



**HISTORICAL OCCURRENCES  
OF  
THE LRRP/RANGERS  
OF THE FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION  
DURING THE VIET NAM WAR**

First hand accounts of events in Vietnam  
By the men who lived it  
As recalled 35-40 years later

## OUR FALLEN BROTHERS

LRRP/RANGER	DATE DIED	AGE	HOME TOWN	THE WALL PANEL LINE	CAUSE OF DEATH
<b>1967</b>					
Sp 4 David Ives	23 Apr 67	20	Council Bluffs, IA	18E 75	Ground contact, hostile fire
Cpt, David Tucker	1 Oct 67	28	Elmhurst, NY	27E 38	Ground fire into chopper
Sgt David Dickinson	6 Dec 67	19	Denver, CO	31E 45	Jeep ran over a land mine
1 <sup>st</sup> Sgt Lewis McDermott	6 Dec 67	35	Fulton, MO	31E 50	
Sp 4 William Chritchfield	27 Dec 67	20	Maple Shade, NJ	32E 71	Ground contact, hostile fire
<b>1968</b>					
PFC Felix Leon	17 Mar 68	19	Rio Pedras, PR	45E 12	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sp 4 Richard Turbitt, Jr.	20 Apr 68	20	Waukegan, IL	51E 14	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sgt William Lambert	20 Apr 68	20	Pensacola, FL	51E 8	defensive position, Signal Hill, A Shau Valley
PFC Robert Noto	20 Apr 68	20	St. Louis, MO	51E 11	
Sp 4 Gerald McConnel, Jr.	8 May 68	21	Moses Lake, WA	57E 7	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sgt Robert Whitten	8 May 68	21	Ft. Myers, FL	57E 12	Booby trap they were setting accidentally exploded
Sp 4 Donald Miller	31 May 68	20	Pomptin Lakes, NJ	64E 17	
Sgt Juan Elias	29 May 68	22	Tucson, AZ	63W 5	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sp 4 Thomas Sprinkle	7 Jul 68	21	Mechanicsburg, PA	53W 40	
Sp 4 Paul Dartt	24 Oct 68	22	Brattleboro, VT	40W 27	Died serving in other Cav unit
<b>1969</b>					
Sgt Tony Griffith	5 Feb 69	20	Butler, TN	33W 63	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sp 4 Francis Kulbatski	15 Feb 69	20	Jersey City, NJ	33W 38	Died serving in other Cav unit
Lt. William Bell	27 Mar 69	25	Essex Falls, NJ	28W 57	Chopper shot down
Sgt. Loel Largent	10 Apr 69	19	Rusk, TX	27W 52	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sgt Dwight Durham	10 Apr 69	19	Tulsa, OK	27W 48	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sp 4 Daniel Arnold	13 May 69	21	Frostproof, FL	25W 93	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sp 4 Daniel Sheehan	17 Jun 69	19	Aurora, CO	20W 12	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sp 4 Lon Holupka	10 Jul 69	20	Detroit, MI	21W 93	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sgt Stanley Lento	24 Jul 69	20	Blaine, ME	20W 40	Accidental explosion of munitions in base camp
Sgt Paul Salminen	24 Jul 69	21	Ferndale, MI	20W 41	
Sp4 Archie McDaniels	24 Jul 69	19	Kirkland, WA	20W 41	Non-hostile chopper crash
Sp 4 John Williams	11 Aug 69	21	Shawnee, KS	19W 6	
Sgt Kenneth Burch	11 Aug 69	18	Cataula, GA	20W 128	Died serving in other Cav unit
Sp 4 Dennis McGhee	28 Sep 69	20	Gratis, OH	17W 17	
Sp 4 Julius Saporozec	17 Nov 69	21	Hayward, CA	16W 91	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sp 4 David Torres	17 Nov 69	23	Los Angeles, CA	16W 91	Ground contact, hostile fire
<b>1970</b>					
SSG Jesse Creekmore	2 Mar 70	24	Alamo, TN	14W 97	Died serving in other Cav unit
PFC William Francis	9 Mar 70	23	Southfield, MI	13W 100	Non-hostile chopper crash
Sgt Arvell Holston	20 Mar 70	21	Inkster, MI	12W 25	Died serving in other Cav unit
Sp 4 Carl Laker	17 Jun 70	20	Clearwater, FL	09W 60	Team mission in Cambodia invasion, bodies not recovered
SSG Devertton Cochrane	17 Jun 70	29	Brooklane, MA	09W 69	
Spr Carl McCarthy	20 Sep 70	20	Rochester, NY	07W 78	Chopper crash during an insertion
PFC Michael Banta	2 Oct 70	20	Cordova, AK	07W 105	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sgt Omer Carson	7 Dec 70	18	Campton, KY	06W 112	Ground contact, hostile fire
<b>1971</b>					
SSG Timothy Harper	17 Feb 71	20	Cylon, MN	05W 113	Ground contact, hostile fire
Sgt Douglas Trotter	12 Dec 71	21	Yakima, WA	02W 94	Died serving in other Cav unit
<b>1972</b>					
Thomas Lipsey	6 Feb 72		St. Louis, MO	02W 104	??????????????? 196 <sup>th</sup>
Sp 4 Thomas Smith	20 Feb 72	19	Evart, MI	02W 108	Other explosive devise
Sp 4 Jaime Pacheco	25 May 72	20	Hobbs, NM	02W 32	Friendly fire, in contact
Sgt Elvis Osborne, Jr	9 Jun 72	20	Dallas, TX	02W 39	Other explosive devise
Sp 4 Jeffrey Maurer	9 Jun 72	19	New Liberty, IA	02W 39	Other explosive devise

## MEMORIES OF YOUNG FACES

From Scott Hancock

Those rare days when the newsletter arrives are never easy ones. When I find one in my mail box, my mood always shifts. Upon the sight of my old unit crest upon folded paper, I find my inner me is suddenly stilled. From what ever busy hurly-burly pace of got-things-to-do-places-to-go mood I had been in, transitions immediately into a much more somber, quiet and reflective place, and I carry the thing back into my home unopened, a true mix of emotions churning inside.

It may not be right away that I open and read it, that newsletter. I usually wait till bed that night, when things are quiet and I will be undisturbed. It is the best time, the best way I can handle reading it.

Every year I think, this next time I will make the Unit Reunion, and yet, when it comes time to schedule such things, I find reasons not to go. I think I am afraid it will be too hard. Too hard to see faces of men grown older, faces whom I had only known as young, made harder to see by the remembering of faces of friends who never got the chance to grow older. Each year I tell myself, next year I will go, and wonder secretly if I lie to myself yet again.

It was but one year. One year in Nam. But filled with moments seared indelible into the soul and psyche, dressed now in a burnished patina only years of tears can create.

Don't get me wrong, most days are spent never giving that one year in Nam a thought, but then, - but then, it is Memorial Day, Veterans Day, or a day like today when the newsletter comes, and I am there again, hearing the throbbing beat of an incoming Huey come to save our butts in an emergency extraction, feeling my heart pound in rhythm with the whirling blades, my nose filled with the pungency of cordite, and then come memories of my teammates faces and the knowing smiles we gave each other as we feel the bird lift us heavenward out and up from a green hill filled with death.

The newsletter came to my mailbox today. Telling me of all those things it does. Of the reunion missed again, reminding me of promises I made myself and broke, of the chances missed not only to see living smiles of friends once known, but to see again the smiles of those Donut Dollies, whose presence out there was a touchstone to all that which lay back-home and which was worth fighting and dying for. I missed the Reunion again, another opportunity lost.

I read in the newsletter Bill Carpenter's call for history, for accounts and so on.

One year, one year in Nam. The memories covered in a burnished patina. Forty years of tears, forty years of raising the flag and saluting, and remembering those faces. How can I write of that time, forty years past, and dare think I got it right?

How many things might I write of and be writing only things as I can see them through that patina? How dare I even try?

I know of those who have done so, written of events of their service, and they were able to capture each truth, each date and event, so precisely, as to leave no doubt as to historical accuracy. But I, I with my patina, my off colored glasses, dare I try to recount what happened, what I think happened, and why?

I only know of hushed conversations while on patrol, of discussions of life and loves, of children and parents, of trials and fears. I only know the feelings that turn within me, within my teammates, as Tet unfolded and we watched and listened as the world went mad, the calls on the radio matching the gunfire that came from all the LZs in every direction around us, until the radio fell silent by command order. But the gunfire and explosions went on.

And I remember standing outside our HQ tent, in the dark one night, tears streaming down my face, listening as one of our teams, on the side of some hill, were being hit. I heard them calling for help. I heard them giving sitreps as the battle they were engaged in progressed. And in the background as they reported each time, was the crackle of gunfire, and the explosions of grenades. I stood there listening to it all, the sitreps coming in, the responses being made. And I wept, because I could not help, because I was not there, standing with them. I listened to the recounting of the wounds received, of the grenades coming in, of the damages taken, the movements of the enemy. And then the reports stopped coming.

I stood there in the darkness, only canvas between me and the radio inside, and listened to those standing at the microphone calling again and again for a response, till it became quite clear, there would be no more reports received from that team. Ever. And then I went back to my cot, in my own tent just down the hill, and lay there staring up into the darkness, until dawn came.

I know of some changes in procedures that were made while I was there, changes that many said were the root causes of some teams running into trouble. I remember discussions about the numbers of greenies being introduced into teams, about how it had once been that they would only put only one new man on a team at a time, and would not count that new man "experienced" until either the team said he was, or ten missions had passed. Only changes were made while my year passed, and experienced teams were broken up and made up of half newbies or so, and team members swapped around without care as to the working relationship of a veteran group. You team with a group, and like them or love them at first, if you come to trust each other, and come to know each other, then you will not be second guessing your team mates possible actions when the shit hits the fan. Second guessing and uncertainties lead to take too much time, lead to too many mistakes. And in battle with rounds incoming, you have no time and can make no mistakes. Constantly mixing teams, treating men as if fully interchangeable parts, only works as long as they have time to learn each other. But my memories could be bad, or off the mark, I was but one guy in a Tiger suit.

Not all memories be bad. Being among the first into Ashua Valley and standing watch as dawn came my first morning there, the light, the mist in the trees, will always be one of my most beautiful memories, and the coming to know the values of and giving full respect to the Montenyard scouts I came to know..., but not the least and the most treasured, are the memories I have of smiling faces of the men I served with, when I too wore a younger man's face.

## **THE NIGHT RADIO CONTACT WAS LOST**

From Earl **McCann**

Bob **Carr's** team got run off that mountain two times in about three hours that same day. My team went in with C1/9, we lasted about 45 minutes before having to be extracted.

We were sent back out and, dropped off of the map sheet in a wide open meadow about ½ mile wide. We just made it to the edge of the tree line and got in a bomb crater. Not three minutes later a company of NVA walked within 21/2 feet of the team. We never got spotted, got extraction.

I told the CO that there was a battalion size element in the area. He said I did not know what I was talking about. So out went another team, the fifth one to the same area in one day. You know the rest of the story. I was listening to the radio too, that long night.

## **'INVISIBLE TROOPS' CATCH NVA LOAFING**

22 Nov 1967 article from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav's newspaper "Cavalair"

by Sp4 Herb Denton

submitted by Larry Pappert

BONG SON

If it had been possible to eavesdrop on their conversation you probably would have heard the North Vietnamese soldiers say something like "What the Heck, Over" or whatever NVA say when – out of a clear blue sky – artillery, rockets and air strikes come booming down on their position and wipe out 72 men.

The Communist soldiers, part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> NVA Division, had been infiltrating all morning through the southern Crow's Foot area of the An Lao Valley when they stopped for a little smoke break. They sat down, lit up, unloosened their packs and began chattering to one another when a barrage of 105mm rounds came flying in on them.

The NVA ran for nearby bunkers only to be hit again by aerial rocket artillery. After the rockets came air strikes which forced them out of the bunkers. Then gunships, more rockets, more tube artillery.

Sitting on a ridgeline above the NVA and calling in all of the firepower were six fearless 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalrymen who make up team "Two Bravo" of the Cavalry's long range reconnaissance patrol.

"We had ringside seats," mused Specialist Four Donald W. Glover, the assistant team leader.

