

D. M. (Mike) Malone

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Dear Dan...

We appreciate the letter you wrote. I'm out of the hospital now and just about to begin a cardiac rehabilitation program, so I should be shaped in another few months. I was in and out of that damned hospital for six months and still feel like I'm in there sometimes.

I hear from 'ole E/20 LRPs now and then, but your letter was the first in a long time. There's fewer of us and some have already passed away. Remember Big Frank Moore, your First Sergeant? He had a big stroke a while back and we nearly lost him. Now, he's almost 100% recovered. We got him from down in the 173rd, I think. He had punched out two guys who went to sleep on his platoon's perimeter and was about to get a Congressional investigation. E/20 had just been approved about that time, and had no people yet, except me. I heard about Frank, then went to the right general, and we got him as FSG. He was just what that outfit needed. Big, tough, honest, and 100% soldier. Remember when a couple of you guys bought that baboon down in the village and chained him outside the FSG's orderly room? With the sign there in the grass lettered "Frank"?

You never knew it, but the officers took Frank down to the 4th Div Officers Club, sat him up on a table and got him drunk. He loved beer. The laigs didn't like that a bit, and we were lucky to get out of there. I guess the only thing that saved us at Pleiku was our reputation and the fact that we were airborne. It was a splendid bunch of troops we had there, Dan.

In the beginning, the 101st was supposed to round up all the troops and turn over a whole, hand-picked, TO&E LRP company to me. When I went to Phan Rang, or wherever it was, there was not a single trooper for me. We had a big argument and got the generals involved, and finally got you guys selected and organized, and then we moved up to Pleiku with the 4th Infantry Division. The hard training I gave you guys there at Pleiku was because of all the time we had lost. It was also to make you guys "special" troops, there at Pleiku in the middle of all those laigs. Our mission statement read that we were supposed to be able to enter the enemy area by land, water, and air. That's how come the parachute training and the night jump a few of us made down there below Pleiku. If there had been a river nearby, we would have somehow done something in rubber assault rafts. We had plans to infiltrate teams out of the back ends of APCs moving through an area, but never got the time to try that out.

There was another big argument with the 101st when we got our first real mission, looking for the VC's major headquarters. That was our first major contact, when Greene was killed by the Chinese claymore. We should have never been there with damn near a whole platoon. I almost got relieved in a big fuss with the 101st about using us LRPs in the wrong way. We were designed, equipped, and trained to work in small recon teams, not platoon-sized patrols doing raids. I was gone about that time, pulled back to I Corps headquarters as soon as the new E/20 commander was on his way to the 101st to take over 'ole E/20. I never even got a chance to brief him. Lot of things went on that you guys never knew about. After I left E/20, I went back to the 4th Div at Pleiku. The 4th was in the middle of the Battle of Dak To at the time. The Bn Cdr of the 3/8th was killed was killed, so I went up there, took command of the battalion, and stayed with it for the rest of my VN tour. It was a good job, but just not the same as working LRPs. You guys, after we got you picked out and trained, and culled out a few guys, were the finest troops I ever worked with. Got to go, Dan. Stay straight.

Mike ( "RANGER" )  
Mike Malone