean when filed as official records. I realized then the impact of cover-ups, how can you reward actions with a Silver Star when you altered the actual events.



Romeo 5 left to right, Weaver, Kohler, Temple, White, and Steponic

Chapter 23, Top Richards

First Sargent's were always called "Top" because they were the highest-ranking NCO in the company. Many enlisted men would tell you that top actually ran the whole damn company and you know I think they were right. For some reason Top Richards had a soft spot for Team Romeo 7 and Romeo 5. SPC 4 Roger Crunk, one of my best friends in the company, led seven. Top

always pitted us against each other, he would tell Roger that Romeo 5 was his best team in the company and Roger needed to step it up if he wanted the title. Top knew how competitive Roger and I were, he played to our competitive side, and you know damn if it didn't work. I think we sometimes did things that were gutsy just to one up each other. Top would tell me how many kills Roger would have and how many I had, how many missions were complete missions, and how many we were compromised; team had to be extracted before the mission was complete. It became a game, one that was taking its toll on Roger and me.

In the Ranger Company we were attached to different Divisions, we were a battalion on our own but we did others bidding as far as Long Range Recon went. Being attached promotions came down really slow, it was called a blood stripe because you could only have so many NCO's of each pay grade so when someone was killed or was wounded so bad that they were sent home the stripe (promotion) was up for grabs. Top Richards had put both Roger and I up for our E-5 Sergeant stripes, but there was only one stripe. The one who scored highest on the promotion board would get the first stripe and the next person would get the next stripe that came down.

The Five board was a panel of 6 officers and NCO's, they would ask you questions about Army regulations, questions on map reading, Our code books, procedures, and chain of command. I had just come in from a very tough mission and went into the board with dirty fatigues and camouflage paint on my face, stinking like a homeless person. When the boards were complete, Roger had gotten the Blood stripe and I was put on the list for next stripe. I would not have to go to the boards again and the stripe would follow me even when I rotated back to the states. That never happened, two months after returning from Nam I went in front of the five board again stateside at Fort Carson Colorado. There were six of us and I aced them out, and the Army gave me back pay all the way back to just before I left Vietnam. I made E-5 in 16 months, I was proud of that, but my Army records show 18 months because that was when I passed the boards in the US.



Chapter 24, Bad Month

Between the second week of July and the second week of August Romeo 5 was in two of the hairiest Missions that really took a toll on me mentally. No one got hurt, we accomplished our missions but the stress was so tough and I worried over my team member's safety constantly. Our company was down on teams because of Nixon's attempts to pull down troop head count in Vietnam. What it meant to us was that we picked up more work with less people. The South Vietnam Army (Starve'n Marve'n as we called them) was supposed to pick up the slack but the assholes could not recon a phone booth, so K/75th took up their recon also. Typical of the Vietnam War, tell the media and the people back home what you want them to hear, but do just the opposite. It was all about numbers and head count, they wanted more kills while having less boots on the ground.

Some missions we would come in on Tuesday morning and be back in the Jungle on Wednesday afternoon. We got one less day to relax and get over the tension brought on by your last mission. That time when you returned you had to debrief, clean weapon, pack ruck with new water and food, check ammo, draw new radios and batteries from supply room. (Each radio had a backup battery just in case first battery went dead) Did radio checks and pre-set radio frequencies, and finally yet importantly get assignment of new mission and do fly over to choose LZ and secondary LZ and extraction point. Not much, time to reflect on last mission or clear last mission from your mind.

This went on like this for about two months until new recruits would arrive and be trained. At one point, our MAC V Recondo school instructors were sent up north towards the DMZ to train Marine Forces on Recon procedures.

We had just come in from a mission after being extracted from a hot LZ; we were being shot at as we ran for the choppers, only for the Grace of God were we saved. We repacked, reloaded, cleaned weapons, and assigned a new mission. We were ready to go the next morning after Lowell Tidline and I did our Fly over and picked out our LZ and Extraction points. We were told this was a very hot Area, suspected NVA regiment in area; we were to follow, observe, document movement and supplies, and at all cost "Not to Make Contact with Enemy." We were to go in, observe and be extracted with the enemy not knowing we were there. That was a normal mission for us but never were we told there were massive sightings of a NVA regiment. I decided to take a heavy team and Richie Fairhurst was going to be my M-60 machine gunner, he had proven his worth to me many times but he was just coming off his third bout of Malaria and was weak, he claimed he was good to go for this mission.

Russ Temple was either on R&R or was pulled for a mission on another team, so my ATL for this mission was Staff Sergeant Lowell Tidline, a second tour veteran and a man I trusted. We had one more addition to our merry band, instead of Kohler we took out Weaver a man who I had never taken out before and knew nothing about. I did not like change; one man I could live with but three of five new team members was a little too much. I was really on edge about this mission, I ran the mission, the map area and what I seen on the VR repeatedly in my mind. I just could not figure out why but I just did not feel right.

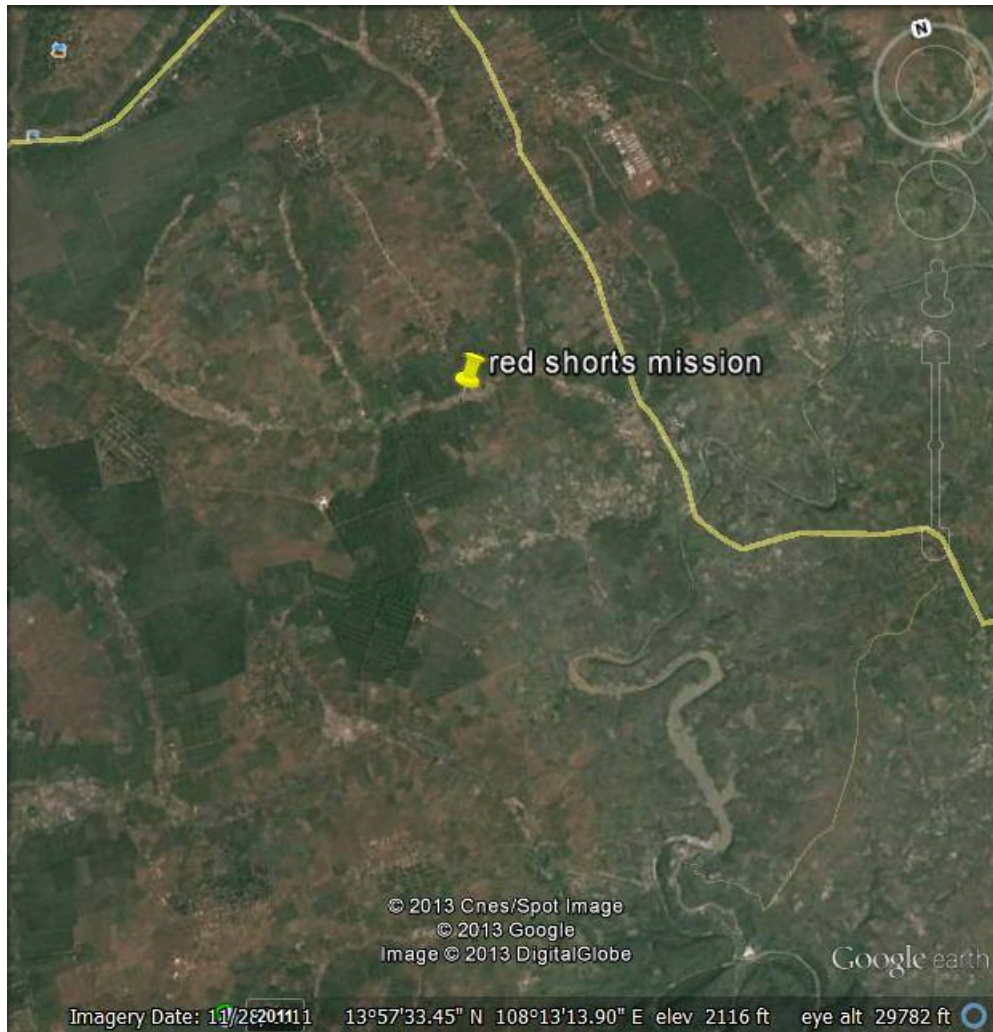
Early the next morning we awoke had breakfast, collected all our equipment, and moved out to the flight line, it was too far to walk so the ¾-ton truck drove us over. We laughed and made small jokes and jabs at each other but we were all on edge. We were the last team to go out because we were the furthest insertion, about 70 kilometers. (44 miles) It was an extremely hot day, no wind and high humidity. The type of day where it was so humid it was hard to breath, the sun and heat was taking its toll on us. The insertions were talking a long time and we waited in the sun 4 hours before lifting off. It was after noon before we would set foot on the ground, things just weren't going our way so far, we were hoping for things to change and our luck was about to get worse.

Packing Ruck Sacks before Mission left to right front; Kohler, White, back row left to right; Steponic, Fairhurst (standing), Temple.



Chapter 25, Hairy Night Extraction

A normal LZ looked green or brown depending on time of year and could be distinguished from the Jungle.



Our LZ that we had picked less than 24 hours earlier was black, someone had burned all the grassy areas and were covered in black soot. We came in on our final at tree top level and as we broke into the open the Pilot started to set our chopper down. As our skids came within 15 feet of the ground our 110 MPH down draft from the rotors kicked up so much dust and soot up into the air it looked like a black cloud that could be seen from a half mile away.

The bird was committed and we dropped in and left the bird moving forward from the LZ. Into a U shaped growth of trees. We set up and monitored the LZ

for movement for 10-20 minutes just like we normally did. I made a radio check with headquarters and we decided to move northeast from the LZ. I took up point and 30 meters in we ran into boobie traps, lots of them, some were mechanical and some were explosive mines all intended to mess up our day! I moved us back to our starting point and started to move us now northwest of our location, that area was just as bad, we were surrounded in landmines and antipersonnel mines. Christ what had we gotten into? I moved the team back to our starting point and radioed our position and our findings. I informed them we were going to monitor the LZ and make a new plan and direction to start moving. A large Thunderstorm was bearing down on us, I told the team I suspected we landed near the NVA base camp and the boobie traps were their perimeter defenses. The team agreed, what else would it be, why would this area be so heavily mined?

As the thunderstorm hit us I lost all radio contact with headquarters meaning, we had no support what so ever. We could not call in Artillery, Gunships, extraction helicopters, if we were hit now no one would ever know what happened to us. We sat tight together; we took cover as best we could and we hunkered down and waited for the storm to pass. It was moving fast and was over us in less than 10 minutes, but I still had no communication because the storm was moving from us towards base camp. Giving the distance to camp and speed of the storm, we were in for a shaky 20-30 minutes. I told the men to get some rest; we were tired and now cold and wet. I took first watch and about 20 minutes into my watch all hell broke loose.

I was facing the opening going out onto the LZ, it was U shaped and had very dense Jungle on three sides for about 75 yards and then it opened up on both sides. Moving from my left to right came 5 men dressed in black Army Fatigues, a uniform I had never seen before. These guys were bigger than a normal NVA soldier and moved just like a Ranger Team, they were a Chinese point element for a NVA company or larger force. The NVA were known to hire Mercenaries from all over the world that would fight for money and they were sent out to find us!!

I took a bead on the point man, made sure my selector was on full automatic, (or as we called it "Rock & Roll") tried to get the attention of my men by only whispering "Gooks in the open" but they never heard. The point man and the second man in line both turned their heads toward me, I did not know if they spotted me or were just looking in my direction and I was not going to take time to find out. In my mind, I planned to hit the point man with a 3 round blast and finish my clip spraying the rest of my 15 rounds across the other 4.

As I squeezed the trigger and the first round went off down went the point man. However, there were no more rounds; my CAR-15 had jammed, my first round was a hot round and expanded the cartridge so much it stuck in the chamber. The four man enemy team all opened up in my direction, bullets hit high, low and all around me but not where I was. They actually did not know exactly where that round came from. They turned around and started to run in the direction they came from. Richie spotted them and dumped all 100 rounds of his M-60 belt in their direction. The other guys opened up on full automatic also. As Richie started to reload he yelled "I got them, I got them bastards!" I knew by now not to question Richie when he claimed he got someone, he was right on with that 60 and I am so glad we brought him.