A sweep through the area the next day by elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry turned up 72 bodies and 58 weapons including AK-47's, SKS's, rocket launchers and machine guns.

The recondos left the area without a scratch and without having fired a single shot themselves.

There are 11 LRRP teams in the Cavalry. The teams were organized last February and are made up only of volunteers. Each includes one Montagnard scout.

They are out in the field every day and are frequently responsible for intelligence on enemy activity. Though Team Two Bravo had never run across 72 enemy before, said Staff Sergeant Robert L. Carr, the team leader.

"First we saw seven and then we just kept counting and counting," Carr said.

The recondos are all trained as infantrymen. They tromp around in rakish "Tiger" fatigues and most of them wear a triangular green patch with 'recondo' embroidered at the top and a big "V" at the bottom.

The patch is proof that they have run for over a mile and a half with a 25 pound sand bag on their backs, become highly proficient in map reading, first aid and the other specialized subjects and physical requirements crammed into a special three week course conducted by the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces in Nha Trang.

According to Private First Class Stephen L. Fox, Two Bravo rear scout, they sometimes get a strong urge to fire on the enemy. But unless cornered this is not their job. They are sent out as observers and not to engage the enemy. Though well-armed with M-16's and M-79's, even the rough-tough recondos will admit that the six man team may be outmatched by what could be a company or larger-sized enemy element.

## ORDEAL IN THE SKY:

This is an article from a "Stars and Stripes" that Doug **Parkinson** found in some old correspondence. It was in the fall, 1967 PHAN THIET—a 100 mile-per-hour wind snapped Sec. 4 Virgil **Hoffman**'s head back as he peered through the howling darkness at the helicopter lights 120 feet above him

Hoffman and two other members of a 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cav. Div. long range patrol swayed at the end of nylon ropes, 2,100 feet above the ground. Late that afternoon they had been picked off a mountain slope 13 miles west of Phan Thiet after their six-man patrol had been spotted by a Viet Cong Company's advance scouts.

Earlier three other members of the patrol had been hauled to safety by the ropes. But, this trip, each time the chopper bounced in the rainy, windy darkness, Hoffman's lifeline slipped and he dropped lower and lower below the other two men. Before being lifted off the slope that evening, Hoffman carefully wrapped the nylon strap on the end of the rope around each wrist while the chopper hovered over the three.

Then he sat on the two-inch-wide strap. Next the three men entwined their arms and legs to keep from slamming each other in the flight. Then the helicopter rose straight up. But Hoffman began to drop as it did. Minute by minute as the chopper gained altitude, he slipped slowly backward and down until his head was below the level of the other two men's waists. Then, one of the team's two Vietnamese scouts couldn't help. His shoulder was dislocated from the strain on his arms. His strap was too big to fit him properly.

Spec. 4 Jesse **McConnel**, the team leader, disengaged one hand, reached down and hooked Hoffman's lifeline in the crook of his arm. Then, like the catcher in a trapeze act, he hauled Hoffman back up and hooked the hand supporting his friend's full weight and 70-pound pack onto his wrist still in the safety loop. If he failed, there was no net, only the ground nearly a half a mile below.

Yet, unknown to the three, someone else had joined their act. Inside the chopper, the door gunner, Spec 4 Rich King, had seen Hoffman beginning to slip. He grabbed the bar of his seat frame, stood on Hoffman's rope and leaned outside the chopper door to keep an eye on them.

Four days earlier, the patrol had set out to find a Viet Cong regimental command post. "We'd moved up the mountain on the fourth day when they spotted us," said McConnel. "There were three of them and I radioed back to the base to get us out of there." Maj. William Hayes of the Cav's 227<sup>th</sup> Avn. Bn. And his copilot Lt. Robert Wright took off accompanied by rocket-firing gunships to find the patrol.

But, rain, clouds and a double jungle canopy made it nearly impossible to locate the six men. Hayes told McConnel to find a clearing farther down the mountainside. "We moved down and found one about 20 feet wide," McConnel said, "but by then it was getting dark." Finally, just as the sun was disappearing behind the peak above them, Hayes spotted the group and the first three soldiers – PFC John **Russell**, PFC George **Williams** and **Ngoc**, the other Vietnamese scout, were hauled out by the ropes.

After the first three were safely dropped off at a nearby landing zone, Hayes returned, but darkness and low clouds hid the clearing. McConnel asked Hayes if it would be better to wait until the next morning to pick them up. "Negative," Hayes answered, "We've spotted VC moving back up the mountain toward you only 200 yards away."

Ignoring the chance of becoming sure targets, the circling helicopters turned on their search lights. McConnel began shooting the last of his flares to guide the helicopters in. During the 12-mile flight back to the patrol's base at Phan Thiet, the rope, the door gunner, McConnel, the Vietnamese scout, and Hoffman made it without incident.

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**webpage posting** by Michael G. Choates  
Motorcyclemike384@yahoo.com

I served in Viet-Nam Aug 70-Aug 71 with 1st Cav 1st Squadron 9th Cavalry Regiment Echo Troop as a Scout Gunner crewing an OH-6. I had the great pleasure on several occasions to discard all my armaments so we could extract one of your teams. I have always held you folks in the highest regard having a hard time believing you were willing to do such courageous duty. Thank you so very much for your service. Mad Michael

## **RECONDO TEAM TROMPS AROUND FOR “CHARLIE”**

An undated article from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav's newspaper “Cavalair”

Submitted by Larry Pappert

### **BONG SON**

Private First Class Roy A. **Olson**, 20, Billings, Mont., and the other five members of his 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Division recondo team were out on a mission in the Central Highlands of Vietnam when they spotted what looked like broken prints of motorcycle tires.

Olson and the other recondos knew, however, that they were impressions left by tire-treaded “Ho Chi Minh” sandals. The team turned to their Montagnard scout for his judgement on the number of people who had been in the area. The scout said “Bookoo” which the recondos know mean more than twenty.

Less than five minutes later the six recondos were battling it out with a company of the North Vietnamese Army. The battle lasted for a half hour until a helicopter came and extracted them from the area.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cavalry Division's recondo teams are out in the field almost daily. Their mission is to observe enemy activity and not to engage the enemy. Occasionally, they are cornered and have to fight their way out as Olson's team did.

All Recondos are trained as infantrymen. They tromp around the Central Highlands in rakish “tiger” fatigues. Olson and many of the other team members are permitted to wear a triangular green patch with “Recondo” embroidered at the top and a big “V” (for valor) at the bottom.

## LIEUTENANT JOE DILGER

Story by Bob Carr

Written by Eugene Luning

There are some men who refuse to die and then there are some men, too, who refuse to live life only for themselves. It is my honor and pleasure, this issue, to write of a man who is both of these things. Lieutenant Joe Dilger.

I first met the lieutenant in the late Fall of 1967. I was in the Central Highlands at LZ Uplift and had just come down for a last-light insertion. It certainly wasn't my first. But it was for Joe. And he was going to be in the Command/Control slick that night. And I remember seeing he didn't have his M-16. So I asked him about it. "I've got my weapon right here," he replied. He was referring to the .45 on his hip.

We dropped into our LZ that night and everything looked proper. The chopper pulled up quickly from between the trees. And, just as soon as that, we were in contact with the enemy. A platoon's worth, I figured. And I remember hearing the sound of the C/C slick overhead and the unfamiliar sound of a handgun up there in the near-darkness. Yes, that's right. Lieutenant Joe Dilger, laying on the floorboard on his stomach, unloading his .45 into the darkened jungle. I remember radioing up in the midst of the firefight, "Well done, John Wayne." But he got us out that night and that's all that mattered. And he never forgot his M-16 again.

Four or five missions later, we got dropped into an LZ in the Sui-Ca Valley. It was another last-light and there were four Americans and two Yards of us altogether. The drop was clean. We zig-zagged out ten minutes and then stopped for our listening halt. I remember the yards starting to talk rapidly. "What's the matter?" I asked them. "Beaucoup VC," they replied. And they were right. So we kept on moving for more than an hour and I remember the fresh trails we kept coming across. So we set up an NDP in the darkness and laid out the Claymores. We knew they were close but we still hadn't seen them.

And then I heard the lieutenant's voice on the radio. "Be advised," he said. "You have thirty minutes to get back to the LZ." "It took us an hour and a half to get to where we are," I replied. "You don't have a choice," he said. "Do not get compromised."

It turned out there was a full enemy regiment in the area that night. Brigade Intel had failed to pass along the word to the lieutenant until we were already on the ground. But as soon as he heard, he got us extracted. He always did. Lieutenant Joe Dilger always thought of his men first.

And then there was the night south of LZ Pedro, another last-light in the DMZ. That night, the pilot of our slick was new and he was afraid of the size of the designated LZ. When he balked, the lieutenant was all over him on the radio. But the pilot still set us down in the middle of a huge field, hundreds of yards from the tree-line. We were forced to cross a trail we'd been sent to watch. About as compromised as you could be.

At the tree-line, I radioed the lieutenant. I explained our situation. He agreed it was bad, but said we had to head for another LZ. I remember crawling on our bellies into a thicket and setting up our NDP. We weren't far off-grid and I could tell from a hill above us that we weren't far from the new LZ.

Twenty minutes later, we picked up movement. By squelches, I kept the lieutenant up to speed on the situation. We were counting NVA lanterns coming over the hilltop trail. One lantern for each five men. We counted seventy-five lanterns. They were probing near, hoping to draw fire.

Then one of them tripped a Claymore wire and so we blew them all. We busted through up the hill, set up a defensive position, and, within thirty minutes, the lieutenant had us pulled. He'd been working toward our extraction since my first call at the tree-line. He was always thinking of his men's welfare.

On April 20, 1968, Lieutenant Joe Dilger was the first man on the ground to clear an LZ at Signal Hill in the A-Shau Valley. They had to repel off the slicks to get in. Behind him, the second chopper lost power and most of the men onboard were thrown clear. Except for Sergeant Larry Curtis. He was thrown on his back and the skid of the chopper landed on his chest. He was saved only by the softness of the mud and the size of his pack.

Quickly, the lieutenant set up a perimeter with the eleven available men on the ground. But they started taking fire almost immediately. Turbitt, Lambert, and Noto were all killed during that first day of the fight. And, at some point, Lieutenant Joe Dilger was struck in the upper chest by an SKS round. The entry wound was no bigger than your pinkie finger. But the exit wound was enormous.



I was the one called in to identify the body. I remember walking in and seeing the lieutenant on the gurney. I didn't want to remember him that way. So I did my job, signed off his death on the log-book, and then got out of there as fast as I could. I believe that was April the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1968.

In 1991, I received a phone call from my old team leader, **Seymour**. He asked, "Do you remember Joe Dilger?" I replied, "Of course I do. He was a great man. I had to identify his body."

There was a pause on the line.

"Well, Bob," Seymour said, "from one NCO to another, you sure didn't do a very damn good job. 'Cause Joe just walked into our reunion. Alive and well, Bob."

I literally dropped the phone on the floor.

Two weeks later, I was fortunate enough to get Joe Dilger on the phone at his mother's house in Louisville. I will never forget that conversation.

And I will never forget last year's reunion in Louisville. I remember talking to **Parkinson** before I flew out and him telling me that some anonymous benefactor had set us up for a prime-rib riverboat cruise. 74 of us. And that anonymous benefactor was none other than Lieutenant Joe Dilger.

It is difficult to sum up my thoughts about this great man. But here's my try: If it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here today. Nor would Doug **Parkinson**. Nor would Bob **Ankony**. Lieutenant Joe Dilger was a total leader. He was a man who not only refused to die; he was a man who refused to live life only for himself.

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## HONORING A LEADER

From: Eugene Luning

To: Bob Carr

Bob-

I've been awfully inspired by all the stories you told me back in January. Thanks again for letting me work on that story (ed: about Lt. **Dilger**) for you. It was a true honor.

On top of writing, I also enjoy writing poetry when I can find the time. Here's something I wrote this afternoon. It's again inspired by Lt. **Dilger**.

### "From Death"

The fire-fight sparked the night and he  
rushed into eternity.

Then spread out, cold, he hurried back  
to render what his country lacked.

A leader of men of highest rank  
into death's warmest slumber sank  
then rose again just like a Christ,  
counting not the cost nor price.

