

First Infantry Division

28 February 1969

Bryan K. Grigsby

My story from this operation is more about a photograph, a ballpoint pen, and a small wallet sized calendar. On February 28<sup>th</sup> 1969 the Viet Cong had done the almost unthinkable...made a daylight attack against the sprawling American combat base at Long Binh. Our team OIC, Capt. Dick Richards, to see what there was to photograph, dispatched Sp6 Lee Swain and me. We were given a lift on a LOH (Light Observation Helicopter) out into the field.

By the time Lee and I made contact with B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> BN, 18<sup>th</sup> Inf., 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, our host unit in the field, all fighting had ceased. As we walked up to where the second platoon had settled into a blocking position against further possible enemy activity, I noticed a radio operator who was slumped against a tree. He looked exhausted and I decided to take a picture. I was carrying two cameras that day. My 35mm Pentax Spotmatic and my Army issue Hassleblad. I shot the picture with my personal camera and as a result this image is a part of my portfolio. It is one of maybe a dozen pictures I shot during my time in Vietnam that I still consider worth keeping.

We shook hands with members of the platoon I couldn't help but notice that Lee and I out-ranked everyone who was there. Nearby several men were engaged in burning bits and pieces of what looked like a uniform. I soon learned that it had belonged to an enemy soldier who had been killed during the recent firefight. Some of the man's belongings were being divided up amongst the men as souvenirs. I don't know why but I was offered two items that are part of the enclosed selection of materials. A Bic ballpoint pen and a small wallet-sized calendar for the year 1968. The pen also included a delicately woven string cord with a safety pin on the end. The man had apparently used the string to secure the pen to his uniform. I was told that the presence of the ballpoint pen indicated that the man had been an officer. Years ago I unfortunately removed most of the string and the safety pin.

We weren't there for long. Within an hour or so they were ordered to move out and catch a helicopter ride back to their base camp, which was located inside the perimeter of a nearby water processing plant. As some members of the platoon stood waiting for their ride back to base I made a picture of them standing next to a building that was pock marked with bullet holes. It reminded me of a picture from World War Two.

Also included in this file are  
the Army captions and contact sheets  
from that assignment. Also military  
critique of those pictures

Calendar + bic pen taken  
off the body of Viet Cong  
Officer killed on 28 Feb. 1969  
outside Long Binh Combat Base  
by members of Co. "B", 2<sup>nd</sup> BN  
18<sup>th</sup> Inf., 1<sup>st</sup> Inf. Div.

The string attached to the pen  
was originally about 4 inches long  
and was tied to a safety pin.  
While communist soldiers (Viet Cong) did  
not wear any insignia of rank,  
officers carried pens

Over →

The contact sheet shows soldiers  
burning materials that belonged  
to this same individual.

Bryan Hines



# LỊCH 1968

|          | Tháng 1       | Tháng 2       | Tháng 3       |
|----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Chủ nhật | 7 14 21 28    | 4 11 18 25    | 3 10 17 24 31 |
| Thứ hai  | 1 8 15 22 29  | 5 12 19 26    | 4 11 18 25    |
| Thứ ba   | 2 9 16 23 30  | 6 13 20 27    | 5 12 19 26    |
| Thứ tư   | 3 10 17 24 31 | 7 14 21 28    | 6 13 20 27    |
| Thứ năm  | 4 11 18 25    | 1 8 15 22 29  | 7 14 21 28    |
| Thứ sáu  | 5 12 19 26    | 2 9 16 23     | 1 8 15 22 29  |
| Thứ bảy  | 6 13 20 27    | 3 10 17 24    | 2 9 16 23 30  |
|          | Tháng 4       | Tháng 5       | Tháng 6       |
| Chủ nhật | 7 14 21 28    | 5 12 19 26    | 2 9 16 23 30  |
| Thứ hai  | 1 8 15 22 29  | 6 13 20 27    | 3 10 17 24    |
| Thứ ba   | 2 9 16 23 30  | 7 14 21 28    | 4 11 18 25    |
| Thứ tư   | 3 10 17 24    | 1 8 15 22 29  | 5 12 19 26    |
| Thứ năm  | 4 11 18 25    | 2 9 16 23 30  | 6 13 20 27    |
| Thứ sáu  | 5 12 19 26    | 3 10 17 24 31 | 7 14 21 28    |
| Thứ bảy  | 6 13 20 27    | 4 11 18 25    | 1 8 15 22 29  |
|          | Tháng 7       | Tháng 8       | Tháng 9       |
| Chủ nhật | 7 14 21 28    | 4 11 18 25    | 1 8 15 22 29  |
| Thứ hai  | 1 8 15 22 29  | 5 12 19 26    | 2 9 16 23 30  |
| Thứ ba   | 2 9 16 23 30  | 6 13 20 27    | 3 10 17 24    |
| Thứ tư   | 3 10 17 24 31 | 7 14 21 28    | 4 11 18 25    |
| Thứ năm  | 4 11 18 25    | 1 8 15 22 29  | 5 12 19 26    |
| Thứ sáu  | 5 12 19 26    | 2 9 16 23 30  | 6 13 20 27    |
| Thứ bảy  | 6 13 20 27    | 3 10 17 24 31 | 7 14 21 28    |
|          | Tháng 10      | Tháng 11      | Tháng 12      |
| Chủ nhật | 6 13 20 27    | 3 10 17 24    | 1 8 15 22 29  |
| Thứ hai  | 7 14 21 28    | 4 11 18 25    | 2 9 16 23 30  |
| Thứ ba   | 1 8 15 22 29  | 5 12 19 26    | 3 10 17 24 31 |
| Thứ tư   | 2 9 16 23 30  | 6 13 20 27    | 4 11 18 25    |
| Thứ năm  | 3 10 17 24 31 | 7 14 21 28    | 5 12 19 26    |
| Thứ sáu  | 4 11 18 25    | 1 8 15 22 29  | 6 13 20 27    |
| Thứ bảy  | 5 12 19 26    | 2 9 16 23 30  | 7 14 21 28    |

