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I had gotten a message that I could not read. Just lots of alphabet letters.
Oh well!

About the flying cover when I got shot down that is possible. I don't actually recall it, however. I think I went down seven times, three times I was shot down and four times for mechanical problems. I also was shot up several times but made it home.
OK its war story time;

Three corp around December 67-January 68. I was the scheduling office for first platoon and as such I assigned aircraft crews and missions each evening for the next day. I did not do the EM, just the officers. I actually had this duty for six or seven months, but this specific story was Dec-Jan. We were doing DCS (Direct Combat Support) on that day. As you recall for us slick drivers that meant that we were pretty much single ship. That in itself was an interesting concept. You and three other guys in a \$300,000.00 aircraft sent off somewhere to assist a unit and nobody really knew where you were or what you were doing. You could go to the beach, and pick up floats (remember those glass balls) or to Saigon for some food and a \$3.00 piece of ass and eluding knew. What freedom!
Back to the story. We would get "mission sheets" from operations that gave us our point of contact, the period that we were to work for them, their call sign, frequency and location. An example might be:

AM until release contact Wagon Wheel 75 on 41.30 at the Red Ball Pad.

Now if you recall, the red ball pad (199th Inf) was at the east end of Long Bin and Wagon Wheel 75 was actually one of the commanders call signs during TET, but that's another story. 41.30 of course was the FM radio freq. As you know we sometimes had three radios. FM was tactical-talk to ground units and our operations. UHF talk within the slicks and to big airfields, VHF for the guns.

Back to the story. I received a mission sheet that said contact Cowboy 26 on 42.30 or some such freq. Well, that wasn't enough information. No unit, no location how were we to complete this. I went to ops (operations) that was all they had. The only Cowboy call sign I knew was a helicopter unit in Ben Hoa or maybe hotel 3, the Cowboys were like the 335 or 336 and a sister unit to the Playboys. So, I took the mission myself. I don't remember who the crew was. I asked around our unit and nobody knew anything. So, in the morning we took off looking for Cowboys making calls on the FREQ to no avail. Upon arriving at the Cowboy pad and refueling we quickly found out that the unit had gone south to IV Corp. Wasn't them. It didn't make sense that we would be supporting a helicopter unit anyway. Well, we bumped into a guy that said that he thought part of the 173 was using that call sign, so we took off to check it out, I knew where there pad was. When I landed, still no commo, the enlisted guy on the ground hide behind ammo crates and c ration boxes as it was very dusty. There was this 2nd Lt that just sat there on the ammo box next to the PSP landing spot and we blew the crap out of him. His uniforms were so new that it must have been the first day. Even his web gear was still dark OD (olive drab), no fading what so ever. When I got to flat pitch an EM reappeared and came to my window, yes this was the right spot, but the wrong freq. He didn't know what FREQ the company I was supporting was using and could not show me on the map where they were. Was the battle lost? We found Cowboy, but where was I to take this stuff. As luck would have it my copilot had worked for another element of the 173rd two days earlier and felt that if we could find them and land then they could direct us to unit we were to resupply and give us the freq. It was a plan. Then the EM told us we were taking this squeaky clean, well he had been

clean

2nd Lt out to the unit we were hunting. I had the crew chief ask him if he had flown before and check to make sure his seat belt was fastened. As this was taking place many thoughts went through my mind. Mostly about what this brand new Lt with his brand new gear and his M-16 and what he was about to face. He didn't look prepared, somehow. Like us he was just a kid, but hadn't gotten crusty as many of us had.

We took off in search of the sister unit that my copilot had supported earlier in the week, I was flying the copilot was navigation. We were at 1500

feet straight and level out in the middle of nowhere. Then I heard it, it was

close and loud, directly over my right shoulder as I sat in the left seat. It

was the sound of an M-16 on full automatic. A noise I had heard many times

before, but not normally under these circumstances. The next few seconds had

many things happen. About the time I asked my crew chief what happened, checked my gauges and evaluated the feel of my airplane, my chief explained

the Lt had been playing with his weapon and that it had accidentally discharged through the room, nobody was hurt. Knowing all the controls that

were above the roof I headed for the ground. As luck would have it I was able

to reach operations on the radio and they would dispatch someone to pick us

up and a Chinook to bring the airplane home.

I found a suitable landing site and all the way down my crew chief kept saying "don't kill him, sir, please don't kill him". I asked the CE to explain that we always secured the aircraft with ground troops. That there

was a bird coming for the crew, but he was the ground troops that would have

to stay and protect the airplane until the CH-47 arrived. The Lt agreed, my

chief told me. I said the words, but I never got the chance to find out if we

would really leave him. The CH-47 showed up right after our bird. But I would

not let the Lt fly with us back to Dau Tieng, he had to go with the hook. The

damage was there the aircraft was grounded because of where some of the rounds had hit. Isn't that something, shot down by friendly fire.

Dick, I will be in Charleston, we are not talking to you in with another

story or two this weekend.

Take care and have a great week.

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