Steponic was carrying an M-49 grenade launcher strapped to his Ruck and had a vest with 25 rounds of High Explosive, I asked him to give that to me. I kept trying to establish communications with headquarters as the guys continued to spray into the Jungle where the Gooks came out of. Weaver pulled out a Willy Pete grenade and wanted to throw it into the jungle; I warned him he had to throw it more than 35 meters. (The bursting radius of a white phosphorus grenade was 35 meters, if you were within that radius the phosphorus would burn you and the only way to stop it was to cut it out or smother it with mud) His grenade flew landed and went off, it sent white burning phosphorus out in a 360 degrees radius and as it came towards us, it dropped right at our feet. I gave Weaver one of my standard glares and he knew he screwed up, that was way to close.

We stopped firing and just waited, ammunition was scarce, we only had what we could carry and that meant we could only sustain a gun battle for about 10 minutes total. Not a pretty thought, but we lived for the moment at hand and put it out of our mind.

I kept checking my radio and I now had communication, I informed headquarters of our situation and I gave coordinates to drop some well-placed 155 MM HE rounds on their little heads. I felt safer with just having contact with a voice on the other end of the radio. I worked the area to my right for about 5 minutes and about 20 rounds of high explosive. I walked it back and forth, left to right and as close as I dared to our position. We stopped waited and listened; we soon had movement and voices to our rear, very close and starting to surround our position on three sides. I called for air support and they sent out two cobra helicopters with a full load, it was starting to get dark now as the choppers rolled on position. They asked me to pop smoke and they would see if they could spot it, I explained that the

enemy did not exactly know where we were just the general direction and I did not want to pop smoke to lead them towards us. I carried a strobe light on me and it just fit into the barrel of the 40 MM grenade launcher, I stuck the strobe up the barrel and kept pointing it up in the air but making sure I wasn't hitting a tree with the light. I had both cobras come down our right and left sides firing rockets and mini guns, after every pass the enemy was firing back at the cobras. I then had them make a run behind us firing all the rockets and mini gun ammo they had and finish of their last run with a barrage of 40 MM grenade rounds.

The pilots would report the gunfire they were taking as they passed and the flight line sent out two more fully loaded Cobras. While they worked out, the two empty birds flew back and reloaded. As they flew back they were joined by 2 Huey choppers who were sent to haul our asses out of this Hell we were in. The third and fourth Cobras were making their last runs when the first and second Cobras showed back up. The NVA were still firing back at the cobras, we were contacted by the Cobras and they told us they were going to come in on a strafing run on both sides as our Huey was going to come in with no landing lights and I was to direct him in. I acknowledge that I understood his order and would comply. All of a sudden headquarters was ordering the Huey not to pick us up, we were to stay on the ground and E&E (escape and evade) the enemy and stay on our mission. The pilot was Animal, which was our nickname for him, he was wild and took chances most pilots would not but you knew if he could, he was going to get you out or die trying. He continued to argue with headquarters that they could see the tracers, we were surrounded and we would not survive the night if we were not pulled out. The answer was final, he was to leave us in and we were ordered to E&E. Animal kept saying he had radio trouble and asked headquarters to say again last transmission. Animal told me to go down to my alternate push, (preset radio channel) I went down and he said we only have a few seconds before they find our frequency so flip me a shiny and lets bring you home.

He was coming in with no landing lights and only his navigation beacons on the top and bottom of the bird. I gave him an altitude reading as best I could as he came over the trees and down into the LZ, he came in fast and hard!!! The Cobras came in on each side of the Huey, turned around, and made a run back firing all the time. I sent the guys out to the bird and I followed behind them making sure everyone got onboard safe. Tracer rounds were bouncing

all around us but we just kept plowing forward. We got on board he spun the bird around 180 degrees and we went out the way we came in.

We landed at the fuel dump on the other end of the airstrip and as she was being fueled, the pilots and I walked around the bird checking her for bullet holes. She had no navigation beacons working, they were all shot off, and there were bullet holes in the top and belly of the bird but not a scratch on any other part of the bird. We figured the dumb asses were shooting at the lights and did not know where else to shoot. The Enemy probably had never seen a Huey Helicopter on the ground at night.

Animal's flight crew took their sweet time fueling up and doing a safety inspection, we knew we were all in trouble for not obeying orders! Guess that was the price of living and not dying that night. It would be only Animal and I that they would be after, we were the ones responsible. We flew over to our end of the flight strip and as we parted we all hugged our pilots and door gunners for rescuing us!



Chapter 26, On the Shit List Again

There was no one waiting for us on the flight line, no ¾ ton to take us back to our company area, so we started to hump back following the road. That was the safest route for us, cutting through someone's company area all dressed up in camo and weapons was another quick way to end your life. As we moved along a ¾-ton truck pulled up and he was from our company, he said he had been there before, waited a long time but we never showed so he left for a while and was on his way back. So, maybe we weren't going to face a firing squad when we got back after all!

We entered the company area and went to our barracks, I unlocked the storage shed and we placed all our equipment inside and locked them in. The ATL and I walked our radios up to the supply area and turned them in, they would be cleaned checked and new batteries placed. We showered changed fatigues and I walked up to headquarters to be debriefed. I was not looking forward to this!

As I entered the TOC, everyone was standing around the radios listening to a firefight/battle going on. I asked what was happening and top and my platoon leader said that Division HQ decided to place a ready-reaction force into the Area we were just pulled from. They set in a company of men about ¾ of a Click north of where we made contact. Moreover, they humped south in the dark until they were ambushed by the NVA. They were still in battle and things were not looking good, we had Friendly casualties and many wounded. They tried to E&E but could not break contact; more people were being inserted to strengthen our forces they would soon have two companies' on the ground and more to come if they needed them. They already expended two Cobras and two more were on the way.

I was told that I did a great job getting my people out alive and that the Huey Pilots confirmed one enemy KIA (killed in action) body on the LZ site. No way could they confirm any other bodies, they were too far away from their position but we did the right thing getting out when we did. Go get some rest, we will see about another mission tomorrow morning. Nice welcome home, considering I figured to be court martialed.

I never said a word about what I was thinking. I wanted to say, if you knew this area was so heavily guarded why you sent only one team in to recon. Were we to be sacrificed? Why did you order us to E&E knowing we never

had a chance? Why in God's name did you send a company of men, roughly 50 men into a hostile situation in the dark knowing they were probably outnumbered 4-1? I guess those questions would never be answered.

I laid in my bunk thinking about those men fighting in the dark, caring for their wounded and collecting the dead in the dark. The thought of knowing there were people killed on our mission, would choosing a different LZ have helped us finish our mission? Could I have prevented this in some way? I lay there all night running these things through my head, repeatedly. Sure, I was tired, but what was really happening? Was the number of missions I pulled getting to me? Twenty-five missions was standard operating procedure, hell I had surpassed that by five and was on track for a lot more. I was soon scheduled to meet my wife in Hawaii on August 6, 1970, I had to make that date and I would be all right.

The next morning we found out the numbers, 19 dead and 40 wounded in less than 6 hours. The enemy had broken off contact and the remainder of the survivors was doing a push through the area. They found a large bunker complex right next to our LZ, we landed right on top of the slant eye bastards.

Chapter 27, Bad Ranger

They let us rest for a couple of days; we were getting FNGs (new guys) into the company area every day. I was assigned a green person and it did not take me long to realize he had an attitude and knew it all. He was going to be trouble, the more I tried to brief him on what I expected on the next mission the more he pushed back saying, "he already knew everything I told him & he wasn't stupid."

Two of the best Team Leaders I ever met, Staff Sargent Rick Williams & Staff Sargent Dave Bristol, taught me; both were NCO school and Ranger Trained and were very good at what they did. Both NCO & Officer leadership in K/75th Rangers well respected their Teams and leadership. I had the privilege to continue passing their training to FNG's who came onto my team. It was a very daunting task, because most of the time, you only had the opportunity to teach out in the jungle as "OJT" and if you were in a hot AO (where there was lots of Enemy reported in your Area of Operations), you worried that they had enough time to absorb something to help save their life.

This one person was my worst nightmare, he was noisy when he moved through the jungle, he would forget to communicate with a whisper, and I could not trust him to be on watch at night as I caught him the first night fall asleep, thank God, I was still awake and checked on him. However, his worst offense was on the second day walking in our assigned route I came across a trail and at the same time heard movement in front of me. I motioned for everyone to get down and take up a defensive position while I did a visual of the area. It ended up it was an animal we scared up and not an ambush but the dickhead FNG was standing as if he was John Wayne in a war movie, I chewed his ass and we continued.

The next day we moved into a heavily traveled area and found three bunkers set up overlooking a clearing. I had everyone get down as I crawled into the area far enough so I could tell they weren't being occupied right now. As I turned around to motion the team to come in here, he was again standing straight up as if nothing could happen to him if we came under fire. I motioned to the ATL to get his ass down on the ground and Russ grabbed him in a convincing manor. We thought he would learn his lesson this time.

We searched the bunkers, took pictures, I worked up coordinates on the map of their location and we proceeded to move out of the immediate area, but before we moved I took the time to chew his ass and tell him he was one step away from an ass kicking party! I explained again there is a reason I want all team members to take a knee when I signal them, and for the safety of his fellow team mates he better start getting his shit together. He would do this again one more time on this mission; it was late in the mission and we were just about on the LZ for extraction.

When I got back to base camp to be debriefed, I told Top Richards I wanted this guy off my team, he is not a team player, and is dangerous to any team he serves on. I told Top he has the "John Wayne syndrome", and thinks he will survive a firefight by standing up and yelling come and get me you bastards. Top understood and removed him from Romeo 5. He was given some one on one training by Top and he went out with a couple other teams. About 5 weeks after this incident Top asked me to drive him over to the Hospital on base to visit some of our wounded, behind the hospital was a very large cooler that had three rows of four individual doors about 3x3' in size. As I asked him what this was and he said the cooler at the morgue and to open a certain door he pointed at. Without question, I opened the door and on a tray came out the body of this John Wayne with three bullet holes in his chest. All three were in a straight line at breast level one under each nipple and one right dead center thru the heart. I knew what happened immediately, he was standing when he took a burst of AK 47 fire.

Top told me that I was the only TL that identified this kid's weakness. He said he pulled missions on two other teams and they never mentioned anything about this kid not obeying an order to get down. He said to me, I believe if this kid would have stayed on your team, or the other team leaders would have been observant of this man he would still be alive. I did not know if that was an ass chewing by Top that I did not continue with this guy or a compliment that I seen a weakness and acted on it. He did not seem upset with me and he never mentioned it again, in fact, he sat and had a drink with me that night, but his remark has haunted me all these years. Could I have saved him? Could I have turned him into a team member who covered his teammates back? At the time I felt he could not be trusted to be a team member who had to be more concerned over his fellow team member's safety then he gave to himself. I do not think the man had any friends in base camp, when his team came in from a mission he would walk off and he kept to himself.

We had one more person who came into the Rangers with an attitude. He came in shortly after I was taken out of the field and given the undemanding job of being the CO's jeep driver. I had gone to visit my old team members and friends one evening when I heard they were back in camp. We were screwing around, laughing like young men do and as I walked by this guy's bunk Russ Temple gave me a shove sideways and I caught my balance by putting my hand on his bunk. Well this for some reason pissed this guy off; he was sharpening his survival knife at the time and came up swinging the knife back and forth from his right hand to his left. The bastard came towards me and said he was going to gut me. Being the gentle and calm person I am I kicked the knife to the side like we had been taught and went after this guy. I had him on his back with me on top of him chocking him before he knew what hit him. My guys pulled me off him and I went outside to cool off. As I walked away he said, "That's right Jeep Driver get out of this barracks, this barracks is only for fighting men." I turned and started back to drain the air out of this little pricks lungs but two of my friends carried me out. However, as I was going out the door I seen Russ and two other of my friends treat the man rather roughly and I am sure he hurt in a few areas.

