

As the armament officer for the Spiders, I used to spend most of my days off helping the crew chiefs and door gunners boresight and test fly their weapons systems on their assigned aircraft.

They'd come and get me when their aircraft were just coming out of maintenance or had just completed some work on the gun system and it ~~it~~ need/to be flown and test fired for accuracy.

Yes, in those days accuracy for the rockets were just how close they were to the grease pencil "X" on the right pilots position but more importantly was-it gave the enlisted crew a chance to fly and fire the mini-guns or 40 mm from the left pilots position and check for accuracy through the flex gunsight. (In those days, there was no rule

about having two qualified pilots (officers) in the pilot seats...I just flew by myself with the door gunner and crewchief.)

DICK & GREY and I
We usually went out to the beach (north of Hue) or to a free fire zone and pick out a target and fire. Then we would go back readjust the pods or re-boresight and rearm and go back out and retest.

Well one bright sunny afternoon, we had just finished refueling and rearming a ship and were sitting around drinking some hot beer just outside the armament tent and were watching the grunts across the dirt

road in the next rice paddy start to line up for a (rare for them) hot lunch being served from a field mess tent.

At the time, all of our slicks and gunships were out on missions and since it was my day off, I was basking in the hot Vietnam sun wearing

my usual boxer shorts and flip flops and sucking on some adult beverage that would take the edge on being miserable in the 'Nam.

While I was sitting next to the tent with the door gunner and crewchief practing our gook squat and looking at the poor grunts in full combat gear waiting in line that was at 10-25 feet separation between each grunt.....we received a direct mortar attack!!!! In broad daylight at 12 o clock in the freaken afternoon at our home base LZ Sally!!!!

At first I couldn't believe it, I was looking at bits and pieces of US Army infantryman flying through the air where they had been waiting for a taste of a hot meal seconds before.

The three of us helicopter types were as flat as we could get on the rice paddy floor but after the first barrage of incoming fire, we made a beeline for the only flyable ship in the reventments.

While I was running to the aircraft, it became obvious that this had never happened before but it was probably the best time to stage a mortar attack. Our helmets and Chicken plates were still in the ship, the crew was still dressed in their jungle suits, but in my haste, I was still in BOXER SHORTS and flip flops.

I knew, as I heard from the next wave of incoming rounds, that the sooner I cranked and got up the better the chances were that the bold daylight attack would stop.

OK, into the right seat, hitting the start button just after the blades were untied and putting my helmet on while rolling the throttle to full RPM. If "CHUCK" is looking at Sally and sees us cranking-WE will be the next target.

As I clear the revement I call the grunts who are now firing back to the west where the rounds have come from. I doglegged north to clear their gun target line and start heading west on an azimuth they think the rounds are still coming from. They have an azimuth but the distance puts the source of the attack just into the hills west of LZ

Sally.

I stayed low level and flew as fast as the thing would go and as I breached over the first hill line the left side doorgunner opens fire.

I looked over my shoulder and banked left to see what he was shooting

at and there they were....about 4 mortar tubes with troops in uniforms

looking up at us in utter disbelief (their eyes were wide eyed to the

point of being round.) The door gunners tracers were hitting right into their position and our presence was such a shock they hadn't started to shoot back-yet.

I continued a turn but since I had no backup aircraft and I was out

there alone, I threw the aircraft into a dive to get some cover behind

some other hills beacuse now they were starting to shoot back.

I called the grunts and told them to adjust the fire to the north about a mile and to tell me when the first rounds were inbound to the

VC. This gave me a little time to get setup for a gun-run with the minis and rockets. Seconds later I got the call "shot out" from the base camp. I swang into a position to observe and start a gun run.

I

had one of the crew jump into the right pilots seat and arm the minigun

system. I saw the US rounds hit the top of the hill but did not get

into the valley ^h were the VC position was. I told them to hold their

fire for a few and we did a solo diving gun run on our target.

I had the crewchief set up to shoot one gun at a time and while he was

firing away I got us into a good rocket position. I had him stop and I

fired rockets at the target and as I broke he and the other crewmember

hit the area with minis and doorgun.

We were HOT SHIT!!!!!! We were killing the shit out of Charlie and

loving every minute of it. It was a doorgunner/crewchief/pilots wet

dream come true. When we started to run low on ammo, we had the artillery start up again and after awhile it was obvious it was all

over. we made an estimated body count looking at what we could see

from the air. Then it was time to head back for fuel and ^{to} rearm.

When we landed at the refuel/rearm pad I saw Major Jack O Johnson walking over towards us. I was waiting for a pat on the back but when

the Maj saw me getting out of the helicopter with nothing on but boxer

shorts, flip flops, helmet and chicken plate he was pissed. I was orally reprimanded on the spot. I was told to see my platoon leader

for further details. Well I did and I found out later that the Maj
was

not aware of what we had just done. He thought I was out screwing
around and flying out of uniform-smile.

This event was one of the most memorable events of my life and I
actually spoke to the Major some 30 years later. He does not
remember

the event but apologized for it after I told him about it-smile.
Poor

guy had so many other things going on in his life at the time this
little event was "no big thing". At least I didn't get a article

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but I did get counseled-grin!

Q

CW5
By JOE WALKER (Retired)