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC DETACHMENT, PACIFIC  
APO San Francisco 96558

CRITIQUE - STILL

DCS 200-24C-69VN

SUBJECT CBT OPR 1st INF DIV

LOCATION RVN

PHOTOGRAPHER CRISBEY

DATE SHOT 28 FEB 69

DATE SCREENED 16 MAR 69

1. BASIC CAMERA TECHNIQUE:

a. Story Coverage GOOD COVERAGE OF LIMITED ACTION. CONTINUE TO EXPAND ON SUBJECT MATTER AND ACTIVITY AVAILABLE. (SEE REMARKS BELOW.)

b. Choice of Angles GOOD

c. Exposure GOOD

d. Focus CAREFULLY CHECK UP, 8 AND 11 OF ROLL ONE, THEY ARE SLIGHTLY BACK FOCUSED.

e. Slat OK OK

f. Lighting N/A

g. Composition GOOD

2. CAPTIONS: GOOD

3. GENERAL REMARKS: COVERAGE ENROUTE TO THE AG (IF POSSIBLE) WOULD HAVE PROVIDED A MORE COMPLETE STORY (EXAMPLE: BOARDING THE HELICOPTERS, ENROUTE, SERIAL LS OF AG, GETTING OFF HELICOPTERS, ETC).

*I wasn't possible, don't reveal info  
OK*

EXCELLENT GOOD XX FAIR POOR UNSATISFACTORY

SCREENED BY

JOHN G. GILLIGAN  
2LT SGC G

PHOTOGRAPHER: SP5 BRYAN K. GRIGSBY  
SUBJECT: COMBAT OPERATION OF THE 1st INF DIV  
DATE: 28 FEBRUARY 1969  
FILM: THREE ROLLS EKTACOLOR "S" 120(TOTAL EXP 25)  
CAMERA: ROLLEI SN: 2817281  
DCS: 200-24C-69-VN

PAGE ONE OF THREE

NOTE: NOT FOR PUBLIC RELEASE UNLESS CLEARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

COVERAGE OBJECTIVE

TO DOCUMENT A COMBAT MISSION WHILE WORKING WITH UNCONTROLLED ACTION AS THE SUBJECT. IN THIS PARTICULAR ASSIGNMENT I WAS CONFRONTED WITH A GREAT DEAL OF INACTIVITY AS WELL AS ACTION, AND SO WAS, IN SOME CASES, FORCED TO POSE MY SUBJECTS AND CONCENTRATE ON THE DULLNESS AND WAITING THAT CAN OCCURE EVEN IN A COMBAT SITUATION.

SUMMARY

ON 28 FEBRUARY 1969, "B" CO., 1st BN, 18th INF., 1st INF. DIV., WHILE CONDUCTING A SWEEP OF THEIR AREA OF OPERATION (AO), LOCATED APPROX 12 KILOMETERS EAST OF THE CITY OF SAIGON, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, ENCOUNTERED A ESTIMATED, WELL ENTRENCHED FORCE, FORCE OF 20 VIET CONG. ( THIS ESTIMATE WAS LATER RAISED TO 30). DURING THE SPURATIC FIGHTING THAT ENSUED DURING THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF THAT DAY, "C" CO., 1st BN., 18th INF., 1st INF. DIV., JOINED IN THE FIGHT. LATER IN THE MORNING "B" CO., 2nd BN., 18th INF., [REDACTED] 1st INF. DIV., WAS SET UP AS A BLOCKING FORCE TO TRY AND PREVENT THE ENEMY FROM GETTING AWAY.