I heard Russ and Angle tell him, "that man you just called a Jeep Driver pulled 34 missions, more than 75% of the men that came before your sorry ass." The last thing I heard this kid say was, "oh I didn't know," as he landed on the floor on his ass.

Shortly after this happened he was brought to the CO's office to explain a letter to his parents telling them how he was being treated. He had sent his letter long before our little discussion. He was wounded a week later and was to be sent home, one of his team members was assigned to pack up his belongings to be shipped home. His team member found some recent letters he received from home and a letter he was about to right. He started to read these letters and reported that this prick was telling his folks that he had to take over some missions because his TL & ATL were cowards. He had whole lot of lies about himself and the men on his team. If this prick had come back to the company area his team would have lynched him!

Chapter 28, Good Friends

I had pulled many missions with Dave Bristol, it got to the point we could anticipate each other's moves on the battlefield. We were also close when we were in Base Camp. Nevertheless, when he was in base camp at the same time as I was, I would let my hair down laughing and making up crazy stupid stories that we would record on Roger's reel-to-reel tape recorder. It seemed to make me, Dave and Roger relax and feel human again.

Roger Crunk was a big man from Tennessee, broad shoulders narrow waste, red hair. The type of man you love to hate when he is around your girl because you know she is going goo-goo over him. I nicknamed him Cap'n Crunch and it stuck. It seemed he was a young man who grew up much like me with a Father who would rather kick your ass than to have to look at you. He had told me his Dad suffered from depression and would sit on the front step just looking out into the world.

I had made a ton of good friends while I was with K company but Roger, Dave and I seemed to have a special bond, that has lasted till this day 45 years after Vietnam. Over the years as we finally started talking about our troubles, adjusting to life we found that all three of us suffered from PTSD and deep depression. We felt extremely bad over the years as to how we three treated our families and how we were never really happy. Roger and Dave sought help long before I did, probably 15 yrs. or so. Guess I am a slow learner, took me until 2005 before I sought help, and another 10 yrs. After that, before I truly felt like I did before I went to Nam.

Back to Nam and my friend Roger. I went on R&R (rest & relaxation) to Hawaii to meet Cathy. My R&R was from August 6-12 and with two days travel time I was actually gone from base camp from the 3 to the 16th. Roger was out on a mission when I got back and was due in on the 19th. Roger had drawn a mission that was both recon and Ambush, while on this Mission Roger took out Richie Fairhurst as M 60 gunner and like happened to me on a mission Richie had flair up of Malaria and had to be medevac'd out. There was only one LZ in this area and they had already used it for insertion and Richie's medevac, but because they hadn't seen nor heard any enemy movement when it was time to come out on the 19th no one on the team questioned using the same LZ a third time.

Now Roger and I have discussed this several times and he is under the belief it was his fault they were ambushed. I was not there so I cannot say what I would have done. I know for a fact that being in an AO for 4-5 days and seeing, observing nothing no signs of, nor heard movement, that is usually when if you're going to get in trouble it's going to be when you are certain it's a cold AO and you let your guard down. That's exactly what Roger said they did.

They made it to the LZ with no problems and sat in a defensive circle waiting on the choppers. They had been sitting there just off the LZ when all hell broke loose. Roger, his ATL Meacham, and team member Gomez were hit and Gomez was killed instantly. The fourth team member immediately returned fire and like most all ambushes, the bastards would hit you and run away. Roger was shot twice in the right leg; Meacham was shot in the shoulder just above his left lung, he continued to fire and check on Gomez. Roger who was in excruciating pain continued to work his radio calling in air support and coordinating the team that was sent in to help get them out.

They were looking for volunteers to run an extraction team for the wounded and a recovery team for the body. I ran and got my weapon and a bandolier of ammo and sprinted to the helipad. Top met me there and prevented me from getting on the bird, he said I was too close to Roger and too upset to think straight. I fought with him but in the end I lost and did the next best thing I could do I met the medevac chopper at the hospital and helped carry Roger in to surgery. I held his hand for a while and he kept saying, "Please don't let them take my leg!" Believe me when I say I would have given my life before I would have allowed them to take Rogers's leg. They took me out of the room as they prepared to work on Rogers's leg. I never saw Roger after that as they placed him on an airplane bound for Japan for further operations trying to save his leg.



*Me with Roger Crunk,
1970 Ahn Ke, Vietnam*

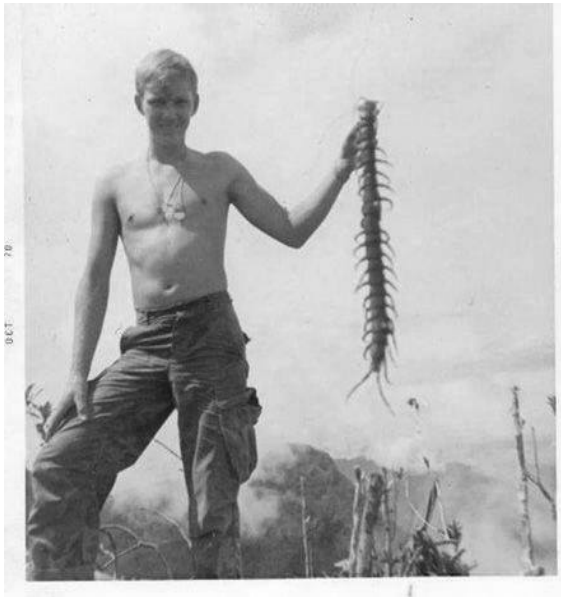
After Roger left and Dave had already returned home, I felt so lost and alone. You become so close to people even though you told yourself not to. I am so glad my friend was alive but I missed him so and not knowing how he was doing was killing me. I wrote Dave right away and told him about Roger, Dave called in some favors from some friends in the Army and wrote back that Roger was recovering in Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington DC and still had his leg. Dave said Roger was told he was to have several more surgeries on his leg and recovery was going to take a long time. Roger spent one year in that hospital but he had his leg. I would pull one more mission before I never returned to the field and I gave up my Team to my ATL Russ Temple. Top kept me out of the field as I only had about 5 weeks until I was to rotate back to the states. He also knew what none of us knew, that the Fourth Infantry Division and K/75th Rangers were leaving the Area of Vietnam and returning stateside.

I was grateful to be out of the field, but I worried for my team and could not help but feel guilt for not being with them. I felt that "Only I" could keep them safe! It hurt to see them go out on a mission and I would not rest till they returned. I now knew how Dave must have felt!



1st light sleeping in Night

Location, so comfy!



Example of the little bugs we had around us in the Jungle.

Chapter 29, You Never Listen to Me

In my time with the Rangers I was on 3 missions where our mission was to, 1) recon an abandoned French patrol base, 2) an abandoned US firebase, 3) and my last mission was to recon a mountain top. The 1st Cav. was going to make a firebase to protect the US Air force base on one side of the mountain and Camp Radcliff which was where our base was located. The Enemy operated a site somewhere in the mountains where they would fire 122 MM rockets at both airfields Army Helicopters and Air force C-130's and just loved to fire rockets into the Army Hospital on Radcliff. While everyone was occupied with the dead and wounded at the Hospital they would send Sappers (highly trained individuals carrying satchel charges of explosives) under the perimeter wire and blow up helicopters on the field. More Sappers would come into your company area and blow up your barracks or throw their charges full of explosives into bunkers where Soldiers were seeking shelter from the raid. The charges would kill every person in the bunker!! Shitty way to die, for a few seconds you see the explosive being tossed into the bunker and just before it goes off you know you can't get out and that you are going to die. I never once went into a bunker during a rocket attack or Sapper attack.



Sapper attack, late July 1970. Approximately 15 Hueys destroyed and 8 cobras, from that point on we were very short of air cover.

We were inserted onto the only clear area on this mountain top about 500 feet below the summit. It was on a 30 degree down slop at its best part and got steeper from then on. I brought in a large team meaning five men one carrying an M-60 machine gun.

After set down and we departed the choppers, I moved everyone to our left side of the LZ and we monitored the LZ for movement just like we always did. It was quiet so I took over point after make a situation report to headquarters. We immediately ran into trails, footprints, some boobie traps. I kept track on my map and location by grid. We did a sweep moving down the side of the mountain about 1500 yards and did a spiral around the mountain and slowly working our way up. It was very dense jungle and very slow moving, it was also extremely exhausting but we had to do a very thorough job, lives were in the balance.

As we moved, I never spotted anyone but I constantly had the feeling our every move was being observed, and my feelings were always correct about 90% of the time. We had done one and a half spiral when it was getting close to evening and we needed to find a night location. I found an area with very thick vegetation and was thick with wait a minute vines. It was so thick we had to crawl into the area. Once inside it opened up just enough for us to move around without being too crowded. We set up our claymores, I radioed in our location and some pre-plots for artillery if they were needed. We did not feel safe but if they did not know already where we were, they would not find us.

I do not think anyone slept very sound that night and that was mostly my fault because I shared my feeling of being followed and watched. I thought telling them how I was feeling would make them more alert. Our night was uneventful and we were all packed up, and ready to roll at first light. I wanted to get going and get as much recon as we could on our second day. It was going to be very hard moving and very exhausting. Due to the shortage of choppers since the last sapper attack, we inserted late and we had a deadline as to when we had this recon done. We had moved about 45 minutes when I received a radio message from headquarters. They had received intelligence that there was much enemy movement in our area and the 1/10 Cav. Was moving up their mission to today at 1400 hours, (2 PM) and we were coming out on the last chopper, so we had to boogie to get it done.

Just like the Line Companies to push up an operation, even knowing it was not safe until we were done. We moved out and moved much faster and noisier than I wanted and was safe. We cut the distance down on our spiral meaning we moved up the mountain recon less area than I did wanted but we had no choice. If we were not on that LZ as the first wave of choppers came in, we had a very high chance of being blown away by our own Infantry guys. They would get very trigger-happy and would shoot at anything; I did not want to be killed by friendly fire.

It was just about 2 PM when we reached the top, even though I had not visually spotted the enemy I had seen enough signs that I knew they were everywhere. How many was the key, the grunts would have to fight after being inserted and we had to get out of there safe and sound ourselves. The choppers started coming in almost on time. We jumped on the first chopper in and it was my old friend Animal at the controls.

I made a point of being the last man on the bird covering for everyone else, as I approached the chopper and stood on the skid we started to lift off and as we reached treetop level I spotted 10 Gooks who were in the very area we just came out of and behind them were many more. Honest to God one of them gave me a small hand salute as we flew past. It happened so fast I could not get a shot off and the door gunner never seen them.

The choppers and the 1/10th Cav. Units were on our radio frequency so I radioed a message, "Gooks on the LZ right side of choppers as they come in on LZ!" The Infantry was alerted and I think they thought I was nuts because three choppers had already dropped their guys off and nothing had happened.

As we flew over the base Animal told me he had to refuel before picking up more troops for the flight in. As I got off the chopper I walked over to his door and we started to talk about the LZ and what we had spotted when all of a sudden he cried out they have just attacked and we have wounded and one chopper shot down. They finished topping off their tank and left us on the fuel dump as they went to fly in. Bullets from all directions were riddling his fellow pilots. We sat on the fuel dump, I turned on the external speakers on my PRC-25 radio, and we listened to the conversations of the battle. Animal had picked up more troops and started ferrying them onto the LZ. He also took out the wounded chopper pilots and some wounded Troops, he just kept pushing his bird to the limit setting more troops in and taking the wounded out.

We always said that our pilots, the ones who volunteered to take us in "flew with Big Brass Balls" because they were more than just brave they were fearless and determined to do whatever was necessary to get people out. The 4-5 chopper crews that flew for us just kept doing their job while other pilots claimed it was too hot a LZ and stopped coming in. Eventually we heard that Animal was shot and wounded, so was one of his door gunners but they all agreed to keep flying until they could not fly no more. On his next trip, the story has it his co-pilot was wounded but they went in for one more try. Finally Animal and crew was ordered down and to seek medical attention. By then the battle was winding down and the cobras were doing their job cutting down the enemy.