His slumber, short, upon the gurney  
ended not his life-long journey.  
The lieutenant rose to live again.  
For bullets could not stop his men.

And bullets could not down the bird  
from which he swung and his men heard  
his voice again upon the wave.  
From death, the best are sometimes saved.

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## FOUR MAN MISSION

From Clare **MICHLIN**

I don't know if it was the first, last or one of many but I went on a 4 man mission during the summer of '68. Steve **Tefft** was the TL, an instant NCO John **Eargle** was the ATL, Ray **Frith**, and myself, Clare (Mick) **Michlin**.

They sent us out northeast of Camp Evans to the sand dune area where a company of grunts had been working all day and found nothing. We were given a list of VC tax collectors, VC purchasing agents and other local VC officials hoping for a POW.

They put us one each in the grunts extraction lift ships and as each one landed, we sort of slithered out and hid in one the many bombed out buildings in the abandoned village that the grunts had been working.

This was a fairly open area, so we just hid in one of the buildings as the grunts were extracted. We planned to wait for dark before we moved out. As the last load of grunts left, and we could still hear the rotor noise, Gooks started popping every where strolling around as if nothing was unusual. Remember, that the infantry had been there for hours and found no sign of the enemy.

A trail ran right next to the building we were in and a lone VC came down the trail. As we leaned out the front window to see what we were hearing, he walked by so close that we could have slapped him in the face. He was looking at something in his hand as he passed and didn't notice us until he was several steps past. Then he turned and looked at us. (WE also had with us for the first time an M-16 with a big clunky silencer on it that we were testing.)

SSgt. **Tefft** shot him several times with the not so silent, as it turned out, M-16. The effect it did seem to have was that you could hear it, but you couldn't tell where the noise came from because the gooks that were walking around started running around with no obvious sense of where they should be going.

When the rest of us started shooting, as became necessary, they figured out where we were and it got interesting for a few minutes until the gunships that were escorting the grunts that had just left came back and covered us until they could reinsert the grunts who again found nothing except the three gooks we killed.

We were debriefed by the intel officer of which ever battalion asked for the mission and he turned out to be George **Paccerelli**, shortly before he took over command of the LRRPS.

Before we went out, we all thought it was pretty cool, until Barney, SSgt. **Barnes** who was the operations NCO, said "be careful". He was not a sentimental man and was as likely to tell you to go ---- yourself but never "be careful".

SSgt **Tefft** was on his second tour as a LRRP and was really good at his job and was the best TL I had and he was a Gook magnet. We used to get inserted and shot out of our AO sometimes twice per week.

So, as it turned out with none of us hurt, it was a pretty good few hours. The grunt unit was impressed with us, and we were quite proud of ourselves even though not much of what happened was really under our control.

With regards, Mick

## Mission out of Camp Evans

From David Shows

PRELOGUE: I wanted to share a story with a few of you guys. I know its way too long to be a posting on the site. That's OK, I just needed to tell the story. It's funny you go all of these years without talking about these things, and now I can't seem to shut up, I try not to be so wordy, but it just comes gushing out. I think that talking to some of you guys may be taking the place of psychotherapy for me. Don't bother billing me I have lousy health insurance. Like Ken Storm told me, making contact with you guys across the years kind of helps me to put things into their proper place.

The 6 man team was all G.I. no Montagnards.

The only man on the team whose name I remember for certain was Ken Storm. This was Ken's first mission.

The ATL was with me for several missions and was damn good but for the life of me I could not remember his name, although I tried for many years. Ken Storm, and Bill Hand were able to tell me that the ATL was Ron Bitticks.

We inserted just before dark in what appeared from the air to be a bomb crater on the side of a densely wooded mountain. We discovered that it was not a bomb crater but was a man made clearing. Filled with fallen trees, it took a good bit of effort to get out over the jumble of logs.

We spent the night a ways up the mountain from the clearing and the next day we made our way to the top of the mountain, at the top we found a network of heavily used trails. We also found what appeared to be the remnants of a stone fence, and what we thought might be the stone foundation of an old building.

We proceeded down the other side of the mountain into a large valley. As we crept our way down we kept hearing periodic single rifle shots, some apparently from the same mountain we were on, others far away. When we got within perhaps a 100' of the valley floor we realized that these single rifle shots were coming from back up the mountain behind us perhaps 100 ft or so above our position above the valley floor, and perhaps several hundred feet to either side of the route we had taken down the mountain, and apparently from the opposite mountain side facing us. We later heard this repeated many times, one shot, wait a couple of minutes then another a couple of hundred yards or so from the first, wait a few minutes then another shot and so on in a circle around the valley floor.

We decided that it was trail watchers or guards signaling and we were within their perimeter. We tried several times to make sit reps, but had almost no commo, we could hear static and occasional words over the radio, and the base was not hearing us any better.

We continued sneaking down a steep sharp ridgeline near the valley floor, and ran into a cleared area, which was about the size and shape of a large bomb crater. From the air everyone had thought they were bomb craters, which is apparently what the enemy had wanted. The cleared area was surrounded by a low wooden fence in the wood line (not visible from the air) and was planted with green grass-like plants. As we continued downward along the ridge we found a similar disguised field on the other side of the ridge. We hunkered down near the bottom of the ridge perhaps 30 to 50 foot above the valley floor and spent the night. The guard's shots continued at regular intervals every couple of hours, and we could occasionally hear voices coming from the valley.

The next morning our commo was so bad we decided we had better get out of there back up the mountain we had just come down where we hoped we could reestablish commo. As we started sneaking up past the second "field" we had found, the field suddenly filled up with several women tending the plants, and three or four uniformed NVA guarding them. We laid there in the wood line just a yard or so from the edge of the field for a couple of hours until the group left going back down into the valley. We were unable to call in the sighting. We sat there for a while making sure we were alone and before we could start back up, we started hearing a noise that seemed to be coming from the woods beyond the first field we had seen. It sounded like chopping on a tree with an axe.

This kept up for sometime, eventually I decided to leave the team with Ron the ATL and attempt to sneak around the first field to see if I could see what they were doing, and where exactly they were. As I was moving the noise stopped. When I got perhaps 50 yards or so from the team along the upper edge of the field, I could see a group of men in the bottom moving below where the team was waiting, several shirtless men (I remember thinking they were large and muscular for Vietnamese) who were carrying long sections of trees which had been de-barked. These poles were about 6 or 8 foot long and obviously quite heavy. Several uniformed NVA with rifles accompanied the group. I could see and hear that they were

laughing and talking as they moved past. The team could not see them but could hear their voices and movements. I laid on the edge of the field until the group was out of sight, and then snuck back to the team. Ron and I were standing at the front of our little column studying the map and trying to pick a route to get us back up the mountain as quickly as possible without being seen by the guards.

I suddenly caught movement out of the corner of my eye, and probably 20 feet to the side of us I saw a pair of eyes staring at me through the brush. I went for my gun and was already starting to pull the trigger when Ron grabbed my arm and whispered to me "it's Storm". The face was still looking at me and I gradually began to recognize Ken. I have never gotten over the sickness in the pit of my stomach realizing just how very close I had come to shooting him. If Ron had not been so alert to see what was going on, and so quick to grab me I would certainly have shot Ken. Ken had slipped off to the side of our column to respond to a call of nature, Ron who was facing toward the team, and the others behind me had seen him go, I was facing up the mountain with the team to my back and had not. For years I wondered if Ken ever knew just how very close that had been. If it had not been for Ron, I would have killed him in 1968. When I got to talk to Ken in 2008, he clearly remembered the incident as well as I did. One of the first things he said to me was "thanks for not shooting me" and then he asked if I still had that gun I pulled on him. He said that it taught him a lesson, one that he almost didn't live long enough to learn. He said that he never again got out of sight of a team without being certain that every one on the team knew where he was and what he was doing. We both owe a heavy debt to Ron.

We regrouped and were just about ready to try to sneak out again when a helicopter came overhead. The Lt. (I don't remember his name) was in the chopper, and I think Bill Hand was with him but I'm not sure of that. The Lt. was giving me hell for not making scheduled sit reps and calling in sightings. When he understood the commo problem he asked why we didn't move to establish commo. I remember telling him that anyway we moved that morning we seemed to be running into enemy troops. He said he was going to put another team out to act as a radio relay and to sit tight. We asked him if we should attempt to snatch a prisoner if they came back into one of the fields. He advised if we got a good opportunity without endangering the team to go ahead. I remember we got a chuckle out of that, how do you kidnap one enemy soldier from a group when you had poor to nonexistent commo, and no way of arranging an immediate extraction without involving a good dose of risk? Later that day another helicopter came back into the area and went all over the area of the valley. He was equipped with a "max sniffer" device and after awhile reported that the valley was full of people (thanks a lot we had already figured that out).

I believe we may have stayed there one more night listening to people moving all around us.

As we were still lying low (I remember that we made hot tea from instant packs with lemon while we were waiting, the first time I ever drank hot tea), helicopters came back into the area and the Lt. advised that he was extracting us immediately and directed us to the second field where we had seen the women working. We had discussed going out by McGuire rig, and I'm not sure why we didn't, I know Ron was all for it, and if the Lt. was listening to Bill Hand I know he would have been all for it. I was willing but not keen on the idea. I never would have admitted it back then, but I was always afraid of heights, and hated rappelling and rope extraction. I did it when I had to, but I never liked it.

In hind sight I suppose the Lt. made the decision to come down into the field which was just barely large enough for a chopper, and get us out as rapidly and unexpectedly as possible. I'm positive it was the right decision. Ships hovering above the triple canopy long enough to hook us up and pull us out would have been too tempting and too easy of a target for too long. The Lt. must have thought all of this out, I didn't until much later.

We lay in the woods beside the field as gun ships went up and down the valley not firing, just hoping to get the other folks to hide, which apparently worked. When our chopper got near the ground in the field we made a dash for it and jumped on from both sides before its skids had even reached the ground. I remember all of us yelling as we got aboard to get the hell out of there. We kept expecting to be fired on but there was no response from the woods as we flew away. It seems to me that the Lt. was aboard that ship that picked us up but I'm not positive of that.

Later in de-briefing, as we were trying to describe what we had seen, and trying to describe the plants we had seen being cultivated, Ron reached into his pack and produced a good handful of the plants roots and all. It was one of those "duh" moments for me, "why didn't I think of that". Ron was a great ATL, he frequently made up for any shortcomings on my part. We were told that the plants were a type of rice that did not require a flooded paddy. I remember we discussed plans for putting a team in as a radio relay, and taking a small very light team back into the valley to see if we could see more of what was going on there. I

remember everyone on the team was eager to try this. Apparently the decision was made to do an “arc-light” (massive bombing attack) on the valley very soon after we left it.

As a team we were disappointed we wanted the chance to go back in and do some more LRRP’ing, I think there was something seriously wrong with us at that time.

Chuck Awe was the RTO on Evans during much of this mission, and he and I later got to discuss it at some length when we met up at Fort Hood in early 1969.

I never stopped thinking about this mission over the years, partially because of the heavy adrenalin rush of being so close to so many of the enemy for so long without being seen, and partially because of the near tragedy with Ken.

I didn’t start trying to put together this account until the summer of 2007 when I was talking to Doug Parkinson about it. I would love to see the debriefing and team notes from that mission, to see just how accurate my memory is after all of these years, and to put names to the others involved. Since I originally wrote this, I had the wonderful opportunity to talk at length with Ken Storm, due to a big helping hand from “Dutch” Pete Eisentrager. Ken reviewed this for me and has helped me out in some areas where my memories had failed me. Most significantly he told me that the ATL on the team was named Bitticks first name unknown. He also verified that this was his first LRRP mission and we talked a good bit about the “almost” friendly fire incident. Subsequently Bill Hand told me that the ATL was Ron Bitticks.

## **IT'S A BEAR!**

By Doug PARKINSON

It was our first mission together in October of 1967. We had trained together in An Khe and attended Recondo School together. Our team leader was Bob CARR, who had a previous tour with the 25<sup>th</sup> Division; the ATL was Don GLOVER a transfer from another line unit from the Cav. Steve "Swamp" FOX and myself were definitely 'Cherries'. Our other member, Ray PATTERSON was from a previous training cycle but had not been on any patrols yet. The Montagnard scout Shren, collectively possessed more combat time than all of us.

