

To: 8th Artillery Association

Dear Sir:

I have inclosed some information for you on the 1st Bn 8th Artillery. I joined the Army in August 1964 at Shreveport Louisiana. I was then sent to Fort Polk Louisiana where I took Basic Training in my home town of Leesville La. where I was raised. I left Fort Polk in Oct 1964 and was sent to Fort Rucker Alabama at Daleville where I took AIT to be a crew chief mechanic on the L-19 Bird Dog and the UH-1 Huey helicopter. I left Ft Rucker in December 1964 after I requested to get out of Aviation because I did not like setting in class 8 hours a day 5 days a week. I was sent to Schofield Barracks Hawaii where I was assigned to A Btry 1st Bn 8th Arty. I arrived at Schofield in Jan 1965. I was immediately assigned to Headquarters Battery Division Artillery Aviation when they found out I had been through 10 weeks at the Army Aviation School. At Divarty I was assigned to a H-23 Raven Unit Light Helicopter. I stayed with Divarty about 3 weeks and finally got reassigned to A Btry 8th around the 1st of Feb 1965. I was assigned A Btry C.O. jeep driver for about 6 weeks until I requested to be assigned to one of the gun sections. I was assigned to the Base Piece from March 1965 until Nove 1965 when I made Corporal (E-4) I was assigned to #2 gun as Gunner. We were put on orders for Vietnam in December 1965. We left Hawaii around the 1st of January 1966 and shipped out for Vietnam on the USNS Vernon County by transport ship. We arrived at Vung Tay around the 15th of Jan 1966. We flew out of there the same day on USAF C-130's to Bien Hoa. We went from there to what I think was a area around the Siagon University where we biv wacked for about 4 days after we picked our guns, and trucks up at the part of Siagon. On the 5th day we convoyed to Cu Chi. When we arrived there there was nothing but a very huge open flat area of land with nothing standing it had all been cleared off apparently before we arrived. The perimeter was being held either by the 1st Infantry Division or the 173rd Airborne Bde. I can't remember which. This was around 1300 hrs Feb 20th. We disconnected our guns and layed them. About an hour after we arrived a Huey Gunship come over low going north when somehow the firing device shorted out on the 2.75" rockets causing several of them to fire right over our heads going down and hitting a tent at Division Headquarters injuring several and killing 2 officers we were told but I cannot verify this. The next day we started building large sand bagged bunkers along our perimeter behind us on the southeast corner of the Cu Chi Base Camp perimeter. We had either 4 or 6 bunkers with 2-4 A Battery manned at night then on down the line going east B Btry and C Btry manned the same