Animal and his crew were going to live, but the co-pilot and door gunner were more extensive. Animal was hit in the shoulder and his legs. We later heard that Animal was awarded the Flying Cross (highest honor a pilot could be awarded) and Purple Heart medals for his actions that day. This was all hearsay as I never seen animal again.

This ended up being my last mission. Three times, we recon firebases and three times men had lost their lives. You really start to question why they had us recon the area if they were not going to listen. Were we, and the Grunts (infantry) expendable like a throw away lighter? My whole team could have been lost if the enemy wanted to or we all five could have been taken prisoners. This mission haunts me in my dreams. Men died and just for a piece of ground and if only they would have listened to me, maybe then, they would be safe.

There was a story written by one of the survivors from the 1/10th Cav. but nowhere does it mention our involvement in this operation. Nowhere were the Rangers ever mentioned, we were the silent teams that went in before anyone else and went out on the birds as they came in.



My last team, Russ Temple took over Romeo 5 with Kohler as his ATL. The team was still intact when I rotated back to the states. Every one of these Rangers came home alive; I hope I had a big part of that. I had pride knowing that no Ranger was ever hurt on one of my teams.

Chapter 30, Split Second Decisions

There was a movie that was released in 2013 called Lone Survivor, it was a true story of a modern Seal Team in Afghanistan, who were compromised by village goat herders and they the decision they made and how it changed their lives forever. They had three choices, 1.) Silently kill them, 2.) Tie them up and go on with your mission, 3.) Let them go and hope they do not run and tell the Enemy about sighting you. They took tying them up and continuing with their mission. Actually, their mission was to verify a Taliban leader was in this village, they spotted him but they did not have radio contact with headquarters. They were going to move to another location and try to make radio contact again.

Unfortunately, their solution did not work for them; one of the villagers got free and ran to the Taliban fighters before the Seal Team could make radio contact. Only one Team member survived and twenty other Seals were killed trying to rescue them.

This was a life and death situation you need to make, and you need to minimize the effect if it goes wrong. I had the very same situation on a mission, where intel claimed there were no friendlies in this Area of Operations. This meant our terms of engagement meant if you were compromised, use any and all force deemed necessary. If we told at briefing, that there were Friendlies in the Area then the rules of engagement were we could only fire if fired upon and there was imminent danger of loss of life. If not in imminent danger then we had to call and wait for permission to shoot or engage the enemy. I hated when they told us there were friendlies in the area and it was a no fire zone.

Our mission was to look for NVA or VC movement or encampments/bunkers. We had been moving on the first day for about 4 hours after insertion when I had the team take a break. We were in a defensive circle position when I heard movement to my right. I spun and took aim at a young teenage girl. She dropped to the ground covering her head; I looked at the team and said, "Where the hell did she come from?" It was obvious she was not NVA or VC she was a normal Villager with bare breasts, bare feet, cloth wrapped around her middle and that is it. NVA & VC women soldiers wore uniforms or black pajamas as we called them. She had nothing in her arms and no

weapons what so ever. I immediately made the decision I was not going to take her with us because someone would come looking for her, and I sure as hell was not going to wound or kill a teenage village girl. I raised my hands and said; "Chew hoi" which loosely translates into all is forgiven. She held up her hands as in surrender, I turned her around facing back the way she came, pointed, and motioned for her to go. Never seen such fear in a person's eyes before, but she did as I motioned her to do. We moved out into the thick jungle in the opposite direction we were heading and did a large circle to get back to our original heading on the compass.

My decision was not as hard a decision as the Seal Team had to make. She was not a threat, she was not the enemy, and she was more scared than we were. I was positive she was OK to send back and if there were NVA or VC in her village she had no idea where we went or in what direction. We searched the AO just as our orders of our mission stated and the only sign of human life was the small, very small village of about 15-20 people that the young girl came from.

Decisions like this had to be made immediately using your training, observation of your surroundings, and gut feelings, then acting on your decision and not waver from that decision. There were no second-guessing, no going back, and if it went sour, you minimized its effect on your Teams safety. This is what made a Team Leader a good leader rather than just a Team Leader.

Split second decisions when you are in a firefight were the type that if wrong you could get your team injured, captured, or killed. It is all about choices, either try to fight with weapons we had on us, and/or use artillery or gunships, or break contact and escape and evade.

Being captured was never an option for us; there was a \$2000-2500 bounty on a Rangers/LRRPS dead or alive. The enemy only took officers prisoners; everyone else were either killed, or sent to a work camp in another country. At least that is what we were told.

If we were being overrun, I carried a thermite Grenade and we would have piled the radios, morphine, bandages, codebooks, maps, and if time, our weapons, set the Grenade off and it would melt everything in seconds. Nothing for them to capture that was useful.

**QUYẾT DÀNH THẮNG
GIÁC MỸ XÂM LƯỢC
THƯƠNG CHO KHÔNG CÙ
THƯƠNG TỊCH
BIẾT DÒNG QUÂN**

**Thương Cho
10,000 Piastre**



**Không Cù
Thương Tịch**

**10,000 PIASTRES
DỄ QUỐC MỸ LÀ KÈ THÙ KHÔNG
DÔI TRỜI CHÚNG CỦA CHÚNG
TA !**

Actual copy of posting by NVA stating reward of 10,000 Piastres (about \$2000 to 2500 in us money) on our heads.

Chapter 31, What do You Want From Us

At Fort Lewis, as we showered and waited for our new clean uniforms to travel home in, some ass, stole my tiger fatigues, my combat boots that I had walk 100's of miles across the central highlands, my k/75th cowboy hat that was awarded to our unit only. No other Rangers could wear that hat, and my Ranger Black beret that was issued to me in Nam. Only Rangers were authorized to wear that Beret. One of my dog tags, souvenirs I had brought home and my survival Knife.

You know what, I forgot our treatment at McCord Air force Base our entrance point back into the states. The customs people (who were military police) found joy in dumping out travel bags and spreading everything on a table then telling us to repack. They also searched us, and then whenever they felt it they would pull a person out of line and strip and cavity search him. If you protested about your treatment, they made you go to the back of the line. One of my Ranger brothers who's standing right behind me was strip and cavity searched and then made to go to the end of the line. I waited for him on the side so he was not alone. He was devastated over his treatment. That was the start of our trip home and the AirPort incident was a capper.

People for the last 40 years have said we Vietnam Vets never received the welcome home we deserved and that is why we are upset. We were not upset about not having parades or banners at the airports. It was the disdain with which our country looked at us. For some reason that we were not privy to know things, people, friends changed. I could handle the people waiting at the main door at Seattle/Tacoma airport with signs calling us names accusing us of being killers of Women and Children. On my right side of the protest line as we walked past these people I was only hit with a sign, but on the other side, my friends were spit on. I do not know if I could take the spitting, but the sign I just laughed it off. However, as we entered the

airport there were still more people calling us names and no one came to our aid or defense, the airport police looked the other way.

The three of us bought our tickets and we learned that we missed our last flight by 10 minutes, even though the plane was right in front of us and the woman said it was only half-full, we would have to wait till 7:30 AM. We stood there another 12 minutes looking out at the plane before they closed the doors and she was ready for flight. It would have only taken 5 minutes to get us three on board.

We went into a restaurant that was open in the AirPort, as we were sitting at the counter 3 guys came in and said they were going to throw us out of our seats. They wanted them and in a way I hoped they would try, we would have busted them up pretty well. Nevertheless, we did nothing because if "we" would have gotten in a scuffle with them "we" would have been placed in the stockade and we would have been delayed who knows how long getting home. You see it would have been our fault for fighting, we were not allowed to do anything damaging to the US Army.

We moved onto second floor where there was a USO lounge for GI's on their way home, this was the safest area for the public and us. You see by now we were hurt and mad and if we tangled with one of these nuts, we would have destroyed them. It was ironic to me that they called us killers and then would try to anger us knowing we were trained to kill with our bare hands.

My flight landed at Minneapolis/St. Paul airport at close to 1:00 PM, Cathy had arranged a welcome home group just for me, and there was a little over 20 people there. I said my hellos, smiled a lot, and let just about everyone hug me. All the time I kept praying please Lord Get me out of here. I was panicking having people crowd me in and then close contact in my face somewhat welcome. My friend Duane seen I was in trouble and led me to the men's room. I told him that while I was grateful for all the honest emotion, I did not like it and in fact, I was scared to death. Duane and Cathy made a grand exit for me telling everyone I had not slept in 36 hours and that was the truth; I had not slept. We all piled in our cars and drove up to Mom & Dads Cabin it was Thursday afternoon.

That evening we talked and drank. People really sounded like they wanted to hear about Vietnam but I was not ready to relive it so I kept my mouth shut. Later Cathy and I went for a walk on the road holding hands and talking; I was starting to relax and we were starting to laugh and talk more and more. It was pitch black on the roads and for an early October night, it

was beautiful. We had walked within 300' of dad's driveway when there was a huge crash in the woods behind us; I immediately hit the ground and tried to get Cathy to get down too. She was freaked and ran from me and into the house. It took me a short while to regain my composure and I just got to my feet brushing myself off as the person who was our best man in our wedding walked up and asked if I was all right. I told him I was and that I lost it there for a little while. I had learned several months later that he told my nephew that I was faking it and I had made it up to make them feel sorry for me. What a prick! He had never left the states and was in the US Air force reserve; what the hell did he know about our jumpiness. That was another example of people judging us without knowing us.

That weekend Marv and my dad wanted me to go hunting with them, hell I was just out of the jungle 4 days prior and they had made plans to take me hunting. I was so jumpy that the first day when someone shot from another blind I returned fire on him or her. I was thankfully too far away to hit them but I still fired on these hunters. The next morning I told them I was sick and could not go. I heard several years later that they were pissed at me because they knew I lied to them. Again, no one took the time to see me for who I had become, every time this happened I went deeper and deeper into my shell.

A week later a good friend of my Dad wanted me to have dinner with him at a VFW (Veterans of foreign wars) he thought it would be good for me to meet other veterans. We walked in, we ordered a drink at the bar, and before I could take a sip I had two WWII veterans in my face hollering, "Why the hell can't you guys win this war? We won our war what the fuck is wrong with you?" I pretended that I just laughed it off but I had not, it hurt like hell, we were winning the war when I left and my fellow Rangers were still winning our war! This happened to me two more times before I finally had enough and walked out the door. The next day when my father came home from work, he got all over me because I embarrassed his friend by walking out. That I was never welcome to come back ever again, and how disappointed my father was of me. I just let him chew me out as I always did. I slid a little deeper into that shell.

All of the time I was home on leave I was constantly pulled aside from my family telling different stories about things that my wife did that upset them. My Sister was jealous of the time my father spent teaching Cathy to drive, her running off on dates with my best friend and Best Man Duane Kelm. My Mother even got in on the act that Cathy did nothing but walked with her head down on weekends and expected my mother to cook for her.

My Father was upset at some things I said in my letters where he felt I was putting him down. My Mother told me I made him cry in one of my letters. My Brother even got into the act by complaining in a letter to my folks that Cathy did nothing to help them when she stayed with them while I was in AIT. In addition, I never chipped in for her food she ate. I knew it was a hardship having Cathy there, feeding one more mouth. I also knew Cathy was chipping in on the groceries, she baby sat my nephew David. Hell we were 19 & 20 years old, and never been away from home! I think my family hurt me the worst. Why come to me if you had a problem while I was gone? What did you expect from me now? Was it to hurt me so much later after the fact? I'll never know why.

I had asked my Dad to help Cathy learn to drive. I had asked my Best Friend who I trusted him and my wife, to take her to movies, parks, to keep her around people her own age instead of my folks. We never asked my Brother and Sister-in-law to have Cathy stay there. It was there Idea and she would be helping them out watching my nephew while they both worked.