Other than being inserted out of our intended AO (which led to difficulties when calling in artillery and gunships later in the mission) the beginning of the mission went rather smoothly. Well, accept for the fact that the base for the long antenna had not been included with the commo kit and as the RTO I had neglected to confirm its absence. Amazing how small you feel when five pairs of eyeballs are trained on you in disbelief when you've nearly rendered inoperable a critical piece of equipment to a patrol's success.

Our first setup for the evening was on a small ridge in small canopy vegetation with not much undergrowth. The claymores were set out with the wire zig-zagged and somewhat taut. We finished our LRRP ration meals and discarded the empty containers at the edge of the perimeter and settled in after radio check.

The radio checks went on through the night without incident. Upon being wakened by PATTERSON to my right to perform my one hour watch, Ray informed me that he'd heard a noise out beyond the perimeter. During later patrols, his ability to hear noises that the rest of the team could not detect were confirmed when he heard a circling tiger long before the tiger soundlessly revealed its presence.

My one hour watch passed without event, but near the end some faint sounds could be detected coming up the hill directly below my position. I awakened the TL, Bob Carr, to my left for his watch. I passed on the same observation that Ray had to me about the unidentified noises. The TL acknowledged and continued the watch. Since the noises had occurred at the end of my watch, I decided to stay awake and peer in the darkness directly in front of my position. There was some ambient light filtering down through the low canopy allowing a faint contrast to the dark under story.

Slight noise continued below my position, but were unheard by the TL on watch. Focusing on the small patches of light under the canopy I became aware of some lighter patches that would silently turn dark. The faint noises became more audible and frequent, but only to me and not the TL. Then a dark form began to take shape through the darkened tunnel of vegetation below my position. The solid dark form was low to the ground as in a squat stance and slowly swaying side to side taking one careful step at a time and proceeding up the hill in a careful swaying motion.

At this time I recalled one of the war stories we 'cherries' eagerly listened to gain some sort of instant wisdom to guide us in this unaccustomed activity we were engaged in. The teller had recounted how an approaching VC/NVA had been in low crouch, advancing slowly in a swaying motion with the careful placement of each foot.

The approaching form met all the previous visions of a carefully approaching enemy. Mesmerized by the image, and yet, not deciding whether to engage with my M-16, give away position or wait. But still the dark low form of a crouching enemy was closing the distance. Still the TL did not detect the quiet slowing approaching form that was only visible through the tunnel of vegetation below my position. Not really knowing what to do and frantic with indecision I leaned over to the TL and whispered about the approaching enemy. This was the first he knew of the approaching enemy. His reply was how far away was the threat? I whispered I'd check. Sliding back to my position I stared back down into the tunnel the form had been approaching. There was no tunnel to peer down. Just complete blackness. Attempting to get a better view I lowered my head to the ground to peer up at the sky and look for some contrast. About 6' in front of me there sky lighted was a roundish form with two smaller round forms set on top. It resembled a bear's head with a pair of rounded ears. It's a bear! Simultaneous to the thought a slight low guttural rumbling began to resonate from a chest and progressed into a piercing and frightened roar.

I do not recall my immediate response. However, Ray Patterson, lying to my left and covered with a poncho was levitating vertically from his position on the ground. From under the poncho legs and arms were vainly and frantically searching for purchase on something. The entire team assembled weapons to the fore were oriented in the direction the bear had first announced its presence. Nervous whispering about what was out there, but no response from out there. While we were all oriented in the direction of the first roar, a second piercing roar originated from about 10' behind us. Why nobody accidentally discharged a weapon, in our keystone cops attempt of six people to suddenly reverse ourselves to meet this new threat from behind, was testimony to our training or a simple form of divine assistance to beginners.

The bear perhaps sensing overwhelming odds, abandoned the frontal and rear piercing roar approach and would silently change positions and emit a low guttural rumble out of the darkness from about 10 to 15 feet away. The tension was too much for Ray, a short burst from his M-16 suddenly silenced the bear. That is until the bear silently changed position and issued a shorter growl from further away. The growls continued for about an hour from different locations, with decreased volume and progressively further away until nothing else was heard.

Bob Carr checked in with our nearest friendly force, a line company with the call sign "Black Bear".

Authors note: "Cherry RTO" Parkinson's ability to identify bears was acquired while working for Alaska Department of Fish and Game for two seasons (65-66) where he developed this ability from some uncomfortably close and personal relationships (phobia) with much larger cousins of the Southeast Asia, Asian Sun bear, the likely culprit of the story. Other witness' stories vary slightly from this truthful version.



## MILK AND COOKIES

By Gair Anderson

In less than one hour after landing for my very first mission, the reality of war introduced itself to me in the form of a loud explosion and the pain of hot metal in my back. I turned and looked around, without going into details; **Miller** and **Elias** were down, **Larry Curtis** was on one knee with his hand over his eye. I could hear **Parker's** voice over the buzz in my ear "help Elias, Andy, help Elias." I pulled my medic bag from my pack and knelt over Elias, I would glance up from time to time to look for any possible danger. I looked up at one point and remember to this day a vision of Larry; it was if a Dutch Master painter had placed him in a pose before he turned to his paints and canvas. A most powerful man standing upright with his weapon at the ready. A small stream of blood and tears ran from his eye down to his chin. He saw and was ready for anything, I returned to the task at hand and I never again looked up because I knew that anything that moved, Larry would put in a permanent state of stillness.

After we returned, Parker and I were waiting for another team to be formed, we rotated on the base radio with teams in the field. During the long nights I would wonder about where I would go next. "**Carr's** team, please don't let me go to Carr's team". Carr's team was getting shot out every time. Not just now and then but every time. He always got everyone back and great stories followed, but it was still more than what I wanted at that time. It was about my 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> night on the radio and Carr called up from the field; this is where we're at, all is well but "we're running low on milk and cookies". I had never before heard that phrase and wanted to make sure I had the message right, "I understand you're running short of food and water" says I.

A louder voice with just a touch of anger came back, "No! milk and cookies ".

You, the reader need to understand than I'm talking to SSgt. Carr, the badist boy in the bush, and in no uncertain terms, I have to get the is message right. I reply, "I understand that milk and cookies is not food and water". "No God damn it, who is this?" came from the other end of the radio. And then it hit me. "Code, this is a code". At that very instant, two very dynamic scenarios came to mind, one being a V.C. radio intercept operator running to command post shouting "the code, we've broken the American code, it's just a matter of time now" and then the other one, the one that would have a far more personal and destructive nature about it. In a few days Carr would be back, and this 131 pounds, heart pumping of pure nitroglycerin, individual was going to leave pieces of my butt all over L.Z. Betty. And then he did come back and I made myself small. Later that night I resigned myself to take whatever hit was coming my way.

All I got from Carr was a look, no to anger or malice but in my mind a statement of "Son, get your shit together, get it so tight it will fit in a corner of your match box."

All other things aside and in a very personal nature, my first week was the most important for me. I had seen the effects and results of war. I saw in Larry the warrior I needed to become, and in Carr, the mindset and way of thinking necessary to attain such.

My personal gratitude to you both, and my hat off to all others.

Andy

## 1<sup>st</sup> CAVALRY LRRP's FIRST CASUALTIES

from Bill Carpenter

Most grunts who served in Viet Nam have a lot more, and better, stories than I, especially the LRRP/Rangers. In the big picture, this story is small potatoes. It was a big deal to six of us. I was only in one firefight before coming home. The average infantryman who pulled a full one-year tour would be in about 10 battles. The average LRRP would pull 30-40 missions in a year, half of these would end with a "hot extraction".

5 January 1967

CARPENTER, WILLIAM D RA16887249

Asg to: 90<sup>th</sup> Repl Bn APO SF 96307

Aval date: 15 Mar 67

I arrive in Viet Nam after the winter monsoon season. On March 20, 1967, I am assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. I figured a grunt is a grunt, so it doesn't matter where I go. I am just glad I am not a Marine in I corps. They are getting the shit shot out of them.

During the "Welcome to Viet Nam" training there is a demonstration on how quick Medivac can get the wounded to a hospital. Why do they make a big deal out of this? Do they expect a lot of us to be wounded? One night we are put out on the green line, perimeter duty, with M-14's and one clip of ammo. A little better than spit wads and rubber bands, but not much better. A single clip of ammo doesn't last very long in a firefight.

We are told during the indoctrination that very few of the women are whores, and most of the whores have VD. A staff sergeant tells us, "When you kill a Chinese or Russian, not if you kill a Chinese or Russian, because if you are in enough firefights you will kill one. When you kill a Chinese or Russian, don't tell anyone, all it will do is cause you a lot of paperwork. Everyone knows they are here."

While I am at the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav's replacement depot, Captain **James** comes down and gives us a little talk about joining the division's Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol (LRRP) unit. I think, why not, at least I will be with some good troops to keep me out of trouble. Military rule number 1, never volunteer. Why did I volunteer for LRRP? It just seemed like the thing to do at the time. So I talk to Captain **James**. I have to come up with an instant sales pitch for this job interview. What I tell him is that the West Virginia hills are very much like the Viet Nam hills, and I had been running ridges all of my life. I also say that I have probably spent two or three years of my life camping out, so sleeping on the ground in the rain is not new to me.

On March 28, 1967 I report to Co. A, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 8<sup>th</sup> Cav at LZ English. The company is on perimeter duty for a new artillery firebase on top of a hill near English. We can look across the Bong Song Plains and see the South China Sea. Beautiful. We spend most of our time clearing the green line, laying concertina wire and building bunkers. There is no serious action during the week I am there.

3 April 1967

CARPENTER, WILLIAM D RA 16887249

Atch to: 191<sup>st</sup> MI Det

Purpose: for dy with Div LRRP Co

Six of us came to LRRP together. We have to set up our own GP tent. It takes a few days to "requisition" canvas cots for us to sleep on. Until then the unit was 18 men. After the war, they take the unofficial name "The Original 18". The new guys are to become Team 3 after we complete training. The idea of pulling a mission with five other new guys scares me.

The unit is a detachment, working directly under division headquarters. We are a bunch of orphans looking for a home, "The James Gang", named after Captain Jim **James**. Lt. Ron **Hall** is the XO and SFC Fred **Kelly** is the First Sergeant. Sometime during the second week of April 1967, the unit becomes HHC G-2, LRRP. I think the unit got a TO&E with that. In January 1969, the unit becomes Company H (Ranger), 75<sup>th</sup> Regiment.

Special Forces had worked out the principle of long range patrolling, but the entire idea of a division LRRP unit is new. There is a lot of resistance to this change from the higher ranks. "We didn't do it this way in WW II or Korea, why change?" Answer, "This is a different kind of war." Most of the NCO's are ranger trained, but it is all OJT for the enlisted ranks.

Team 1 had been pulling missions since January, and Team 2 since February. Some of the kinks have been worked out. They are the first 1<sup>st</sup> Cav "Ghosts". They must be doing something right; there has not been any serious contact, yet.

For the next two weeks, SFC **Kelly** tries to teach us everything he knows. The training is very intense. "Let me try that again." "Don't have time, gotta go on." The running winds me, but running is supposed to wind you. Lt. Hall did like to run. Two-a-days in football were a lot harder than the physical part of the training. I had a lot of civilian experience in topog maps and first aid, so no problem there. I do not know radios and the idea of calling in an artillery strike scares me.

About the third week of April, about 8-10 new guys come in to start training for team 4.

Team 1 is down to four members, so at the end of training, Bill **Carpenter** and David **Ives** join Team 1. John **Simones** is the team leader and Doug **Fletcher** the ATL. The other two team members are Art **Guerrero** and Geoff **Koper**, medic.

John had been in the Marine Force Recon before coming over to the army. Doug had been with 2/8 Cav before LRRP, and had earned a silver star in the A Shau Valley. Art had been with 1/7 Cav, Custer's old outfit, and also had a silver star from the A Shau Valley. Geoff is a combat medic. All of them had been in country for several months before coming to LRRP. They have pulled about 10 missions as a team. Good people, they will take care of this newbie.