BY EARLY AFTERNOON ALL CONTACT HAD CEASED ALTHOUGH FRIENDLY UNITS CONTINUED TO SWEEP THE AREA AND RECON BY FIRE.

BY LATE AFTERNOON ALL FRIENDLY UNITS WERE AIR-LIFTED, BY HUEY HELICOPTER, BACK TO THEIR BASE CAMP, AS THE AREA WAS CONSIDERED SECURE.

BY LATE AFTERNOON, ENEMY LOSSES WERE COUNTED AT 6 KIA, 6 INDIVIDUAL ENEMY WEAPONS APPTURED, ALONG WITH SEVERAL LOADED AND ARMED RPG ROUNDS (ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADE), PLUS SEVERAL RPG ROUNDS IN VARIOUS NON-OPERATIVE STAGES OF CONDITION. ALSO CAPTURED WERE PAPERS AND MAPS TAKEN OFF THE BODIES OF ENEMY DEAD.

MASTER CAPTION:

ON 28 FEBRUARY 1969, "B" CO., 2nd BN., 18th INF., 1st INF. DIV., TOOK PART IN A SWEEP OF THEIR UNITS AREA OF OPERATION(AO), LOCATED APPROX 12 KILOMETERS EAST OF THE CITY OF SAIGON, RVN. ACTING AS A "BLOCKING FORCE", THE COMPANY ATTEMPTED TO PREVENT THE ENEMY FORCES ENCOUNTERED EARLIER IN THE DAY FROM GETTING AWAY. DURING THE OPERATION CAPTURED ENEMY PERSONNEL EFFECTS, INCLUDING MAPS AND PAPERS WERE EXAMINED AND NON-ESSENTIAL INTELLIGENCE ITEMS WERE DESTROYED. WHEN THE AREA WAS CONSIDERED SECURE "B" COMPANY WAS AIR-LIFTED, VIA HUEY HELICOPTER, FROM THE AO AND FLOWN BACK TO THEIR BASE CAMP FOR "HOT CHOW".

PHOTOGRAPHER: SP5 BRYAN K. GRIGSBY  
SUBJECT: COMBAT OPERATION OF THE 1st INF DIV PAGE TWO OF THREE  
DATE: 28 FEBRUARY 1969  
FILM: THREE ROLLS EKTACOLOR "S" 120(TOTAL EXP 25)  
CAMERA: ROLLEI SN: 2817281  
AGS: 200-24C-69-VN

NOTE: NOT FOR PUBLIC RELEASE UNLESS CLEARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

ROLL ONE

1. SLATE.
2. MEMBERS OF THE 2nd PLT MOVE OUT ALONG A PATH RUNNING INSIDE A ABANDONED COCOANUT GROVE.
- 3-4. MEMBERS OF THE 2nd PLT MAKE THEMSELVES COMFORTABLE ALONG THEIR DEFENSIVE POSITION.
- 5-7. SP4 RALPH LANDWERI(BUFFALO,N.Y.), ACTING PLT SGT, 2nd PLT, INSPECTS THE CONTENTS OF A CAPTURED ENEMY RUCK SACK.
8. A MEMBER OF THE 2nd PLT SETTLES DOWN BEHIND HIS M-60 MACHINE GUN, WATCHING FOR ANY POSSIBLE MOVEMENT IN THE SWAMPY AREA IN FRONT OF HIM.
9. MEMBERS OF THE 2nd PLT SETTLE DOWN BEHIND THEIR DEFENSE POSITIONS ALONG THE EDGE OF A SWAMPY AREA.
  
~~10. PFC VERNON WILLIAMS(CHICAGO,ILL.), RIFLEMAN, 2nd PLT, TAKES A MUCH NEEDED NAP.~~  
~~11-12. A SMALL FIRE, MADE UP OF NON-ESSENTIAL ENEMY MATERIAL RECENTLY CAPTURED, BURNS BRIGHTLY AS MEMBERS OF THE 2nd PLT LOOK ON.~~

MASTER CAPTION: SAME AS ROLL ONE

ROLL TWO

1. SLATE.
- 2-5. MEMBERS OF THE 2nd PLT MOVE OUT AFTER RECEIVING ORDERS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE AREA
6. MEMBERS OF "B" COMPANY WAIT BESIDE A DESERTED FARM HOUSE TO BE AIR-LIFTED FROM THE AREA.

PHOTOGRAPHER: SP5 BRYAN K. GRIGSBY PAGE THREE OF THREE  
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ROLL TWO CONT.

7-12. MEMBERS OF "B" COMPANY MOVE OUT AND BOARD WAITING HUEY HELICOPTERS.

MASTER CAPTION: SAME AS ROLL ONE.

ROLL THREE

1. SLATE.

2-5. MEMBERS OF "B" COMPANY ENJOY HOT CHOW AFTER BEING IN THE FIELD.

6-12. NOT EXPOSED.