

2/22/2000

Dear William C. Mescham:

I received a copy of your book "Let Us Forget - The Kingmen, 101st Aviation Battalion, 1968" from a former member of the Aviation Company I commanded in Vietnam in 1967-1968. When I saw the cover and read some of the introduction I thought "Oh wow" someone has taken the time to tell our story so I was very interested in getting into your book.

Let me tell you from the start that I commanded the 188th AHC from December 67 to June 68 then after I turned over command of the Company to Hank Dreher I moved to Camp Eagle and became the XO of the 308th CAB and subsequently XO of the 159th ASHB when both the 17th and 188th were deactivated and became B, C and D Companies of the 101st. I have some direct involvement in most all of the actions you write about and will make some comments regarding how you have documented them.

I was very impressed with your prologue and liked your conclusion about who you were fighting for and how you "would never forget -- want to forget -- could never forget" I think that your sentiment very accurately describes the feelings of many of us after we got back and continued on with our life.

The first few chapters of your book bring back memories of the process of getting into country and

getting run around until someone comes to rescue you from Long Binh. When I got back to VN for my second tour I was assigned to the 269th Bn at Cu Chi and your next to be Commander Don Andrews is an old friend who I was glad to see at the 116th. Don and I were in Ft Hill basic officers course and flight school at the same time, we go back a long way and he is truly a professional.

When we got the order that we were to move North after TET 68 Don and I plus several others who were to form the 308th CAB flew up to Hue/Phu Bai and looked over Camp Eagle. I have a picture of the group at Camp Eagle in the middle of the area that you would move into. Don is on the left side of the group. We moved both AHC's and the 200th in April as you indicate very accurately in your book. Somewhere after we arrive at the 101st the story of our actions starts to get confused.

The operation to establish FSB Verhel consisted of a two Company lift with the Kingmen leading and the Black Widows following. The LZ was so small that we had to go in in flights of five and I was flying the lead ship in my Company lift. The first flight got in and out clean as you say but when the second lift got on short final they got hit. As you say a ship went down but it was right in front of me. I have a picture of me on the ground with the crew running to get into my ship taken by

Bob Spradlin, BW 13, as he approached in the fourth lift. The crew had gotten into a bomb crater right in front of my aircraft and they can be seen getting to my ship. We continued to work in the area the rest of the day and we too were looking for Captain Oleson's ship until dark.

Later in your story there becomes something that is really confusing. You indicate that you are assigned an aircraft 66-16121. I have made a copy of the list of tail numbers assigned to the 188th when the company formed up and transferred to VN and that aircraft was in my company. That ship never left the company as far as I can document and in fact it was lost, still assigned to C Company 101st on 10/24/68 when it was shot down. The IP WO Richard S Riley was giving an in-country check ride and went on an unarmed Mekeo between Phu Bai and Da Nang and was killed along with SP 4 David Sparks during the action. This can be verified in the VHFA directory on pages 190 and 215.

Now with respect to door art that you indicate was on your aircraft. When I took command of the 188th I authorized the painting of the doors with slogans or pictures as long as it was in good taste. This was done in Dau Tieng before we moved north to LZ Sally. I'm sending along several pictures of our aircraft to include a print out from our web page

that shows several of the pictures you claim to be aircraft belonging to the 171st. This is simply not correct. The picture of "Lucky" is clearly marked with the 188th patch, white circle red center, on the tail. We were able to keep the door art until the 188th was deactivated on 1 July 68 when all marking was changed to reflect the 101st marking of aircraft. The guy that did most of our door art was Dick Detron and his picture is in three of the photos with LUCKY and SATISFACTION.

One event you describe and take credit for I challenge completely. The battle for Phuoc Yen was an action that I ran out of my company C & C with LTC Jim Hunt the battalion Commander. We were doing a routine search with a light fire team when they took some fire out of the village. We picked up some of Jim's battalion and inserted them in the neck of the stocking and when they probed into the village all hell broke out. We moved every troop available to surround the village on the other side of the river and then for the next three days we were full in support of the operation. We also put up a flak ship at night because the artillery and AF could not keep illumination over the village all night every night. The one serious break out occurred when the lights went out once in the middle of the night. When we last had a Gathering of Eagles at Fort Campbell a year and a half ago I spent an

evening talking with Ji
about this operation.

Do you think I was
a little bit pissed
over his lies?

I regret that
got so mixed up. In
Black Widows like me it
accomplishments and
credited to someone else,
who had as equally a proud record. I believe
that the unvarnished truth about combat is dramatic
enough without embellishment or outright lies. Enough
credit has been taken by others seeking personal gain or
glory. I was proud of both the 17th and the 188th having
gone through what we went through to move up north
and turn the 101st into an airmobile division. I'm
sorry that you couldn't see fit to give us our credit
due in your book.

We have been developing a unit history for
the last few years and hope to have it published before
the next VNPA reunion. As part of that history
we have made up a picture of the 308th CSB sign
with the insignia of the units we worked with. I'm
sending a copy of this picture to you which might
be something other members of your unit might want
since it does reflect our shared service in VN
in 1967-68.

Sincerely,
Jack Johnson

(over)

evening talking with Jim Hunt and LTJ John Chushman about this operation.

I regret that your history and lives got so mixed up. I'm sure that there are many Black Widows like me that were very proud of our accomplishments and are distressed to see them being credited to someone else, even our sister company, who had as equally a proud record. I believe that the unvarnished truth about combat is dramatic enough without embellishment or outright lies. Enough credit has been taken by others seeking personal gain or glory. I was proud of both the 17th and the 188th having gone through what we went through to move up north and turn the 101st into an airborne division. I'm sorry that you couldn't see fit to give us our credit due in your book.

We have been developing a unit history for the last few years and hope to have it published before the next VNPA reunion. As part of that history we have made up a picture of the 308th CAB sign with the insignia of the units we worked with. I'm sending a copy of this picture to you which might be something other members of your unit might want since it does reflect our shared service in VN in 1967-68.

Sincerely,
Jack Johnson

(over)

my address is:

LTC(R) JACK O. JOHNSON



SAFETY OFF 269TH BN SEP 67-DEC 67

CO 188TH AHC DEC 67-JUN 68

XO 308/159TH CAB/ASHB JUN 68-SEP 68

KINGSMEN for [redacted]

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From: Bill Meacham [redacted] | [Block address](#)

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Subject:

Dick,
First of all let me say that it's good to hear that Doc is out and about.
Hope you enjoyed reading the book. I tried to be as truthfull as I could.
I will be going to a LRRP/Ranger reunion at Fort Campbell in June. A lot of the people that are in the book will be there. If I have strayed to far from the truth you know damn well that they will nail my hide to the wall.
If you need more infortmation on the reunion, let me know.
I lost tract of Dick Washburn aftre he was infused into the Black Widows.
If you have any luck in finding him I would like to know.
Aircraft 66-17121 was lost on 03/09/69 on a mission out of Mai Loc. The crew that was on board were KIA. They were CW2 David Poley, LT Daniel O Neill, SP5 Charles Girard and SP4 Dennis Ormond.
My home address and phone number are as follows.

William C. Meacham
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

Stay in touch.

Bill