Team 1, four old pros and two new guys, is inserted at dusk on Thursday, 20 April 1967. We are put in close to the head of a stream. We are to more or less follow this stream and see what we could see. See what you see, hear what you hear, smell what you smell, and think before you act. The stream runs to the southwest. The closest US army troops are at An Khe, about 15 kilometers south of us. The nearest friendlies are at Kan Nak, some 7-8 km away. Kan Nak is where the stream we are on empties into the Song Ba. The Green Berets had a base there at one time, but there is only an irregular force there now, who may even be VC. Don't depend on them. Our E&E plan is to head for Kan Nak.

We are outside of artillery cover. Because of the mountains, radio contact is difficult. There are no radio relay points. We are to report in morning and evening. Most of the time, base has to put a chopper in the air for radio contact.

This is not going to be like hunting back home, the squirrels shoot back.

On Friday we go through a lot of elephant grass, 7-8 feet tall. The word "leach" takes on a whole new meaning for me. The elephant grass is loaded with them. Walk, pick off six or eight leaches, walk, pick off six or eight leaches. We hear someone cutting wood, nothing out of line. I hear a hen cackling, and am told that they run wild in the jungle. This is not West Virginia, chickens do not mean people.

On Saturday morning, we move from some open timber to some pretty thick new-growth jungle. We go slow to keep quiet, we can't see more than 10-15 feet in any direction. We eat the first meal of the day. We are low on water, so Art and I take the canteens down to the stream to fill them. The stream is about 20 meters away.

Art and I encounter a major trail, a "high speed runner". The tall timber keeps the trail well hidden from aircraft. You had to be on the ground to see it. Finding things like this is LRRP's job. This "trail" is wide enough, and smooth enough, to drive a jeep on it. This means this trail has a lot of foot traffic, not just someone going to grandma's house.

There is a little hooch set on low stilts by the trail. The trail goes close to the hooch and curves around the hill below it. There are several firing positions in an arch on the downhill side of the hooch, overlooking the trail. The opening/door to the hooch is on the uphill side. Don't see any people around.

Art decides to check the hooch out. His web gear makes him about three feet wide. We have left our packs with the rest of the team. Art sees some paper on a shelf inside the hooch. I pull security while he goes after the papers. He gets stuck in the door. I hear voices, not in English, from the other side of the hooch, about 10 feet away. I let Art know we have company. He is stuck in the door, he finally gets free, soundlessly. He tells me to take off while he pulls rear security. The "high speeder" is between us and the cover of the jungle.

"Think before you act". Not this time, I have a split-second mental lapse that will be fatal for David Ives. I take off too fast, and hit the brush too hard. This by a guy who spent his life in the woods and knows how to not spook wild animals. Art is watching the people, he says later that there was a woman and some men; the woman had something in her hand. When I hit the brush, she screams and throws the item in the air.

Everyone knows what happens when you make a woman mad. She turns to the men in her life, father, brothers, uncles, etc. and says, "What are you going to do about it"? I always tell everyone that the reason I was wounded is that I got a woman mad at me. Never make a woman mad, she will get even.

We get back to the other four guys. There is the 20 questions situation on why it took us so long to go 20 meters to get some water. We call in a sitrep.

We are on the NW side of the stream. There is a clearing on the hillside across the stream from us. It is big enough to get a chopper in. John decides to move over beside the field and set up for the night. We can hear someone following us as we move; we have a "trailer". When we get over by the field, we button hook to see if we can pick up our trailer. We set in the ambush for a while, but see nothing. It is getting late by now anyway. When it is darker we move about 20 yards to a different position that John had checked out before we button hooked. We are in a little cove with open timber on one side and the open field up the hill from us. There is heavy brush on the other two sides.

We can hear them getting into position during the night. Or is it a wild boar out there? Better to think it is Charlie and be ready. It now seems strange, but I sleep well that night, knowing that Charlie was out there and could hit us at any time. You get tired humping 100 lbs. through the jungle all day. I don't know how Geoff does it. He weighs about 150 lbs. Will Charlie try to crawl up on us during the night? I am wondering what it will be like to kill a man with a knife in hand-to-hand combat. I feel inadequately trained. Today I realize, a person can be trained on how to kill, but they cannot be trained to kill. Just do it.

I keep remembering one of the war stories of the time. A Special Forces guy was on a patrol like this, they hear Charlie crawling in on them, he rested the end of his rifle on his foot, when Charlie touches his foot, he shoots him.

It is Sunday, April 23, 1967. David and I have the 5-7 a.m. shift. I am not a morning person; I never have been a morning person. I sit up against my pack, which is in turn leaning against a tree. Don't sit up, it's easier to see you, too much target, but if I lay down I may go to sleep. Why do all of the Hollywood battles begin at dawn?

There is another problem. Either the LRP rations, or the malaria pills, have given me a diarrhea. This is a quandary. It is about 6:00 a.m.; the sun is just coming up. I tell Dave, pick up my rifle and some toilet paper and walk far enough away from the other guys and take care of the diarrhea. It is LRRP policy to not initiate contact. Perhaps all we have is a trailer. If I see someone, will I shoot before they do?

No problem, I don't see anyone, but I don't look too hard either. We know they are there, why look.

I go back to sitting against my pack while the other guys stir a little, ready to start another day. The next thing I know, I am laying about 8 feet down the hill from my pack. A hand grenade has blown me down the hill. I have just become LRRP's first WIA. I had heard nothing, I felt no pain, but I am dazed and knew I have been hit. Shrapnel has chewed up my face and left arm. My pack and the tree have taken most of the blast.

I crawl back up the hill to my weapon, ammunition and pack. As I get to the pack, a burst from an automatic weapon hits the ground in front of me. A lot of dirt and rocks kick up into my face. I think, "Whow, Just like in the movies." Weeks later I realized that one of the rocks is really a .45 caliber round which bounced off the ground, went through my lower left jaw, through the roof of my mouth and stops about ½ inch from my brain. It breaks my jaw, along with taking out about 8 teeth. The nerve to my left ear is severed along with several nerves to my left cheek.

The impact of the bullet knocks me out. After this, events are flashes of consciousness a few seconds long. I do not know in what order they occur.

I am trying to cover my sector and return fire, but I cannot see. I feel a lump under my left eye. Months later I realized that the lump is what is left of my eye and lower eyelid. If I put a little pressure on the lump, I get a little dizzy, but for a moment I can see some. I think, with the right pressure I will be able to see to return fire.

I try to raise my rifle to return fire, but my left hand is too weak to support it. I realize that a lot of the muscles of my left forearm are hanging in shreds. So I take my right hand and shove the muscles back where they belong. Do I think they would stay there? I don't know. It doesn't work, so I prop up my left arm, and rifle with my right hand, but when I move my right hand to the trigger, the rifle sinks, I need three hands.

Dave and I share a poncho to sleep on. We are literally shoulder-to-shoulder. The grenade exploded on Dave's side of me. Some time in there, I realize that Dave is dead. I guess it is because he is lying there on his back, not moving. I do not see any wounds on him. Geoff said later that Dave lived long enough to get the radio operational. Art said later that Dave was shot through the head. I don't know, maybe the grenade didn't get him and he was shot while working with the radio. I just know that Dave is dead.

I am passing in and out of consciousness. Art reaches up and yanks on my foot to wake me. The nerve damage from the bullet and the grenade concussion has almost deafened me, but I heard Art tell me to get the radio to him. I tell him I can't see to return fire. He said he knows that, so get the radio. I say Dave's dead. He said he knows that, that is why I need to get the radio to him.

Dave's pack with the radio in it is on the other side of Dave. So I crawl on top of Dave to reach his pack. This pack, with radio, weighs 80-90 lbs. I am lying on my chest, I reach out with my right hand and grab the pack to drag it down to Art. Gee, I can't pick it up. So I grab the pack and try to slide it down to Art. Try lying on your chest, then reach out with one hand and move an 80 lbs. canvas container. I do not get it all the way to Art.

I know that both Art and Geoff have been wounded. How do I know this? John and Doug are down the hill from me, I assume they are ok. Don't worry about what is going on behind you; take care of your sector. I made that mistake on a training maneuver at Ft. Myers, know better now. Training helps.

Where is the fear? No time for that, do your job, the other guys' lives depend on you.

"That is, you can't, you know, tune in"

"But it's all right"

"That is, I think it's not too bad."

(from the Beatles' song, "Strawberry Fields Forever")

I got the following note from Geoff in 2000, 33 years later:

*If the following is not some dream cooked up when I was a little out of it, I remember that when we arrived at the spot where we were attacked the next morning, Art and I laid down on a slope facing uphill behind the root of a very large tree that was next to us and that created a depression on the downhill side that was about 10" or so high; Ives was laying down to our front without any protection. You were behind a tree, to his left. When the shooting started we were screened by the fact that we were laying behind the tree root. At first both Art and I thought that there was firing coming from our rear (downslope as well as from our front) and he fired at least one M79 round in that direction. We then concentrated on the fire to our front. Now, our tree root gave us a problem, in order for Art to aim and fire he had to raise himself up higher than the root and he exposed himself - I believe that this is when he was shot in the arm. By now Ives had been shot at least once and was asking for help (even though he attempted to assemble the PRC25 whip antenna). When I tried to climb over the root I was shot in the chest that stopped me cold for some time (it could have been seconds or minutes - I don't remember). When I finally managed to crawl to him he was dead and the firing had slackened off to almost nothing. John and Fletcher were by this time making sure that there were no more live VC to our front and since I was now next to the radio I started to talk to An Khe (Ives had managed to get the radio going before he died). I was not as coherent as I thought I was and John took the set from me not long after I started talking.*

*An interesting sidelight to all of this is that when we got into position the night before, Art and I were laying right over the wild animal trail that we had followed into the clearing. That night while I was on watch (Art was also awake) and it was pitch black we heard a rustling noise coming from somewhere down trail from us. It kept getting closer and louder and we could now hear snorting along with the rustling. Art whispered to me that*

*it was a wild boar and while I was still prone pointed my CAR15 in the direction of the ever-increasing noises. Art, who was lying next to me, laid his CAR on my hip and pointed in the same direction. We could still see nothing but we decided that we would have to fire if it got much closer. However, at the last minute the boar (if indeed it was one) seemed to hesitate (maybe it smelled us) and moved off downslope into the brush. I have thought about whether or not our firing at the whatever it was could have either sprung the ambush prematurely (and saved us from being fired at when it was light and we were good targets) and possibly saved Ives who I don't think that they could have seen then.*

*I think what ultimately saved us was the fact that while you, Art, Ives and I were located in a group John and Doug were set up to our right and might have been as much as 10' away. When the VC checked us out at first light they may have thought that the four of us to their front constituted the whole group and did not realize that Fletcher and Simones existed until they began a heavy fire into their flank. I have an image of John and Doug standing and firing on full automatic across our front and into the ambush. I give John and Doug all of the credit in the world for fighting like tigers when the heat was on and giving us the chance to survive.*

*Merry Christmas,  
Geoff*

Art had been shot through both legs by the enemy behind us and through the left shoulder but he was still able to use "JoJo", the sawed-off M-79 "chucker". Art told me later that the enemy had tried a human wave assault. He fired an M-79 HE round into the line. It hit a woman in the chest. The head went up, the arms went out, the legs kept running, and the trunk disappeared. Try living with that memory.

I come to; Doug is carrying me to the chopper. He has me in his arms like a baby. Wait a minute, I weigh 225-230, Doug is about 6' 2" and 210 lbs or so, but not big enough to carry me alone. But he is doing it. John is walking beside him. Is he carrying some one too? I don't know, I don't care, its over!! Wait a minute; I have my rifle in my left hand. My right side is toward Doug. The rifle is dangling down. Is the weapon on safe? What if the trigger catches a branch and a bullet hits someone? I'd better check the safe. I can't lift my left arm, so I move my right hand to check the rifle. Doug says, "It's ok, it's over, it's over." His voice is so calm, like a father comforting a child with a bad dream. I don't remember actually being loaded on the chopper.