amount behind their guns at night. The second night at Cu Chi the infantry left and we took our own perimeter security. This consisted of 1 man in a fox hole by himself with a M-14 and 100 rounds of ammunition. The foxholes were around 50 meters apart on a line running east and west along the south east perimeter of Cu Chi base camp with about 15 men from A Battery in 15 single foxholes. Some of the foxholes had a 2 man crew on a M-60 which each gun section had. A batteries foxholes continued east along the perimeter until we ran into B Batteries foxholes where they took over until they met up with C batteries foxholes. We continued this each night for about a week until we got the large bunkers built along the perimeter which then was manned by I think 2 or 4 men in each one I can't remember that far back. I was promoted to Sergeant (E-5) in February 1966. I stayed gunner on #2 gun until around May when I was assigned to #6 gun as gunner. Around this time I had a good friend of mine who was a Recon Sergeant Killed in Action. His name was Arwin D. Pennel he was from Nederland Texas. We had served in Hawaii together. He came to us from the 13th Artillery where he was a gunner on a 155 towed unit. At the time he was killed he was working with 1st Bn 27th Inf. During the early months at Cu Chi we took a lot of Sniper Fire from the tree lines on the north east corner of the base camp. Again you have to remember when we arrived there there was nothing. We built the first buildings in our area. The only buildings in A Battery area was the mess hall, sleeping tents with wooden floors, and sand bags half way up the sides all the way around with screen for ventilation all the way around so it would stay cool at night. At night $\frac{1}{2}$ of the gun crew would man the guns from 1800 to 2400 the other half would man the guns from 2400 until 0600 the next morning. The whole gun crew would man the guns during the day light hours. After about 3 weeks at Cu Chi we started going out on numerous operations we spent little time at base camp. A Btry supported the 1st Bn 27th Inf B Btry supported the 2nd Bat 27th and C Btry supported 1st Bn 5th Mech. During our time in the field the only problems we even had was we got mortared twice in the same place by 60mm mortars. Both times we were about 25 miles west of Cu Chi near the Cambodian border. I can't remember the name of the place but I remember a Arvan base camp was right behind us which several of the rounds over shot setting the buildings on fire. This happened in April and May 1966. We had several other times in other locations where we were snipped at with small arms and 50 cal once. I left the 8th in June 1966 on the 30th. My brother got real ill at home and I returned to Shreveport on emergency leave and never returned to the 25th division. I was reassigned to Fort Polk C Co Special Troops where I spent the remainder of my time in service getting out as a Sergeant (E-5) in August 1967. I became a Shreveport Police Officer in Feb 1969 where I am still employed and have attained the rank of Lieutenant with 22 years 7 months service. I will retire probably at Captain with 25 years service in 1994. The information I have sent you the Battery Rosters are from my album on the 25th Division. The rosters are good from February 1966 to March 1967 13 months because the guys I arrived

there with would have rotated out in Mar 67. The other pictures I sent are from my personal Hawiian Album I bought at Schofield in 1965. It is torn up and ragged but I still have it. The pictures in my personal album start out in Hawaii and go through June 1966 in Vietnam. I hope the information I have sent will be of help to you and your association.

Thank You;

Jerry L. Johnson
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Shreveport La.
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Work 1-318-226-6151 after 8:30pm

* If possible I would like to locate the below listed men. They served with me in A 1/8 1965 & 1966:

1stSgt Mack C. Grider from Arkansas
SP4 Gene D. McGuffee from Arkansas
SP4 John S. Mabe from Kentucky or Tennessee

I have a friend who lives in Shreveport who was a 1st Lieutenant F.O. with A 1/8 69-70 who would probably like some information on the 8th Artillery Association. He is now a major in the Reserves.

Ron Chatelain 6168 Masters Dr. Shreveport La.
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⑤ James Hill 311 N. 4th Durant OK 75701 1966-67
Johnson

8th FIELD ARTILLERY
(AUTOMATIC EIGHTH)

Vietnam

Counteroffensive

Counteroffensive, Phase II

Counteroffensive, Phase III

Tet counteroffensive

Counteroffensive, Phase IV

Counteroffensive, Phase V

Counteroffensive, Phase VI

Tet 69/Counteroffensive

Summer-fall 1969

Winter-spring 1970

Sanctuary Counteroffensive

Counteroffensive, Phase VII

(other campaigns to be determined)

DECORATIONS

Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered TAEGU

Presidential Unit Citation (Army), Streamer embroidered SANGNYONG-NI

Presidential Unit Citation (Navy), Streamer embroidered WONJU-HWACHON

Valorous Unit Award, Streamer embroidered CU CHI DISTRICT

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1967-1968

Meritorious Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered VIETNAM 1968-1969

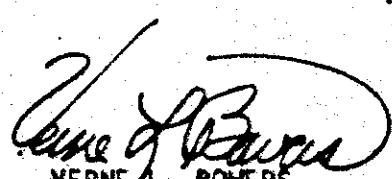
Navy Unit Commendation, Streamer embroidered PANMUNJOM

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered 17 OCTOBER 1944
TO 4 JULY 1945

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered MASAN-CHINJU

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, Streamer embroidered MUNSAN-NI

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:


VERNE L. BOWERS
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General