Back in Basic Training, I had broken a tooth while eating a chicken salad we were served for lunch. I told my Drill Sargent about the tooth and how much it hurt. I was told that in the next week, we were to be examined by an Army Dentist and I was to report it to them. When I reported it to the Army Dentist, he told me to wait until my next Duty Station. When Basic was complete I went on sick call to the Dentist to have my tooth taken care of I was told that they would only pull the tooth or wait till my next assignment. I waited until I was sent to Nam. In Vietnam, the Dentists told me they did not do dental work unless it was for reconstruction due to Enemy Fire. I was ordered to go back to my Company Area.

While I was in Vietnam my teeth got considerably worse, I was told it was from lack of nutrients our system was not getting from C-rations. We were literally starving our systems. When I rotated back to the states from Nam I was told by the Army Dentist clerk to go to a civilian Dentist and when I got to Fort Carson they would reimburse me. That is exactly what I did and I paid \$1500 out of my own pocket. Now if you compare those costs to buying a new Mustang Mach 1 the Mustang cost new \$3600. That made that \$1500 worth a whole lot based on the value of a dollar then. Of course, when I got to Fort Carson and turned the paid invoice in for reimbersment the Army refused payment and said I was informed wrong that I had to wait until I got to Fort Carson and have the Army fix it. I learned a valuable lesson that day, that the military does not give a damn about any one of us enlisted men.

In Vietnam I had cut my ring finger on my right hand on some jagged metal on the side of a duce and a half truck. It was cut to the bone and you could see the tendons, I went to a field hospital to have it checked and there was a female nurse and a male Doctor playing grab ass and when they looked at my finger the Doc told her she needed to get him a suture kit. He started to trim the wound, clean it, and he looks at my shoulder patch and said, "Army Ranger, well you guys think you're so tuff! You don't need any numbing while I stitch this up." Six stitches latter I walked out of this field hospital feeling lower than pond scum. Another example of how the officers hated us enlisted men and especially if you were a Ranger or Green Beret.

When Cathy & I arrived in Colorado Springs we felt our first real discrimination, We were asked to leave restaurants because we were Army, We were told to leave a store because we weren't welcome, and a GI friend of mine and I were thrown out of a strip club on his 21st birthday because we were Army. Gas stations would not sell us gas, and apartments charged us more for rent. "Welcome home Veteran! You are our hero", yeah right! Things had changed in the Army while I was gone, there seemed to be a lack of respect for rank and for the Veteran. I remember when I was going through training I was in awe of the Vietnam Veteran, it was an honor to know one and to listen attentively if they were trying to train you.

When I reached the states my last six months in the Army was spent as a Sargent in a Mechanized unit in Fort Carson. The first week in the unit we were sent on a one week maneuvers as aggressors against a Cav. Unit. While out in the mountains one night I was told to check on the men in my platoon for dry socks, wet close, dry sleeping bag. It was snowing hard and getting cold and we did not want anyone to get frostbite. As I walked around I had men who told me to Piss Off and I had two Black Men who got right in my face and told me they weren't going to do what I ordered, after I caught them goofing off on guard duty and if I pushed it they were going to kick my ass. It was touch and go for a few seconds until two men who were sleeping stood beside me. I actually had a black man who was sitting on the hood of my car on base pull a knife on me when I told him to get off. I was walking with my jeep driver and I was carrying a 45 pistol on my hip so the 4 men backed down, the man put his knife away and the lieutenant who was about 5 steps behind us ripped these guys up one side and another. The war was unpopular at home and the new soldiers acted to me just like the public towards us Veterans. It was not the US I had left just 12 and a half months ago.

When Cathy and I finally were discharged from the Army we drove home and we started planning for our baby that was on his way in 7 months. I registered with the Veterans Affairs Office as I was told to do by the Army and after answering their questions on a questionnaire, I was told that 1.) I was not a veteran of a war, only WWII soldiers were considered Combat Veterans. 2.) I was not sprayed by Agent Orange in Vietnam because they never sprayed where I was. 3.) I had 4 more years' service in the Army; two was active duty in the Army reserves and two years inactive reserves. I was also issued another draft card and told I was classified 4A meaning I could be redrafted at any time the US Congress deemed fit. That welcome home really kicked me in the nuts.

I started back to work 2 weeks after leaving the Army, the crew I worked with was pleasant enough but made it a point to mention that every time there was a shooting on the news in a bar or market place, they would always say; "I bet he was a Vietnam Vet." On the news, they showed lies about the South Vietnamese taking over the majority of the fighting as the US started sending the GI's home. That was a lie, several times, we would win a battle, they would bring in the South Vietnamese soldiers to fake a firefight, and it was reported they did the fighting. Therefore, I had to stop watching the news. When I was installing phone service in people's homes I would get Men and Women who would get right in my face and tell me how much they hated the war and the people who fought it. The college students and graduates were the worst. You never admitted you were a vet at a Party or someone would try to get in an argument or fight. One socialite was heard saying that "Vietnam soldiers were his least favorite minority." I asked two different Priests why God would allow people to treat us this way. Why would God want us to kill people if it was an unjust war? How do I get God to forgive me for killing men in battle? They had no answers for me, never even tried to explain. They just wanted us to "get over it, and get along with our lives.

I joined the American Legion at the coaxing of my father and there were some real pricks, that never left the states but they still would tell lies about their service and the battles they fought in Vietnam. I could not take their bullshit, lies so I left after 6 years as an active member and was Vice Commander of our Legion Post.

When I was promoted to Management, I was competing with a lot of College educated management who only went to college to avoid the draft. I had one activist scream at the top of her lungs that she does not want to hear nor

does she give a shit about Vietnam War stories. We never had mentioned the war but she wanted to let us know she was against any vet. I had a director (2 management levels higher than me) Tell me I was lucky I was promoted by another Director, because he would hire a woman over a Vietnam Vet anytime. He too was my age and a college graduate.

In 1975, I watched, as the US Congress would not fund the South Vietnamese to help them defend their country that we had fought so hard to keep free of Communism. Night after night, I watch the towns and villages that I fought in go down in flames by the North Vietnamese Army. The treaty we signed was broken and we did not defend the treaty. From that, point on the Vietnam Soldier was a target and a forgotten bunch. The record book would show Vietnam was the only war the US Military lost even though we had pulled out of the country 2 years prior to the takeover. How in God's name did they figure we lost? It was a war run by Politian not the Military!

In 1978 we elected a Democrat President Jimmy Carter, one of his first acts was to pardon all the draft dodgers, draft card burners, and the Chicago 8 who were convicted of breaking into Government Office's and set the building on fire to burn draft records. Those 8 people went on to be very affluent officials in Colleges, and 2 of the 8 were elected to Congress.

Late in 1982, the Defense Department and DuPont Chemicals admitted there was proof that Agent Orange defoliant caused heart trouble, cancer, birth defects, and physical and mental problems. Problem was they used a map that still showed a very small area of spraying. The Defense Department blamed Dow Chemical for making the drug so toxic, but would not accept blame for spraying us. Several billion dollars were paid to the Defense Department to be used as restitution for Agent Orange, but it took years of court battles before the Veterans Administration starting using the money for treatment of Agent Orange exposure. Another lie by our grateful Government.

Veterans had a higher suicide rate than the nation/world average. Alcohol and drug abuse was higher than the average. With pressure from the Veterans, VA did studies and found many were suffering from what they named PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and started to test Veterans. They finally learned that sending a Veteran home right after being pulled from a Jungle was not the right thing to do and in fact caused more stress because the Vets did not have time to adjust to a so-called normal life. They

also found that the Vietnam vet had spent 3 times more time in combat than did a WWII Vet.

It is better now in 2015 than it was in the 70's, 80's and 90's. After the gulf war, the Vietnam vets vowed, to never let what happened to them happen to anyone ever again. We greeted and welcomed them home with a smile and handshake. We gave them jobs, college money, and upgraded the Veterans Hospitals. After 9/11/2001, we stepped up our efforts to make the Vets welcome and appreciated.

We never wanted parades, or bands when we came back home, what we wanted is a nation to give us respect for the suffering we did for our country. Is it better than it was, yes! Is it where it should be? No.

The US had a 9 year POW from Vietnam War run for president. People used his being a POW against him as a reason or fear for not voting for him, but when George Bush ran and won two terms as president his lack of Combat was held against him and was constant ridicule. It seems like there is a double standard in politics and with Vietnam Vets.

I went to my 35th class reunion in 2002, I was sitting at a table with 5 guys that we were inseparable during our high school years. We were talking and getting up to speed as to what each person had done for the past 30+ years when one of my friends said to me, "you were in Special Forces during the war and I heard you got your guts shot up." I told Mark that I was not part of Special Forces, that I was part of Special Operations Force. This included the Navy Seals, Marine force recon, Black Ops, and I was with the Rangers attached to 4th Infantry Division. All of a sudden, a classmate from another table jumped up and said to me, "There were never any Rangers in Vietnam, your spreading bullshit!" He got up and walked way away from our table. I wanted to kick his ass but I was tired of defending what I did in combat and what unit I was with. As he walked away I hollered back at him, "kiss my ass I didn't like you in High School either!" I got in trouble from my wife for that remark, have not been back to a reunion since and probably never will. I was just tired of this shit.

One of the things that really hurts is when a Veteran of Vietnam who was there before and during the 1968 Tet Offensive will tell us Vets who came after that; "you guys were there during the easy times." They would say; "it was much rougher when we were there!" Really! Then why was it that we had more of our guys killed during the year I was there 69-70 than any other year! We did more with less head count, we pulled more missions, had

more Enemy killed, and pulled more Hawkeye missions (Search and Destroy) than at any other time in Vietnam. Shit, just give us some respect for what we did!

I did a small experiment on my own; I wanted to see if people even care about us/me and what we did 45 years ago. Dave Bristol wrote a book on Vietnam and there were about 12 pages of this book where he talked about his time with me in Vietnam and some of the things I did that he thought were heroic or funny and his take on me as a soldier. I sent those 12 pages to 10 of my friends and family. I would ask the closest family members if they read it, only my oldest Son Chris said he did right away. Other people would say they started it, have been too busy, and did not get to it yet. I stopped asking after 6 weeks of waiting. I still had only one reply that it was read. Six months later, I was still only at one.

My little experiment was about the way we were treated after coming home. We are there in front of you but everyone looked away wishing we did not exist or include them when it comes to our discussing our feelings, problems, and illness from a war long forgotten. It is very easy to say he/she has a problem and I wish they would get over it.

There are a few more incidents I could recite; firefights, narrow escapes, dangerous extractions, true unity during hardship. If I shared all, then I would have to truly open memories that I have chosen not to recite. We Vietnam Vets do not talk about it. Our motto is "if you weren't there, then you wouldn't understand nor did you earn the right to know."

There was a saying going around in Nam; "To those who have fought for it, peace has a bitter sweetness that the protected will never know." Meaning those at home protected by us soldiers from war, suffering and death, will never understand what life and peace truly means. Nor do they care!

In 2005 after the death of my Mother I was having real problems with my emotions, my interactions with family and friends, younger co-workers. Nightmares for the past 35 years had become more frequent, less and less sleep, withdrawing into my own shell. A friend talked me into going to the VA for help, they diagnosed me with PTSD and said I was Bi-polar and started treating me for my mental illness. They keep adding to my drugs, actually making me less responsive, dizzy, no energy, and huge weight gain. I tried to have them assign me to another Doctor but the VA policy was and is no second opinions and you could not change Doctors once treatment started. I was getting worse, the anger issues seemed to be more aggressive,

more frequent, and for less and less of a reason. I felt persecuted and judged by everyone, I guess you could say I was becoming paranoid.