I come to, it is so cool. I lift my head and see my blood on the chopper floor. Hey, if I can see my own blood, I am going to make it, I am alive. I look out the side of the chopper at the forest below; so green, so quiet, so calm, just like my West Virginia hills. It would be fun to walk in the woods to watch the squirrels play in the trees. Maybe I can take the dog out this weekend and let it run a coon. I see feet to my left; there is a pool of blood around the feet. Someone is sitting on the bench. It is Art, he says, "It's ok, it's over, it's over, lay back down." At sometime I raise my head and look to my right, I see another pair of feet, no blood; I try to lift my head to see a face, I can't. Somehow I know this is Geoff. Where are John, Doug, and Dave? I guess they are taking another chopper. They would not leave Dave.

#### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

APR 25 67

Mr and Mrs Ova M Carpenter, don't phone, report delivery

The secretary of the navy has asked me to express his deep regret that your son, PFC William D. Carpenter was placed on the seriously ill list in Vietnam on 23 April 67 as the result of gunshot wounds to left arm, left thigh, buttocks, facial fractures and loss of left eye. He was on reconnaissance patrol when hit by hostile small arms fire. In the judgement of the attending physician, his condition is of such severity that there is cause for concern, but no imminent danger of life.

I come to again; they are taking me off the chopper. They pull me out and put me on a stretcher lying on the ground. A female in OD green fatigues, with short curly red hair and freckles bends over me. She smiles and I think I smile back. She is talking, but not to me. Little Orphan Annie is in the army. It's ok, it's over, it's over.

I come to; they are using scissors to cut my clothes off of me. Don't take my boots, I want to keep my boots, only guys who have "been there" have jungle boots.

I come to, I am on a gurney being wheeled down a hallway, someone is holding my hand.

I come to, they are putting me on an x-ray table, they lay me on my chest and extend my head forward. They then rest my chin on the table. PAIN, "You stupid son-of-bitch, the jaw is broken, this really hurts, pad my jaw some way." This is the first time I have felt any pain. I don't care whom this private is talking to or what their rank is. They padded my chin to do the x-ray.

I come to, Capt. **James** and Lt. **Hall** are standing by my bed. Privates salute officers, I sit up and salute them. Apparently John was with them but I don't see him. I come to again and say "Hi, Sir" and go back to sleep. I think the captain visits me several times.

A Donut Dollie wakes me up, -- would you like to write a letter home? -- I can't, my hand is messed up. -- I will write it for you—I don't know what to write. -- I'm sure you will think of something. I talk a little and go to sleep, she is still standing there when I wake up. This is repeated several times. I don't know how long it takes to write that letter.

"Nothing is real,"

"And nothing to get hung about."

"Strawberry Fields Forever"

28 April 1967

CARPENTER, WILLIAM D RA16887249

Awarded: Purple Heart

Reason: For wounds received in connection with military operations against a hostile force.

As soon as I am staying conscious for a while, I am put on a stretcher and loaded on a plane. The plane is gutted, and has metal racks to hold stretchers. We are stacked three high. I leave country completely naked, I have my pocketknife, my Buck hunting knife, and one dog tag in a bag on my stretcher. Why do I have only one dog tag? What happened to the other one? These three items are my entire memorabilia from VN, except for some shrapnel and one flattened rifle slug.

I am headed for a hospital in Japan, but it is full, so they send me to the hospital in Camp Zama. This will be my fifth temporary duty station in two months. My mail will never find me. The next day, a Japanese woman comes in to change the bed. She grabs the sheet on me and pulls it down, and screams. I am still naked. Someone brings me some pajamas.

At some time, I need to pee. I grab my IV stand and use it as a cane. The bathroom is only 2-3 beds away. I'm LRRP, I can walk that far. An E-6 medic is sitting at a desk at the other end of the room. He yells, where are you going? I tell him. Back in bed, I will bring you a pee jug.

A medic wakes me up. He wants me to sit up so they can x-ray my chest. They have brought a portable machine to my bed instead of wheeling me to x-ray. Nice of them to do that. Why do you want to x-ray me? You are not breathing well and you have a fever over 103. I don't know what ever came of that.

It is May 20, I am at the debarkation center in Japan, waiting for my flight home. I am 45 lbs. lighter than I was a month ago. They still have me in a bed. Up walks Geoff; he's headed home, too. How did he know I was here? He is ambulatory, but walks with a slump and has some difficulty breathing. The round had gone in his shoulder and ended up in the pelvic area, it did a lot of damage in between. But we are both alive. There is some small talk, and he leaves to catch his flight. What do you say to someone you had shared a look at death with, and survived? We do not communicate again for 32 years.

A bunch of us "walking wounded" are sitting on benches waiting to board the plane. An air force one-star general comes up and shakes each man's hand and says, "Thank you". When he comes to me, I stand up and come to attention. He tells me to sit back down, "I am here to salute you." Some officers cared.

On May 23, 1967, my birthday, the plane I am on lands in Denver. I am home. Happy Birthday Bill. A major gets on the plane, he is looking for Private Carpenter. What did I do this time? Majors do not escort privates. I am the first off the plane. Standing at the bottom of the ramp is my family. Really happy birthday Bill. My sister-in-law has basically raised hell with everyone until she finds out when I am coming home. "I'm sorry ma'am, we can not release that information." The Red Cross gets the information for her.

John, Doug, Art, and Dave all get Silver Stars and Geoff and I get Bronze Stars for this mission. Why did I get the Bronze Star? The only constructive thing I did was try to get the radio to Art. What I really did was get the shit shot out of a team. I guess six guys who are nine miles from home when they take on a bunch of the bad guys deserve something.

There is a very interesting postscript to this that I still cannot explain. In the fall of 1968, I am married and in college. One afternoon I receive a phone call from a woman who says she is Geoff's mother. She asked if I am the **Bill Carpenter** who had been in LRRP with Geoff **Koper**. Yes, I am. She said Geoff had died from his wounds. Geoff was from Princeton, NJ. I am in Ft. Collins, CO. Art had kept track of people and told me that Geoff was in college. How did she find me? I didn't ask.

Not very many people knew the connection between the two of us. I was speechless. My war is over; no more people are going to die in "my war". We are both safe in the real world. I made a few comments, but can't remember what else was said. I thanked her for calling me and hung up. This was before called ID and all of that stuff. After I hung up, I realized that I did not even know where to send flowers. Going to the funeral was out of the question.

Well, Geoff had not died. I still do not know who made the phone call, or why. A Denver newspaper had an article about Art a few weeks before. Geoff and I were mentioned. Perhaps some sicko war protestor wanted to try to extend their mental instability to me. It never occurred to them that the biggest opponent to war is the person being shot at.



## WHO ARE THESE GUYS?

by Glen McCrary

Any inaccuracies are unintentional and purely a result of the passing of thirty-six years. Corrections and comments are welcomed.

The following tale is not so much a war story as one of twists and turns and coincidences that resulted in this Soldier's journey from one unit to another and full circle back again.

It was on or about 1 Aug. 1970, at the time I had been in country since May serving with E Co. (Recon Platoon) 2/5, 1st. Air Cavalry. As the Recon Platoon for the Battalion we spent the majority of our time in the bush with an occasional stand down usually in Quan Loi. The duration of our missions necessitated that the unit periodically be re-supplied by Helicopter (Log Bird). While I don't recall the exact intervals for re-supply, I would guess Log Day occurred approximately once a week. In addition to the necessities required to sustain a force of approximately 20 men there was the occasional small supply of beer and ice and more importantly mail from home... Thank God for mail from home.

It was not unusual for the Log Birds to carry human cargo as well. Replacement troops or troops returning from R&R, sick call or wherever, would hitch a ride back to the unit. That being the case, on this particular Log Day we were not surprised to observe five men exit the Huey as it settled in for off-loading. Curiously, the soldiers emerging from the Slick did not look familiar and it was obvious they were not new replacements. Outfitted in camo fatigues with painted faces and sporting a strange array of weapons prompted the question, "Who are these guys?" It was apparent that the men of Echo Recon were in for a new experience.

Our Platoon Leader assembled the Squad Leaders for a briefing and it was revealed that the mysterious soldiers were a Ranger/LRRP Team from H Company assigned to perform a "stay behind mission". It was a well-known fact that our field units were prime suppliers to the VC and NVA. Our discarded items were valuable commodities to the enemy. In addition to food and other supplies carelessly abandoned, there was always the possibility that documentation identifying the unit or their intentions may also be thoughtlessly left behind.

We were instructed to consolidate all of the debris from the re-supplying activity into a centralized location and then to prepare to move out. The Ranger Team would take up a concealed position and "stay behind" to observe and attempt a prisoner snatch. In closing the Lt. asked for volunteers to stay with the Ranger Team. While I was no stranger to enemy contact I was more accustomed to a friendly force of twenty some odd men, not seven or eight. Nonetheless I nervously stepped forward along with two others and volunteered. While we were made to feel welcomed I have often wondered how the Rangers felt about having strangers attached to their Team.

To provide concealment the Ranger TL carefully selected a position behind a stand of small bamboo allowing for a clear line of fire to the ambush site. With the Team members in position the Recon Platoon packed up and moved out of the LZ. The rear guard of the Recon unit had not been out of sight for more than twenty minutes when two VC rushed to the bait. The trap was sprung with the blast of several Claymores and small arms fire. Miraculously, the first enemy raider danced through the wall of blistering steel never missing a step. The second, not as fortunate, went down...down, but not out! Armed with a M-1 carbine the wounded VC proceeded to lay well-directed fire on the Team's position. As if M-1 rounds splintering the bamboo just above our heads weren't exciting enough, there was more to come. The commotion from the firefight disturbed a colony of fire ants that boiled from the ground and immediately attacked

the Team. Man!!...Rounds sizzling overhead.... Fire ants making a meal of my exposed flesh...I thought, what am I doing here, had I learned nothing about volunteering?

In a matter of minutes, which at the time seemed like an hour, the small battle subsided and the TL directed the Team to move up to assess the results. At that point what moments before was a killing zone became a hospital zone as the Team did everything possible to save the life of their determined opponent. All attempts failed as the courageous VC had sustained a fatal chest wound. Further examination of the ambush site revealed a blood trail leading off into the bush indicating that the first VC was not as fortunate as first thought. An attempt to track the wounded VC failed as a typical afternoon downpour washed away the trail.

At that point Echo Recon returned to secure the LZ for the extraction of the Ranger Team. As we sat and talked one of the Team members was casually poking around in the dirt with his Kabar and happened upon a spent round, a quick glance around revealed that we were sitting in a direct line with our ambush position and the kill zone, the assumption was that the slug was from the M-1. Many times I have wondered what the chances were of finding that slug in the dirt. Is there a chance that the Ranger Team

member was having some fun and messing with my mind? To this day I don't know the answer to that question.

**And now..... the rest of the story:**

Unbeknownst to me at the time was the fact that before my tour was completed I would become one of "those guys".

In an effort to raise the performance level of the unit our new Platoon Leader felt that additional training was in order. Being a young aggressive First Lt. with stateside Ranger Training his first choice for our additional training was the in-country course at, you guessed it, H Company.

SSG. Al Rapp and myself were chosen to be the first to attend and reported for training on 4 Oct. 1970. Having been in the boonies for most of our five months in country we were unaccustomed to the harassment but fully recognized the value of the training and were determined to successfully complete the course.

After completing the course and the required training missions we had developed a strong appreciation for the small unit tactics and more so for the professionalism and dedication of the men of H Co. and discussed requesting transfers to the unit. In addition to our respect for the unit, rumor had it that the 2/5 was scheduled to stand-down, which would result in the dismantling of Echo Recon. The demise of Echo would undoubtedly result in its members being reassigned, many to line companies. We reflected back on the "stay behind" mission and concluded that if the enemy could easily track the movements of a twenty man Recon unit what chance did a large line company have of operating undetected. Besides, we did not feel that our 11F40 (recon/intelligence) MOS would best be utilized serving with a line unit. The pros far outweighed the cons and we requested the transfers.

As we all know nothing happens quickly in the military and Al and I returned to the Recon Platoon on 7 Dec. 1970 to anxiously awaited word on the transfers. Long story short, my transfer was approved, Al's unfortunately was denied. While disappointed that Al would be staying behind I looked forward to returning to H. Co. and reported on 14 Jan. 1971 to proudly complete my tour as one of "those guys".

Upon returning I was saddened to learn that Omer Carson, my first TL, had been killed in action on 7 Dec. 1970. Omer was one of the many warriors of H. Co. whose dedication, loyalty and soldiering skills played a large part in my decision to volunteer to return to the unit. I think of him often.

