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Dick,

Thanks for everything. Just let me know what else you need -- I have a few other tapes, and am in the process of transferring to CDs. Your interest has caused me to go back, listen, and understand a lot about my father (and my family).

Also, I wanted to give you my permanent address (mom and stepfather's), in case you need to contact me later (I am working on a PCS to Korea right now, will probably leave Kansas in the next few months).

Robert Daniel Wallace
c/o Gabe and Nancy Faimon
Box 218

Thanks.

-----Original Message-----

From: DICK DETRA [mailto:[\[REDACTED\]](#)]
Sent: Friday, August 31, 2001 9:24 PM
To: Wallace, Robert MAJ G2
Subject: The package

Robert,
I have received your two packages. I need some time to absorb the info and will get back to you...I am overwhelmed at the fact that you are probably one of very few who have an audio tape from their fathers...he was one brave man! I was on the bunker line that night and was scared shitless...waiting for a ground attack that never came...they wanted our hueys and they did that. When the unit first arrived at Dau Tieng, Hanoi Hannah came up on our company frequency and said that "We would be

CLARKSVILLE, TN 37043

15 April 1997

Dear Dick,

I appreciate your calls and the information you sent me and to give me a chance to tell my side of the story. Of course you are asking an almost 66 year old guy to remember events that happened almost 30 years ago. Most of the important events have stuck in my mind and should not be to hard to bring them out of hiding somewhere in this old brain of mine.

I have some pictures being made from slides that I will get back next week and will send them on to you. It will show in pictures some of the things I will put on paper today.

When I arrived at Dau Tien, the first thing I saw was a tent city among the rubber trees. Maj Jim Rungee had gone with the advanced party and had all the tents pitched when we got there. The mess hall was a concrete pad with nothing on it. It was during the monsoon rains so there was a lot of mud. I can agree that moral was pretty low the first few days so that is what I attacked right off the bat. I had a civil engineer, Cpt Jenkins, and we discussed ways that we could start projects to get the 300+ folks busy and their minds off of home, mud, etc. We found out that we could get lumber at Tay Nian, but we needed trucks to go in a daily convoy to Tay Nian. We got loan of some trucks from the Infantry unit there and started the daily runs to get lumber. Cpt Jenkins went to the Arty outfit at Dau Tien and got the metal casing that 105 rounds were shipped in. By putting these in the ground, as a foundation, putting 6x6 lumber on them and nailing a flooring on the 6x6, we got the tents out of the mud. I then talked with the Engineer Commander about out messhall. I was told that the materials were on hand to build out messhall, but he didn't have the manpower to do. There were a few projects ahead of us. I finally talked him into sending his building expert by our unit in the morning, lay out the work to be done, again Cpt Jenkins, come by at noon to check and lay out the afternoon schedule and come by at the end of the days to again check to be sure we were doing it right. We got us our mess hall by this method.

Our next project, well not next, as it was going on as the other stuff was moving, was showers for the troops. When we arrived at Dau Tien, there was a big water tank laying out near the Swimming Pool there, and talking with Maj Rungee, it had been there in the same spot since then advanced party got there. One of the NCO, took a detail, truck and proceeded to "borrow" the tank. If you remember the Orderly Room, right across the street was a water hydrant from the French days of living there, and the water was not good for drinking, but was great for showers. By late that afternoon, the tank had been painted about seven times, mounted in the air, filled with water, and showers operating for the troops. Of course, I had a 2nd Lt come to say that I stole his water tank, and I assured him that the 188th would never do a thing like that.

When we first arrived in country, the 16th Avn Co, a sister company with the 269th Bn, loaned us a UH-1 that we could use until our aircraft got there. A couple of the Gun Platoon pilots along with Cpt Frank Kerbl, the Gun Platoon Leader flew down to Bien Wau Air Base and dropped into the area where the jets dropped their aux fuel tanks, loaded one in the UH-1 and headed back to Dau Tien. That was the shower located between the officer's tents. All in all, by the time the equipment arrived at Dau Tien, moral was running very high.

Another side line....when we first arrived at Dau Tien, I dispatched WO Liston, out supply warrant(non pilot) to Saigon to see what he could get for the unit. It wasn't long before he would show up with a truck full of goodies. jungle boots and fatigues for all the troops. That was also a moral booster as all everyone has was the regular old fatigues.

After the equipment arrived, we really settled down to business and getting the unit ready as fast as possible to take our share of the missions. We were really coming into shape when the attack hit us. I had already been going to the nightly briefing with the commander of the 3rd Brigade of the 25th Division. He had met me right after we arrived and invited me to attend his nightly intel briefing. I would then brief the unit on the things I got from these briefings. The week before the mortar attack, BG _____ ?, the 1st Avn Brigade Commander paid us a visit and I briefed him on the possibility of an attack on Dau Tien. His comments were that we were in good shape and that he didn't think "charlie" would attack us...; the 12th Group Commander, COL Socki(?) also

paid us a visit and was told the same thing. He too said we were in good shape and should not worry about an attack. Finally, TLC Merman, 269th Commander, was there (he seem to always appear right after the 12th GP CO did). Merman was told the same story and his comments were the same as all the others. The 24th started off as a real good day. We had gone to Bung At to support the "Assisi" during the morning and to Tan An area to work with the 9th Division. It was a real good day of work for the unit and we headed back to home base. As we got close to Dau Tien, a very heavy rain shower hit us . I was in contact with our Flight Ops and was told that the visibility was down, but the ceiling was not too bad. I had the flight close in on me and led them down to the runway. The weather was such that it was not safe to hover the flight to the fuel pits so maintenance told me through Flt Ops to pull off to the side of the runway and shut down. Maintenance would refuel the birds by truck and disperse them (the revetments were still under construction by the local civilians). I instructed the Maintenance Officer to get the birds refueled and to call the XO and some of the pilots would come and disperse the aircraft. Well the rest is history, the mortar rounds came in and the helicopters were not dispersed. The Maintenance Officer decided to pull all the maintenance on the birds before moving them. Wrong move, especially for me. I had all sorts of visitors the next day. From the C/S of MACV to of course LTC Merryman (I guess you can tell that Merryman is not one of my most popular person).

I was finally told by LTC Merryman that I was being transferred to the Bn staff at Cu Chi and that Maj McWhoter would replace me as the CO. Now I think is where the moral was low. When the unit heard I was being replaced, there was almost mutiny. Before the ..quote..Change of Command, (McWorther and I actually passed the company guidon), and before Merryman and McWorther got there, I had a formation to explain to the unit why I was leaving and that I expected them to support the new CO. The unit was as well trained as they could possibly be and would make a name for themselves as the best lift company in Viet Nam and that I would expect nothing less from them.

Dick, I have been putting down these thoughts as they came to me and I hope you could follow them. There are a lot more of these little stories of our first few weeks in country. The compressor for the messhall reefer the Saigon dock with the equipment; generators for lighting the tents and unit area, Cpt Graham and his night of celebration; and others that I am sure will come to mind as I think back.

When I get the pictures next week, I will write notes about each one, so until next time.

The Original Black Widow 6,

Bob Wofford