The solution my Doctor had was to increase the drugs so I was in a more sedated state. I hated how I felt, I could no longer do the things I enjoyed because my concentration was altered, I was dizzy and falling. They decided to change my drugs in February 2015 and I had a reaction where I became so angry I wanted to punch everyone who looked at me. I dwelled on the past and lashed out at family members who hurt me in the past. I don't know how she did it but Cathy stuck with me and tried to get me help from the VA. I was finally assigned a new Doctor and she found that I was misdiagnosed and was not Bi-polar and the drugs were in fact hurting me not helping me. I now have been put on medication that treats the PTSD and I am back to pre-war days. The VA is another example of how the public and the government wants to forget about and dismiss the Veterans who answered, "their nations call to duty."





*Welcome to
the Jungle, the view I had while walking point.*



I now spend my time volunteering at the State Veterans Cemetery giving other Veterans the respect they deserve at their burial as part of the Minnesota Patriot Guard. I also am on a Veteran lead committee on Mental Health.

Chapter 32, Spooks in company area

Many years later I was contacted by Wayne Mitch, Tom Sove, and Roger Crunk, they had made a trip to the National Archives and obtained our after action reports that were created during our mission debriefings. They also obtain our K company KIA's. 7 out of the 17 Rangers that were killed during the time I was in the company were killed during the hairiest months June thru mid-September 1970. 7 men in 3 months, and as we looked at the after action reports missions during that time frame were altered and information was removed as to where we were, type of mission, and any information of battles/firefights.

We started talking about during those months we always seemed to have two to three men in dress pants and white shirts always in our TOC (tactical Operations Center or as we called it Romeo Zero). They were involved in our mission briefings, they monitored our radio transmissions and they were there when a team came in and was debriefed. Then it dawned on us, they were Spooks (ghosts) as we called them in Nam, CIA to everyone else. They would tell us they were from Washington and worked for the defense department evaluating our weapons, ammunition, and analyze how they could modify our equipment just for our type of Ranger mission, and we believed them.

We lost good men on our teams, helicopter crews, infantry companies, on their f-in missions. I never felt so used or lied to. Roger, Wayne, and Tom have continued to research all of our after action reports and it is only during that timeframe were they altered.

Why? What were they hiding?

Chapter 33. Not all wounds heal

It amazes me that every time Rangers get together for a reunion we start to share more and more about our battles. At a recent reunion in Tampa Florida, I was talking to several of my good friends I had not seen since Nam. Doug Childers told me that once he got back to the states his back kept killing him and it started after he was injured in a helicopter crash that mangled his arm pretty well. He was constantly complaining of his back but the VA would not help him. Like most of us, he went to a specialist and found that he had broken his back in that crash and some of the bone fragments lodged in his nerves. Doug had spent three months in Nam on light duty after his crash and never luckily returned to the jungle. He was told he was lucky he could have been paralyzed for life. He also has heart trouble, (Isthmic heart disease) and prostate Cancer from Agent Orange. I have the same Isthmic Heart disease, as did about 40% that were there.

Willie Williams told me he still has nightmares of when he was wounded twice and damn near bled to death before they could get him medevac out. One of the bullets hit him in the wrist and they could not control the bleeding. It was a nighttime firefight, they were told to give him first aid, and they would get him out in the morning. They finally convinced the powers to be to get him a chopper out ASAP or he will be dead in a little while.

They stitched Willie up and after he healed they sent him back out and he was shot again this time in the shoulder close to his lung. This time Willie was given an early out of Vietnam and sent home after he healed. But how do you overcome that feeling that you should have died, that you're living on borrowed time?

When I first got to Ahn Ke there was a Ranger who slept all day and worked all night on the company radio at the TOC. I was able to talk with him one night and he told me he would never be able to sleep at night. I asked him why and he told me on his last mission they walked into an area where there was an enemy sniper. One by one, he started picking off the team members until Ferguson was the only one left. If he tried to move, he was shot at. He was pinned down all night between his 4-team member's dead bodies. The Army Doctors fixed Fergie's wounds but they had no idea how to fix his brain.

Just before I left Nam one of the teams was sent again to recon a firebase that was abandoned months earlier, but now they decided they wanted to use it again. Well the team was only on the ground for a few minutes when the team leader split his team and had the 2 FNG's stay back in the tree line as he and the ATL and his one other experienced man went to recon. As soon as the three-team members got onto the small firebase, they were ambushed. To take cover they dove into a bunker not knowing it

was booby-trapped. The TL was killed, as was the experienced man and the ATL was busted up in the face and he was blind. The two new people returned fire keeping the enemy back but they were out in the open and couldn't get to the others without getting themselves killed. Because the team had not given their initial situation report and could not be reached on the radio they sent in another team to see what was going on. By then the new people were on the ground an hour without radios, pinned down, certain they were going to die. *

When the rescuing team brought them back in, you could quickly see that the two new people were wounded just as much as the others but their wounds never showed. They just were not the same people as when they left and the Army had no way to treat this. We called this the 10,000 mile stare!

****Note: this incident was told to me by another Ranger in the company at the time of the incident and in later years by another Ranger who was in the company at time it happened. I have no way to verify it's accuracy.***



in on abandoned firebase

Grunts coming

Like I said before our unit was all volunteer and we would see more action, fought more fights, and spent more time in the jungle, than most who fought in Vietnam. Moreover, all of this was done with 4-5 men. Brave men, men I am proud to call my Brothers! In my 12 months in the Rangers I pulled 34 missions and was in 8 firefights. 1 in 4 missions were battles, the other missions were terror filled days filled with hours of boredom!



How in God's name do you get anyone to even remotely understand what we did and most of all why we did it. Our missions, our suffering and our demons will die with us. They will never do a movie about us or even a television show. Only the Modern Rangers know of what we did. When a modern Ranger comes up to us old dogs they always shake our hands and tell us "you wrote the book on Modern Rangers. We study and learn from your triumphs and your failures from Nam." At least we have them to realize what we did, and our contribution to the war, and our legacy that lives on through a new Generation of Rangers."

I am attaching a couple of pages from Dave Bristol's Book



Dave Bristol before company mission.

An Unlikely Warrior

He was in so many ways an enigma to me! He was an unlikely warrior. He was in Christopherson's words "a walking contradiction." He was a very good LRRP, a good ATL, and TL. Make no mistake about it; He carried his weight and then some. He walked point, the most dangerous and demanding assignment on the team. He was more than proficient with his weapons and all the tools of the trade, and he was a fighter when he had to be.

I came to trust him as only close brothers at arms can trust. He proved worthy of that trust over and over again. He bore the physical, mental and emotional burdens of our missions as well as anyone and often better than many of us did. He could be tough if needed and it often was needed. He dealt with the discomfort of our missions with stoicism. He knew how to provide information and help to a sometimes arrogant TL. In short, He was a good soldier.

But Bob White was more than that! The contradiction, at least in my mind, was that he was not a warrior in the sense that we often think of them. There were men in K Company who by nature seemed to enjoy the thrill of the fight. Some seemed immune to the fear of losing a teammate. They outwardly relished the power given to them and a few apparently enjoyed using the power to kill. Some were athletes who saw the brutal physical challenges as another way to prove themselves. Some men, at least outwardly, never questioned what we did, they just did it. Bob was not any of these men.

Bob was not a great athlete, nor was he a thrill seeker. He was more concerned with losing a team member than he was about being hurt himself. While he was an outdoorsman, he did not embrace the discomfort of the bush. He learned early that we were involved in an awful task that sometimes ended in the death of another human being. He never learned to live with that burden lightly! Bob was married and wanted nothing more than to get home to Cathy. He carried that burden while many of the rest of us did not.

I believe he was in many ways ill-suited to be a LRRP. Even as we all hardened to the task, Bob seemed to carry more of the burden of knowing the cost to us and to our enemies. Someone said the "courage is not being unafraid; it is being afraid and acting anyway." I think that applied to all of us, but especially to Bob. He was not a LRRP by nature; he was a LRRP by choice. He placed himself among those special men who did this job and by the force of his will and character became a true warrior.

His incredible sense of humor was the tool he used to deal with the situation we were in. He kept his humanity with great effort. To someone seeing him in his camouflaged fatigues, he probably looked like the rest of us. To those who knew him, he was anything but the stereotypical LRRP. He was an ordinary man, thrust into an extraordinary war against his will, but he was by choice a LRRP and he became an extraordinary soldier. By an act of his will, he excelled and kept his humanity. By an act of his will, he did the job of being a LRRP. His strength of character was what made him a LRRP. I don't think it was ever easy for him, but he was a Ranger.

The World According to John Wayne

Americans have a well-developed sense of what is acceptable in a fight. That code carried over into my team's experience in Viet Nam. One mission, probably my third or fourth as a team leader, revealed one of these oddities in a vivid way.

Highway 19 or, QL 19 as it was called, was the only ground route from An Khe to Pleiku. There was a fuel pipe line that ran along the road to supply petroleum products to unit's further inland. Both the road and the pipeline were critical security concerns for the 4th Infantry Division. Our teams were often tasked with recon missions along the road. We would check out the areas one or two clicks (1000-2000 meters) from the road. These missions were often considered "soft" because larger NVA units did not often operate close to the road. Contacts were fairly common however, because small Viet Cong units did operate near the road. They mined the road and blew up bridges and the pipe line at night. I hated these missions for several reasons. They were close to American units and that was dangerous if they saw you. I was concerned about the close proximity to many friendly Montagnards in the area and breaking contact was hampered by the proximity of both.

On this mission we had movement for several nights. We needed to locate the people who were in the AO and determine what they were doing. Movement in this area was tricky because of the many open areas and the resulting lack of concealment. As we moved around in the scrub trees and grass, my point man was trying to skirt a clearing when he stopped and froze in a ready position. This caused all of the team to do the same. Carefully, slowly, I turned my head and looked over Bob's shoulder. Three men squatted around a small fire in front of hooch about 30 meters in front of us. At first I thought they were Montagnard wood cutters. They did wander into these areas at great risk to their lives. That thought was soon dispelled when I saw three weapons, one near each man.

Bob's first thought was to back out and avoid contact. Before that could happen, one of the VC saw Bob and instinctively reached for his weapon. Bob fired and apparently killed or wounded all three men. We immediately heard movement and voices, and we were forced to leave the area. Apparently we had stumbled onto a fairly large unit hidden in small bunkers. What followed was a nasty and dangerous running contact. (That is another story.) Using artillery as cover, we moved to our extraction point, one of the firebases in the area, and were pulled from the AO.

We returned to An Khe where Bob supervised weapons cleaning and repacking while I debriefed at the Brigade operations center. We cleaned up and went to the mess hall for a hot meal. There was the normal nervous chatter and bravado common after a contact mission. Bob soon withdrew from the discussion and I found him outside our hooch alone and disturbed. He, like most Americans, struggled with the fact that he had killed someone. It was not easy for most of us and many never really got used to it. This contact was different, more difficult than normal.

Deep in the mind and soul of Americans is the idea of a fair fight. Countless westerns and popular culture taught us that you never shoot a man in the back. Two of the VC killed

that day had their backs to us when they died. He felt some deep betrayal of a “code of honor”, no matter how silly it seemed to others. We talked long about this. His actions may well have saved the team from harm. His actions were proper in every way, and most LRRPs thought he had shown extraordinary courage and restraint in trying to back out of the situation.

In a few days, we were back in the bush, pulling more missions and he had no choice but to put the mission behind him and move on. We talked about this mission many times later and he said it helped. Little did I know that our roles would soon be reversed?

The Spider Hole

Spider holes were small holes in the ground with a little lid made of woven grass or vines. The VC would dig these holes in strategic locations and hide in them. They would pop up, shoot someone or something, and then disappear back under ground, often unseen. They were nearly impossible to see and so were a real danger to all infantrymen. I considered them a greater threat than snipers because there were many more of them in the area where we worked. On the "Red Shorts" mission, I had a personal encounter with a spider hole.