**Pop Quiz:**

Who were the team members on the stay behind mission? No seriously.... who were they, I don't remember.

## DAVID SHOWS' MEMORIES

The First Cav. LRRPS from early October 1967 through early October 1968.

Bill Carpenter issued a challenge for us to write down our individual perspectives of what LRRPS was when we knew the unit. I have attempted to do that.

This is not intended to be a definitive history of the unit, it is how I remember it, 40 years later.

After browsing the web site, eavesdropping on the posts, and corresponding with some of the other old guys, I have certainly discovered that there was a lot about LRRP that I never knew, and a lot that I may have known at one time that is now clouded by the passage of years.

As much as possible I am trying not to include specific incidents, except as they relate to my over all impressions of what the unit was. I may try to write down more of those later, unless some one has the good sense to tell me to shut up.

I was a 19-year-old E-4 mos 11B when I arrived in Viet Nam 8 October '67 after a tour of duty in Korea with the Mechanized Infantry. I was promptly assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav. Division.

Upon arriving at Ahn Khe I was assigned to an Infantry company (I don't remember the unit) and was told to store my gear in a hooch, and I would be transported to a training area for in country orientation. The company area was fairly deserted since the unit was in the field. Two young troopers came in to the hooch having just returned from the field for some reason. We introduced ourselves and I recall they were very welcoming and friendly to the new kid, and very up on what a good unit I was getting into. They made a special point of warning me that I might be approached by Long Range Recon Patrol which I had never heard of, and asked to volunteer. They warned me not to even consider it, assuring me that no sane person wanted any part of that.

As I recall the 1st. Cav.'s in country orientation lasted about three days, I still remember a couple of the classes and instructors, especially one very large spec 6 who did classes on medical issues, the guy should have had his own comedy show. I still remember several of his jokes. There was considerable introduction to weapons and equipment, a lot of which was in use nowhere else but Viet Nam at the time. A lot of us had never fired or trained with M-16's.

I got my first taste of rappelling from the tower in the training area.

"Graduation" was a "patrol" of about a company-sized group of us newbies. We were inserted by slicks to a fairly nearby hill outside of the camp, and basically camped out there overnight. There I met up with Bob Whitten, and we pretty much stuck together after that. Bob was also an E-4 and had done a previous tour in Germany.

When we returned to the training area, a LRRP Sgt. (I think it may have been the 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. but I'm not sure of that) came around and told us a little about the LRRP missions, and asked for volunteers. He stressed the idea that LRRPS only took volunteers, operated in 4 to six man units usually with Montagnard scouts, on six to ten day missions, operated considerable distances from friendly units, and primarily worked to locate and gain information on enemy units and movements getting in and out without being detected or making contact. He advised LRRPS also acted as forward observers for artillery and air strikes, and occasionally might be sent on ambush missions. He did not minimize potential dangers, but told us that generally the goal was to avoid direct contact.

The idea kind of appealed to both Whitten and I and we volunteered. The Sgt. then spent about 15 minuets individually interviewing each of the handful of guys who had volunteered, and both Bob and I were accepted. I always thought that what got me into the unit was being a squirrel and deer hunter.

He arranged for us to be taken back to our assigned units and pick up our stuff then take us to the LRRP company area. I remember running into one of the two guys I had met before, and he was quite upset that I had gone to LRRPS and told me that he was sure I was going to regret it "if you live long enough".

I arrived in the company area and went to what passed for an orderly room to report in. The 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt and another Sgt. were there and I remember them making fun of me for standing at attention when speaking to Sgts.

At any rate there was a dozen or so of us arriving to the unit at the same time, I can visualize several but have lost a lot of the names. We were divided into two "teams" for LRRP training in the company area. My team was Jim "Mack" McDonald, Mike Tebbitts, Bob Whitten, Larry Pappert, Chuck Awe, and myself. I wish I could recall some of the other names, the people I remember fairly well but the names are gone.

I don't remember a lot of the specifics about the training but as I recall it wasn't very long, perhaps two weeks at most. A lot of work on compass and map, directing artillery, and air support, we actually got to go

out and call in practice fire missions with live rounds, some medical training, I remember we had to practice establishing IV's by drawing blood from each other. There was more weapons training, and a good deal of close order drills moving in team formation, tactical reaction drills, rally points etc. More equipment familiarization. Radio procedures, coding and decoding. There was some rope training rigging mc guire rigs and swiss seats etc. I remember we even trained on making rope bridges (which we never actually used after training). There was some physical training, long runs, and the final exam was a long run around the perimeter of Ahn Khe with sand bags in our alicie packs, and weapons.

What I remember most about the training was how informal it was. There was absolutely none of the "military harassment" typical of most peacetime army training. I recall that one of the guys who came in with us announced that he couldn't do it. LRRP missions appeared too dangerous to him. There was no harassment or belittling of him, he was treated with respect and transferred out promptly. I remember clearly one of the instructors telling him and the rest of us that there was no shame in it, this work just wasn't for everybody, and he invited any one else who wanted out to just say so ASAP. No one did. The only psychological stress of that training was simply from being constantly reminded that we had to learn these skills very quickly and that if we "made it" our teams lives would depend on it, that and frequent reminders that if couldn't do any part of it we would be quickly reassigned.

We went out on a sort of short shakedown mission with Mac as TL, Tibbetts as ATL, and an Sr LRRP NCO acting as observer and adviser. I remember him quite well, but again do not remember his name. I remember meeting him again at Quang Tri months later. He was then with some other unit I think SF and came by to visit with some of the Montagnards. I remember that on that mission we were shown several actual booby traps and that a Montagnard who went with us was wounded on a punji stake and had to be medivacked while we continued.

After that mission we went through a regular debriefing, followed by an in depth individual critique from the NCO. We were then informed that we had made it and could call ourselves "LRRPS". From that moment forward we considered ourselves and went by "1<sup>st</sup> Cav LRRPS".

At that time the unit designation was actually 191 MI HHC LRRP but that was only our APO mailing address, as far as we knew we were simply "First Cav. LRRP". I don't recall that any training time had been spent on the history or founding of the unit, and I didn't know until quite recently that the unit had only existed for less than a year at the time I arrived.

I don't recall that there was ever any discussion of "RANGERS", there were of course RANGER qualified men in the unit, but I believe they were very much in the minority, we were "just" LRRPS, and very proud of it. Since we were all volunteers, I remember that guys had a pretty wide variety of MOSSs, including ones that were not normally thought of as combat MOSSs.

We were then sent to LZ English, where we spent several months pulling missions. John "Barney" Barnes was the senior team leader while I was there. Our groups stayed largely together. There was some shifting of personnel among teams since most missions were four G.I.s and two Montagnards. At times we didn't have enough Montagnards to go around and we had 6 man G.I. teams and four or five man teams with one Yard. I remember talk of at least one four man mission, but I don't remember anything about it, and didn't participate in it.

When we weren't pulling missions we spent most of the time reading, playing cards, and goofing off, with frequent "tourist trips" into Bong Son. Our AO on English was pretty much isolated from the rest of the base, surrounded by concertina. The scout dog platoon was our nearest neighbor and as I remember it we were both pretty much left to ourselves, we always though it was because the officers and NCO's of other units considered us more than a little "non military" and they were afraid we might corrupt regular troops. Generally we kind of reveled in that reputation, and the attitude of regular infantry types that we must be seriously deranged to operate in such small units. I remember a high ranking old timer NCO berating several us at a mess hall because of the way we were dressed (tigers, mixed with jungle fatigues, and woodland camo, go to hell hats, no helmets or flak jackets, non issue weapons etc), and John Barnes telling him that these were our uniforms and should be afforded the same respect as any other U.S. uniform.

Frequently we just told people that questioned us that we weren't soldiers, we were lrrps.

I was always cognizant that we had teams operating out of other LZs, but we didn't have a lot of contact. Primarily "our" world and our unit consisted of the teams that operated out of LZ English. We knew that we had a company and a company commander but we didn't see them very often. For us the boss was the Lt. in charge of our area on the LZ. While I was there our officers did not go to the field with us, teams

were generally led by an E-5 or E-6, and at times by an E-4. I remember that ranks were very unimportant to us and frequently the team leader would be "outranked" by newer guys on the team.

The team leader was boss regardless of rank. I was only ever personally involved in one mission that included a Lt.

At English we lived in about three large army tents on cots. The tents were ringed by sandbag walls. I don't believe that we had any bunkers there. We went to a nearby unit's mess hall.

I don't recall when my group began splitting up, but I suspect it was around the time that Mac and Mike were sent off to Recondo School.

I also cannot recall how long I was at LZ English, but I do remember celebrating Christmas there. So we were there at least into 1968.

I believe but am not sure that we were still at LZ English when we were re designated as Co E 52<sup>nd</sup> Inf. LRP. I'm told now that that happened in January of 1968. If I ever knew that we were a part of the 75<sup>th</sup> regiment, I had completely forgotten it, I don't think I ever knew it. For us that was just an APO address change, the teams and the missions really remained the same. We still called ourselves "1<sup>st</sup> Cav LRRPS" I don't recall that we ever had any authorized insignia, although guys sometimes had "LRRP" embroidered onto the slash of the Cav Patch, and some of us had "Long Range Recon Patrol" patches made up as a banner to sew on over the Cav patch. I still have one of them. These were never authorized. I don't believe that I ever saw the emblems and banners that I now see on the web site.

At some point we moved from LZ English en mass north to Quang Tri. I remember there was a bit of anxiety in that we were told that we wouldn't be dealing with VC up north, it would be mainly NVA regulars.

We packed up the entire area onto deuce and a half trucks, and joined a convoy of other Cav units headed north, the trucks were loaded to the hilt and we primarily rode on top of the loads. We drove to the ocean and were loaded onto a Navy LST.

The LST had US Navy markings but the crew was Japanese merchant marines. While we were on board the ship put out to sea to ride out a storm, and I recall that is the sickest I have ever been in my life. To this day I have zero interest in a cruise, or even fishing out of sight of land. We landed on a beach in a marine controlled area and proceeded to Quang Tri. From reading on the web site I gather that this was LZ Betty, I don't recall that, I thought we always just referred to the place as "Quang Tri". We were quartered in a ruined shell of a building that I think was a remnant of a colonial plantation near one corner of the LZ. The Lt's quarters and orderly room was a tent surrounded by sand bags between this building and the corner of the base. The long side of our building faced the perimeter wire. We divided up the area in the building into numerous "apartments" with walls constructed of rocket boxes filled with dirt. Bob and I stole three 4x8 sheets of plywood from the mess hall area at the other end of the base, near the tall tower and open cistern, and used them to make a roof for our apartment, which was in one corner of the building. Army tents were then stretched over the steel roof frame of the building.

That LZ was frequently targeted by rockets while I was there, but they were very ineffective, they had to be fired from a considerable distance and the enemy did not have the benefit of advanced launchers. You could see the rocket coming from a long way off then it would flame out and we couldn't see it until it hit. A trench was added between our building and the command tent for use as a bunker, but I don't think we ever used it. Generally when rockets were fired we would sit around and watch the infantry types diving for holes and try to predict whether or not the rocket was going to hit the base, most did not. We always did our best to convince the regular troops that we were completely nuts.

We stayed there for some time pulling missions, again I don't remember how long, but long enough that the LZ began to be home to us.

Some time around April of 1968 part of our group including Bob Whitten, were sent up to Khe Sahn (sp?). After awhile I was sent to join them at Khe Sahn it seems to me that I was only there for a day or so when the company commander came to me and informed me that he was promoting me to Sgt and sending me back to Quang Tri to be a team leader. Soon after returning to Quang Tri I ran afoul of a highly propelled foreign object and was medivaced out. I remember that when I came out of initial surgery I think the same day, Bob Whitten, and a couple of other guys came to the hospital to see me. I think but I'm not sure that the other guys may have been Bob Ankony, and Chuck Awe. I never had the slightest idea where the hospital was in relation to our LZ, by this time Bob had also been sent back to operate out of Quang Tri. I ended up medivaced out of country.