We had been dropped off to ambush an area and we had lost como and been in contact off and on all night. After a harrowing night on the ground, armored vehicles arrived in the morning to extract us. A short ride on the tanks ended when shots were fired at a tank from a spider hole! That abruptly ended the ride on the tanks, and all of the LRRPs that were with me decided to walk out. We decided that walking was better than riding if the VC were willing to shoot at tanks! As we moved, we always had a team member walking drag. The last guy in line looking backwards and covering the six (back side) of the rest of the team. As we walked out, I walked past a spider hole and did not see it. I had no idea it was there! As I passed the hole and moved a short distance past it, the occupant of the hole slowly pushed up the lid and raised his weapon, intent on shooting me in the back! Bob White, walking drag turned in time to see the lid move and fired on the man, killing him. The unexpected shots caused an immediate reaction among the LRRPs and armor crews. Every LRRP was on the ground and looking for the threat. Bob let us know what had happened and we continued our walk out of the area.

I know that this happened. Bob recalls it in vivid detail. This is the kind of incident one would expect to be indelibly etched in my mind. It is not! I have a very vague picture of some event in my mind. I cannot place it on this mission, I cannot say that I would have remembered it without Bob's reminder, and I do not have the emotional reaction to the story that one would normally attribute to such an event. This was an honest to goodness "you saved my life" moment! There is no other way to characterize this event! But I do not have any detailed recall of that happening at all.

Why would that be? There are several things that come to mind. Both Bob and I remember this mission as the worst mission we ever had together. We were without Commo and at maximum range for artillery support. We were probed all night long by a sizable group of VC or NVA. They were persistent in their attempts to find us and were willing to loose people to do it. We had no helicopter support. We did get a "Spooky" flare ship to help keep them away. I fired artillery all night long. They were 175 mm guns from LZ Black hawk and they were at maximum range. This made them even more inaccurate than normal, adding to the stress of the night. As we rode out, we were shot at again. I was pretty well spent and it is possible that I just had reached my limit and emotionally blocked it out. I never saw this event either, it all happened behind me and was over before I knew what happened!

After we got back to Pleiku, I was debriefing and someone challenged my honesty about the contact. They accused us of faking a contact and said a contact like that should have

produced a big body count. I was instantly livid and responded with something to the effect that I had 8 live bodies going in and I had 8 live bodies coming out. That was all the counting I had time for and that was all I did. This certainly added to the emotional turmoil I was in. Perhaps I just had other things that I needed to do.

This story shows how deeply distorted the thinking of men in combat can become. It shows the perverse nature of combat stress and its effects on the minds of men. I know it happened. I know Bob White saved my life that day, and I am grateful beyond measure. There is little head knowledge but my heart seems somehow to know it happened. I cannot tell this story or hear it told without a deep, deep uneasy feeling. It is a feeling of dread, or awe or maybe both. My dad once told me that "We should be thankful for God's miracles in our lives, whether we are aware of them or not". I have come to believe that this may well be one of those miracles, almost unknown to me, but real, very real.

K/75 Killed In Action

The highlighted names are the 17 Rangers who died while I was in the unit. The one name with a * was the man killed on Rogers Crunks Mission.

NAME	DATE	INCIDENT	UNIT	VIETNAM MEMORIAL
Richmond Ross Luce	19670529	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	21E14
Daniel Lee Harmon	19670602	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	21E34
Ronald Joseph Bonert	19670614	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	21E100
Robert Lee Johnson	19670801	KIA Vietnam	LRRP	24E61
Richard Edward Smith	19671102	KIA Vietnam	1/4 LRRP	29E013
Jose Ramos	19671127	KIA Vietnam	1/4 LRRP	30E099
Kenneth Charles Hess	19680208	KIA Vietnam	K/75 RGR	33W89
Nathaniel Irving	19680208	KIA Vietnam	K/75 RGR	33W86
Peter Mitchell	19680303	KIA Vietnam	1/4 LRRP	42E53
Joseph John Steimbach	19680412	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	49E36
Adolph William Albrecht	19680711	KIA Vietnam	1/4 LRRP	52W013
William Arthur Thompson	19680712	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	52W20
Dennis Lynn Ahrendsen	19680906	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	45W47
John Joseph Kull	19680927	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	45W54
Luther Anderson Ghahate	19681021	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	40W12
Dickie Wayne Finley	19681021	KIA Vietnam	2/4 LRRP	40W11
Michael Eugene Lawton	19681201	KIA Vietnam	E/58 LRP	37W17
Todd Louis Wood	19690109	KIA Vietnam	3/4 LRRP	35W062
Craig John Loftus	19690109	KIA Vietnam	3/4 LRRP	35W062
Jack Lee Rightmyer	19690216	KIA Vietnam	K/75 RGR	32W46
Hugh Rufus McKinney	19690216	KIA Vietnam	K/75 RGR	32W45

Gerald Quinn Hancock	19690216	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	32W43
Ralph Gerald Dunn	19690216	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	32W43
Armin Jochaim Blake	19690322	KIA Vietnam	2/4	LRRP	28W08
Steve Hathaway	19690623	KIA Vietnam	2/4	LRRP	22W119
Felipe Obed Santiago	19690703	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	21W56
Frank William Humes	19690708	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	21W83
Wallate Fred Thibodeau	19690719	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	20W23
Dennis Michael Belonger	19690719	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	20W17
Raymond P Johnson	19690809	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	20W118
Lonnie Lowell Gibson	19690928	KIA Vietnam	1/4	LRRP	17W16
Luis A. N. Hilerio-Padilla	19691113	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	16W69
Eddie Dean Carpenter	19691113	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	16W69
Kenneth James Smolarek	19691127	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	16W128
Robert John Silva	19691127	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	16W127
Michael William Lyne	19700107	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	14W08
Charles R. Willard Jr.	19700107	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	14W10
La Roy Frederick Roth	19700107	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	14W09
Dean Allen Borneman	19700123	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	14W58
William H. Bartholomew Jr.	19700123	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	14W60
Luther James Doss Jr.	19700430	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	11W72 **
Frank Edward McClellan	19700604	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	09W08
Earl David Broach	19700803	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	08W78
Evelio Alfred Gomez	19700819	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	08W124 *
Antonio Ambrosio Grau	19700830	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	07W24
William Eugene Roller	19700907	KIA Vietnam	K/75	RGR	07W45

Roy Christopher Olgyay 19700919 KIA Vietnam K/75 RGR 07W74 +

Frank Harold Miller Jr. 19700919 KIA Vietnam K/75 RGR 07W74 +

Robert Wilber Toler Jr. 19701205 KIA Vietnam K/75 RGR 06W109

Gerald William Hill 19710107 KIA Vietnam K/75 RGR 05W31

Charles Jackson Britt 19720330 KIA Vietnam 2/4 LRRP 02W124

© 75th Ranger Regiment Association, Inc. All rights reserved.

+ Note; the last two men who were killed on the same day Olgyay & Miller were Team Members on a mission to recon an abandoned firebase. The area was booby trapped and when they were attacked they took cover in a bunker that had a tripwire with explosives at the end. These men were killed immediately and a third member was blind from the blast. I knew all three very well happened only 9 days before I left for home.

** Was killed on my friend Roger Crunk Romeo 7 mission*

*** Jim Doss' Son contacted many of us who were there when his father was killed, I only told him that I knew his father, he was a good and honorable man that he would be proud of. I also told him I was out in the Jungle when his Dad was hit, that was a lie I was in camp that morning having just come in from a mission. I heard the whole ordeal of the firefight, the panic in Jim's voice and the voice change to that of the ATL stating Jim was KIA (killed in action) and they needed an extraction. The Jungle was so thick they had to lift the body out on a rope through the thick triple canopy. Very sad group of Rangers in that Camp, Dave and I went to the makeshift funeral the next day. I made a pledge I wasn't going to attend anymore vets funerals.*

Interesting Facts & Myths about Vietnam and her Soldiers.

Vietnam War: Facts, Stats & Myths

Credit: Capt. Marshal Hanson, USNR (Ret.)

and Capt. Scott Beaton, Statistical Source

9,087,000 military personnel served on active duty during the official Vietnam era from August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975.

2,709,918 Americans served in uniform in Vietnam.

Vietnam Veterans represented 9.7% of their generation.

240 men were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.

The first man to die in Vietnam was James Davis, in 1961. He was with the 509th Radio Research Station. Davis Station in Saigon was named for him.

58,148 were killed in Vietnam.

75,000 were severely disabled.

23,214 were 100% disabled.

5,283 lost limbs.

1,081 sustained multiple amputations.

Of those killed, 61% were younger than 21.

11,465 of those killed were younger than 20 years old.

Of those killed, 17,539 were married.

Average age of men killed: 23.1 years.

Five men killed in Vietnam were only 16 years old.

The oldest man killed was 62 years old.

As of January 15, 2004, there are 1,875 Americans still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

97% of Vietnam Veterans were honorably discharged.

91% of Vietnam Veterans say they are glad they served.

74% say they would serve again, even knowing the outcome.

Vietnam veterans have a lower unemployment rate than the same non-vet age groups.

Vietnam veterans' personal income exceeds that of our non-veteran age group by more than 18 percent.

87% of Americans hold Vietnam Veterans in high esteem.

There is no difference in drug usage between Vietnam Veterans and non-Vietnam Veterans of the same age group (Source: Veterans Administration Study).

Vietnam Veterans are less likely to be in prison - only one-half of one percent of Vietnam Veterans have been jailed for crimes.

85% of Vietnam Veterans made successful transitions to civilian life.

Common Myths Dispelled:

Myth: Common belief is that most Vietnam veterans were drafted.

Fact: 2/3 of the men who served in Vietnam were volunteers. 2/3 of the men who served in World War II were drafted. Approximately 70% of those killed in Vietnam were volunteers.

Myth: The media have reported that suicides among Vietnam veterans range from 50,000 to 100,000 - 6 to 11 times the non-Vietnam veteran population.

Fact: Mortality studies show that 9,000 is a better estimate. "The CDC Vietnam Experience Study Mortality Assessment showed that during the first 5 years after discharge, deaths from suicide were 1.7 times more likely among Vietnam veterans than non-Vietnam veterans. After that initial post-service period, Vietnam veterans were no more likely to die from suicide than non-Vietnam veterans. In fact, after the 5-year post-service period, the rate of suicides is less in the Vietnam veterans' group.

Myth: Common belief is that a disproportionate number of blacks were killed in the Vietnam War.

Fact: 86% of the men who died in Vietnam were Caucasians, 12.5% were black, and 1.2% were other races. Sociologists Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, in their recently published book "All That We Can Be," said they analyzed the claim that blacks were used like cannon fodder during Vietnam "and can report definitely that this charge is untrue. Black fatalities amounted to 12 percent of all Americans killed in Southeast Asia, a figure proportional to the number of blacks in the U.S. population at the time and slightly lower than the proportion of blacks in the Army at the close of the war."

Myth: Common belief is that the war was fought largely by the poor and uneducated.

Fact: Servicemen who went to Vietnam from well-to-do areas had a slightly elevated risk of dying because they were more likely to be pilots or infantry officers. Vietnam Veterans were the best educated

forces our nation had ever sent into combat. 79% had a high school education or better.

Myth: The common belief is the average age of an infantryman fighting in Vietnam was 19.

Fact: Assuming KIAs accurately represented age groups serving in Vietnam, the average age of an infantryman (MOS 11B) serving in Vietnam to be 19 years old is a myth, it is actually 22. None of the enlisted grades have an average age of less than 20. The average man who fought in World War II was 26 years of age.

Myth: The common belief is that the domino theory was proved false.

Fact: The domino theory was accurate. The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand stayed free of Communism because of the U.S. commitment to Vietnam. The Indonesians threw the Soviets out in 1966 because of America's commitment in Vietnam. Without that commitment, Communism would have swept all the way to the Malacca Straits that is south of Singapore and of great strategic importance to the free world. If you ask people who live in these countries that won the war in Vietnam, they have a different opinion from the American news media. The Vietnam War was the turning point for Communism.

Myth: The common belief is that the fighting in Vietnam was not as intense as in World War II.

Fact: The average infantryman in the South Pacific during World War II saw about 40 days of combat in four years. The average infantryman in Vietnam saw about 240 days of combat in one year thanks to the mobility of the helicopter. One out of every 10 Americans who served in Vietnam was a casualty. 58,148 were killed and 304,000 wounded out of 2.7 million who served. Although the percent that died is similar to other wars, amputations or crippling wounds were 300 percent higher than in World War II. 75,000 Vietnam veterans are severely disabled. MEDEVAC helicopters flew nearly 500,000 missions. Over 900,000 patients were airlifted (nearly half were American). The average time lapse between

wounding to hospitalization was less than one hour. As a result, less than one percent of all Americans wounded, who survived the first 24 hours, died. The helicopter provided unprecedented mobility. Without the helicopter it would have taken three times as many troops to secure the 800 mile border with Cambodia and Laos (the politicians thought the Geneva Conventions of 1954 and the Geneva Accords or 1962 would secure the border).

Myth: Kim Phuc, the little nine year old Vietnamese girl running naked from the napalm strike near Trang Bang on 8 June 1972 (shown a million times on American television) was burned by Americans bombing Trang Bang.

Fact: No American had involvement in this incident near Trang Bang that burned Phan Thi Kim Phuc. The planes doing the bombing near the village were VNAF (Vietnam Air Force) and were being flown by Vietnamese pilots in support of South Vietnamese troops on the ground. The Vietnamese pilot who dropped the napalm in error is currently living in the United States. Even the AP photographer, Nick Ut, who took the picture, was Vietnamese. The incident in the photo took place on the second day of a three day battle between the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) who occupied the village of Trang Bang and the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) who were trying to force the NVA out of the village. Recent reports in the news media that an American commander ordered the air strike that burned Kim Phuc are incorrect. There were no Americans involved in any capacity. "We (Americans) had nothing to do with controlling VNAF," according to Lieutenant General (Ret) James F. Hollingsworth, the Commanding General of TRAC at that time. Also, it has been incorrectly reported that two of Kim Phuc's brothers were killed in this incident. They were Kim's cousins not her brothers.

Myth: The United States lost the war in Vietnam.

Fact: The American military was not defeated in Vietnam. The American military did not lose a battle of any consequence. From a military standpoint, it was almost an unprecedented performance. General Westmoreland quoting Douglas Pike (a professor at the

University of California, Berkeley), a major military defeat for the VC and NVA.

Statistics from the Combat Area Casualty File (CACF) as of November 1993 (the CACF is the basis for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, aka The Wall)

Average age of 58,148 killed in Vietnam was 23.11 years (Although 58,169 names are in the Nov. 93 database, only 58,148 have both event date and birth date. Event date is used instead of declared dead date for some of those who were listed as missing in action).

Deaths Average Age

Total: 58,148, 23.11 years

Enlisted: 50,274, 22.37 years

Officers: 6,598, 28.43 years

Warrants: 1,276, 24.73 years

E1 525, 20.34 years

11B MOS: 18,465, 22.55 years

Interesting Census Stats and "Been There" Wanabees:

1,713,823 of those who served in Vietnam were still alive as of August, 1995 (census figures).

During that same Census count, the number of Americans falsely claiming to have served in-country was: 9,492,958.

As of the current Census taken during August, 2000, the surviving U.S. Vietnam Veteran population estimate is: 1,002,511. This is hard to believe, losing nearly 711,000 between '95 and '00. That's 390 per day. During this Census count, the number of Americans falsely claiming to have served in-country is: 13,853,027. By this census, FOUR OUT OF FIVE WHO CLAIM TO BE VIETNAM VETS ARE NOT.

The Department of Defense Vietnam War Service Index officially provided by The War Library originally reported with errors that 2,709,918 U.S. military personnel as having served in-country. Corrections and confirmations to this errored index resulted in the addition of 358 U.S. military personnel confirmed to have served in Vietnam but not originally listed by the Department of Defense (All names are currently on file and accessible 24/7/365). Isolated atrocities committed by American Soldiers produced torrents of outrage from anti-war critics and the news media while Communist atrocities were so common that they received hardly any media mention at all. The United States sought to minimize and prevent attacks on civilians while North Vietnam made attacks on civilians a centerpiece of its strategy. Americans who deliberately killed civilians received prison sentences while Communists who did so received commendations. From 1957 to 1973, the National Liberation Front assassinated 36,725 Vietnamese and abducted another 58,499. The death squads focused on leaders at the village level and on anyone who improved the lives of the peasants such as medical personnel, social workers, and school teachers. - Nixon Presidential Papers.

The United States Did Not Lose The War In Vietnam, The South Vietnamese Did. Read On...

The fall of Saigon happened 30 April 1975, two years AFTER the American military left Vietnam. The last American troops departed in their entirety 29 March 1973.

How could we lose a war we had already stopped fighting? We fought to an agreed stalemate. The peace settlement was signed in Paris on 27 January 1973. It called for release of all U.S. prisoners, withdrawal of U.S. forces, limitation of both sides' forces inside South Vietnam and a commitment to peaceful reunification. The 140,000 evacuees in April 1975 during the fall of Saigon consisted almost entirely of civilians and Vietnamese military, NOT American military running for their lives. There were almost twice as many casualties in Southeast Asia (primarily Cambodia) the first two years after the fall of Saigon in 1975 than there were during the ten years the U.S. was involved in Vietnam. Thanks for the perceived loss and the countless assassinations and torture visited upon Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians goes mainly to the American media and their undying support-by-misrepresentation of the anti-War movement in the United States.

As with much of the Vietnam War, the news media misreported and misinterpreted the 1968 Tet Offensive. It was reported as an overwhelming success for the Communist forces and a decided defeat for the U.S. forces. Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite initial victories by the Communists forces, the Tet Offensive resulted in a major defeat of those forces. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the designer of the Tet Offensive, is considered by some as ranking with Wellington, Grant, Lee and MacArthur as a great commander. Still, militarily, the Tet Offensive was a total defeat of the Communist forces on all fronts. It resulted in the death of some

45,000 NVA troops and the complete, if not total destruction of the Viet Cong elements in South Vietnam. The Organization of the Viet Cong Units in the South never recovered. The Tet Offensive succeeded on only one front and that was the News front and the political arena. This was another example in the Vietnam War of an inaccuracy becoming the perceived truth. However, inaccurately reported, the News Media made the Tet Offensive famous.



Ssg Russ (Shirley) Temple my ATL



Romeo 5



Left picture, Mike Steponic & Russ Temple 2, efforts to contact John have failed.

Right picture, me & John Figaro Romeo

Both on Romeo 5, I was contacted by Mike Steponic only once after returning home



Me and Richie Fairhurst



Romeo 5



*Left picture SSG Dave Bristol,
SPC4 Brad Stutz*

Right picture, me, SSG Lowell Tideline,

*Team Leader R-8 & R-5
120 lbs. I am in contact with both.*

Waiting to go on a VR. I was down to



Sgt. Wayne Mitch

ATL Romeo 8 Lives with his wife Fran in Atlanta GA. Owns his own business.



Russ Temple ATL Romeo 5 lives in Palm Springs Florida retired from Military after a long career. We still keep in touch.



Me with an M-60 machine gun before a mission.



Fairhurst and Temple blowing off steam before a mission with Hand to hand combat. Both on Romeo 5. Efforts to contact Richie Fairhurst have come up empty.



PFC Kohler, Romeo 5 efforts to contact Kohler have come up empty. Have not heard from him since Nam.



Elephant Grass, cut you like a knife.



PFC Ray Allen, sometime Team Member and Sniper on R-5 lives near Houston TX with his wife Sondra. Ray and I still keep in touch.



SGT. Roger (Cap-n Crunch) Crunk, TL of Romeo 7 one of my best friends, wounded in August 1970 and sent home. Three men shot in this ambush one was KIA. Roger Lives in Fruita CO with his wife Janet. We still keep in touch.



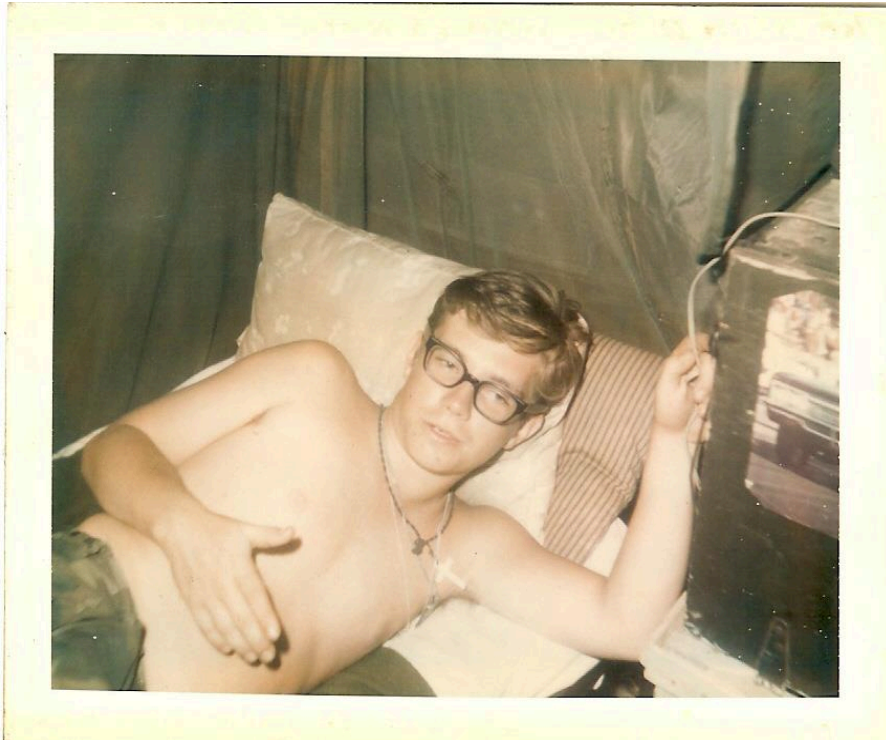
Dave Bristol

and I on LZ X-Ray on my 21st birthday.



1st Platoon

after POW Camp raid.



Harry Phair, almost lost his leg from a pongee stick removed half of his calf. (Died July 17, 2015 of Cancer at age 66)



Rick Williams, first Team Leader and mentor. Efforts to contact Rick have failed.



Wayne Mitch on mission with Romeo 8. Wayne lives outside Atlanta, and we still keep in touch.



Dave Siglow & Wayne Mitch. Dave Siglow died at a young age, he became an alcoholic a sign of PTSD untreated.



*Area in Mang Yang pass
defoliated with Agent Orange, slept on ground for 5 day mission*



*Waiting on flight line for
choppers to set us in on mission.*



Two NVA captured soldiers/POW's



Just days before rotation back to the states. Skinny, 120 lbs. tired and my boots had walk hundreds of miles looking for trouble. (this was my second set of boots, wore the other pair out in less than six months.)



Walking to the choppers for flight into Jungle.

Walking to the choppers for





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, 24 AUGUST 1962
HAS AWARDED

THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL

TO

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

FOR

MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT

IN GROUND OPERATIONS AGAINST HOSTILE FORCES

IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM DURING THE PERIOD OCTOBER 1969 TO OCTOBER 1970

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON

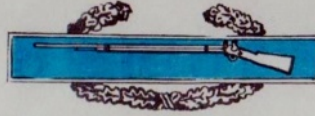
THIS 1ST DAY OF OCTOBER 1970

Wm A. BURKE
Major General, USA



STANLEY R. REARR
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY

INFANTRY.. QUEEN OF BATTLE



THE
COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE

awarded to

PFC ROBERT L. WHITE, ~~XXX-XX-XXXX~~
Co K (Ranger) 75th Inf

*for his participation in armed ground conflict while a member
of "The Famous Fighting Fourth Infantry Division"
in the Central Highlands of the Republic of Vietnam.*

Awarded this 11th day of January, 1970

Larry E. Penley
LARRY E. PENLEY, CPT INF
Commanding