By the time I returned to duty with LRRP (Co E 52<sup>nd</sup> Inf. LRP), I was sent to Camp Evans. There was a much larger contingent of the unit there, including a training unit for new members, Bill Hand was doing

the training of new guys then. The unit's actions in the Ausha Valley, and Signal Hill, had already taken place by the time I returned to duty, Bob Whitten had been killed, Mike Tebbits was wounded and medivaced out not long after I rejoined the unit. Chuck Awe was still with the unit but had been pulled from field duty and would soon be sent home because they had discovered that he was allergic to malaria pills. I remember Chuck worked a lot as the company RTO during that time. Mack Mc Donald was still there but was very short and derosed out ahead of me. Larry Pappert had been wounded before me and sent back to the states.

I became a team leader and continued to pull missions from Evans for the rest of my tour. I remember that there was considerable consternation that some of our teams were being used at Lp and Op positions just outside of the perimeter, which we did not feel was an appropriate use of LRRPS. I was never involved in any of those missions but continued to do more typical scouting missions. When I arrived at Evans we were living in Army tents but soon after plywood cabins were built for us with tents stretched over them for roofs. The outer walls were protected with sand bags.

I remember that LRRP at Evans was different than what I had experienced at English, and at Quang Tri. We even had a couple of actual military type formations in the company area. I don't recall ever having a formation before that, other than a single team lined up for equipment inspections before a mission. We even had a regular supply room (tent) and our own supply Sgt. Kirkendal. We never did have our own mess hall, but at Evans we did have our own command radio bunker in the company area. At Evans we frequently got cold beer, which we did not have at English or Quang Tri.

General make up of a "standard" six man team during my tour was the Front Scout, followed by the Team Leader, followed by the RTO, followed by the Medic, followed by the Assistant Team Leader, followed by the Rear Scout. Five man teams were not uncommon.

Equipment wise:

We were all issued standard M-16's and a few CAR 15's without slings and the swivels taped up, as primary weapons, but a lot of guys carried other weapons instead of the 16 which was pretty much universally distrusted, due to its unbelievable tendency to jam. Every one kept a single section of cleaning rod handy in a pinch you could kind of throw this section down the barrel with the bolt locked open to force out a stuck ctg case. I remember that one of the last things we did before going out on a mission was to test fire the 16's into 55 gallon drums buried into the side of a hill to make sure they would work. Even when they did we always wondered if they would work the next time. A lot of guys used makeshift slings since we didn't carry issue ones usually a section of rope tied to the stock behind the pistol grip, and to the front sight assembly allowing you to carry the rifle in a horizontal attitude at the ready and instantly shoulder it. I had acquired an M-14 with an early version of a synthetic stock and a 4-power side mounted scope, and usually carried that. A few guys carried AK-47s, I remember one guy who carried an automatic shotgun he had sent from home, and a claymore bag full of loose 00 buck rounds. One guy (Bob Ankony) was very much enamored of WW II grease guns and frequently carried one. Quite a few of us also carried pistols, mostly "illegal" privately owned ones, and a few issue 1911s.

I think we were supposed to carry 11 magazines for whatever weapon we were carrying, but frequently carried more. Each guy carried at least 4 frag grenades, two trip flares, and one smoke grenade. At some point I recall our LT insisted each man carry one WP grenade. (I was scared to death to have that thing on my person, and didn't carry one whenever I could get away with it). Everyone carried one 6 rnd bandoleer for the M-79 except for the man actually carrying the 79 who generally carried more.

The M-79s we had all had had the stocks cut off, and the rear sights removed, and were generally carried strapped to the back pack or in it with the handle sticking out. I do recall one guy who had rigged up a kind of belt holster for it and carried it that way. (Ala Josh Randal Wanted Dead or Alive). I don't recall who in the team carried the 79, I think it varied.

The Team Leader and ATL usually each carried a set of binoculars, and sometimes we also carried a 40 X spotting scope. Frequently but not always we had a first generation starlight scope. Very heavy, bulky, and primitive by today's standards.

Each guy carried a map and compass, (can you imagine what we would have given for a GPS? probably would not have been lost nearly as often) and small notebook. Everyone was required to take running notes of movements and everything that happened on a mission. (I'd give a lot if I had been smart enough to keep those notebooks). The team leader also carried the SOI book on a lanyard around his neck.

We all carried one LRRP ration per each day of the mission (and as many extra as we could find room for) and one quart of water for each day of the mission, again extra if we could make room. Our Lrrp rations

made us the envy of other troops who had to rely on C rations. I think everyone really liked the Irrp rations, I still eat them from time to time, although the manufacturer (Mountain House) has dropped all but a couple of the original menus. Water was carried in at least two one-quart canteens per man, plus two-quart soft-sided canteens (we liked these because they could be compressed when empty and didn't take up so much space, but they were sort of fragile and frequently developed pin holes) and 5-quart plastic bladders. We were always low on water and looked for every opportunity to refill with ground water. Everyone had a canteen cup with the handle broken off to cut down noise. There was usually one or two "stoves" made from a c-ration can per team and shared as we heated water one team member at a time. We usually carried a pound or two of C4 explosive, which we used for heating the water. Most importantly we each carried a plastic spoon salvaged from a C ration in our breast pocket since Irrp rations did not include spoons. Each team member carried a claymore mine, except for the RTO and the ATL. The guy assigned to carry the aid bag was the "medic". At least on the teams I served on we did not have specially trained medics.

On a couple of missions we carried one or two LAWs, but not very often. I was on one mission where we carried an M60 machine gun, but that happened only once on a special "heavy team".

The RTO of course carried the radio (PRC25 what an improvement over the PRC 10's and PRC 6's used by the Army in other theaters) and the ATL generally carried a back up radio, and each of the rest of us carried a spare radio battery. I remember how we had to break up the radio batteries when we changed them, and bury and conceal the pieces to keep the VC from using them. (Now my sons and I use little pocket radios with several miles range that are about the size of a pack of cigarettes and run on a couple of pen light batteries, wouldn't that have been great back then.)

Of course none of us ever went anywhere without our survival knives, which we used for darn near everything. We would spend every free moment sharpening those things, then dig a hole with them, and start all over again.

Each guy carried a couple of small squeeze bottles of mosquito (and leech) repellent. I remember how just a tiny drop of that stuff would cause a leech to curl up and drop off you. On base areas we sometimes would douse one of those huge centipedes with the stuff and light them the stuff was quite flammable. We each carried either a half a poncho or more commonly half a poncho liner. We always cut these in half because we were afraid of getting tangled up in them if we used a whole liner to sleep under, a half one would more or less barely cover you when you slept.

There was always one or two signaling mirrors on the team, one or two strobe light signal devices, such as are commonly carried on small boats. We usually carried a few of the hand operated aerial parachute flares. Unbelievably we found room for almost everyone to carry extra "personal" stuff, cigarettes, extra grenades, camouflage paint sticks, cleaning gear for the weapons etc.

Those ended up being damn heavy packs, but at 18 or 19 years old they were manageable.

The team leader was normally advised of a mission a day in advance, and notified the assigned members to start getting their gear together for the number of days required. The team leader usually, but not always went on a fly over of the assigned area and planned insertion LZ with the Lt.

We would then have a briefing detailing specifically where we were going and what we would be looking for. Each member would be told who was carrying what equipment, what units we were to use for artillery, ARA, medivac, and their frequencies, code words, E&E azimuth etc. Then would then have a second briefing where each member was quizzed as to all of these details and had to know the coordinates of our intended insertion, who was carrying what equipment, and the radio frequencies of units who were supposed to support us.

We primarily were inserted by three Huey slicks accompanied by two gun ships. (Most of the gun ships were just Hueys with rocket pods and mini guns added, late in my tour we started to see the "new" Apache gun ships). The team would be on the first slick traveling at low level followed by the other two running one after the other. I believe our Lt. generally rode in the last slick. The lead slick would pull close to the ground at a pre-selected LZ usually a small open saddle on a ridgeline, and the team would jump off. The ship seldom actually landed, and a few times we jumped from ridiculous heights that would scare me to death now. (I do have a story about one of those jumps on a team with Glover, but that's for another time) The other two ships would pass overhead and continue on and the team's ship would fall into place as the third one in the line leaving us behind. The theory was that from a distance folks on the ground would see three ships moving at treetop level over an area and never realize that an insertion had been made, unless of course an observer was close enough to actually see us off loading. These insertions were usually made just



before dark. For the most part I think this worked reasonably well. We would move into the heaviest cover available and wait for full dark then move to an overnight area to listen and make sure we were alone. I also participated in at least one "walk" off mission where we inserted by foot after dark by walking out of a small unit LZ, and traveling by foot to our assigned area. I was on one leave behind mission where we went out with a company sized infantry unit patrolling through an area and when we got near our assigned patrol area and the unit would stop for a short break we would hide in the woods and let the infantry unit walk off and leave us behind.

Our assigned area was a four thousand meter square surrounded by another thousand-meter buffer zone. Generally there were several areas in that four thousand square meter area that we were assigned to physically inspect for trail activity and other evidence of enemy activity, including actual sightings of enemy troops. This area was designated as a no fly and no fire zone for other units. Ships were not supposed to over fly this area unless they were in contact with us, and when ships occasionally did stray into our area we hid from them and tried our best to get them called off because we knew we would look a whole lot like the enemy from the air. An arbitrary point outside of the assigned area was designated and rather than giving locations in map coordinates we would give them in terms of distance from the pre designated point.

I had several months to go on my enlistment after I rotated back to the states, which I spent at Ft. Hood, I know that at some point I learned that the LRRPs had become RANGERS some time after I left. While I was at Ft. Hood I met up with Chuck Awe, and boy was I glad to see him. We were only together for a short time and until recently he was the last LRRP I had any contact with, although I did stay in contact with the Whitten family for several years. Now 40 years later Chuck Awe and I are exchanging e-mails and I have managed to make contact with several others that I remember from the unit.



## Dale Markovich

When I reported for duty at An Khe, Capt. Tucker was there CO and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Kelly was the top NCO. That was June '67. There was training and PT for a week or so. Training was small squad tactics, compass, artillery, calling sitreps, commo procedures, lots of running around An Khe, radio watch, quick reaction, and team E & E. Reaction depended on situation, attack from the front, rear, or flanks. One-by-one break contact and fall to the rear, take up position and the next member peels and so far down the line until contact is broken. Most of the time the contact was a superior force and you had to wing it.

I then reported to Phan Thiet, on the ocean coast south of Saigon. I ran several missions as Radio and ATL. I believe Lt. Utter was the platoon leader and SSGT Campbell platoon sergeant.

The missions were mostly OP and roving patrol, reporting anything out of the ordinary. We did have several chances to make contact and our team had several kills. The enemy in the area seemed to be at that time VC militia, VC regulars and some NVA regulars but not many. The weapons we brought back were an SKS carbines vintage 1944, one M-1 Garand, one M-1 carbine, several AK-47s, and several modern SKS's. The web gear and grenades were ChiCom, and a mixture of other stuff.

After several weeks I went to Recondo School for training. I really enjoyed the course and the Green Berets who taught it were something else. I compared it to a nine week Ranger course condensed into three weeks. It was the only army course where you had to pull an actual combat mission to complete.

I graduated and returned to Phan Thiet. We were moved to LZ English in Bong Son area. LZ English, LZ Albany, LZ X-ray. The terrain was different some jungle a lot of mountains. Phan Thiet was flatter with brushy mountains, plains, and very little jungle.

I was made TL at Bong Son. We ran different missions here. G-2 wanted us to seek out and find the enemy, follow trails, find camps, supply and rest areas, set up ambushes, and if the opportunity arose, take prisoners. The locals were told to stay out of certain areas and not travel at night. It could be dangerous for them.

In Phan Thiet and Bong Son we always had fly overs to check our AOs and look for LZ sites. The chopper that took us in was the same chopper that took us out. We had choppers assigned to us. We also had a Red, White, Blue teams from the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> to help us if we needed them. They were on 24 hour call.

Capt. Tucker was replaced by Capt. Gooding. Tucker later died when a chopper he was riding in was shot down. 1st Sgt. McDermott was killed when a jeep he was in hit a mine. He was sent home. An LRRP named Dickenson was killed in the explosion. I really missed those people. They were good LRRPs and soldiers.

The division CO changed, Abrams was replaced by Tolson. The rules of the game changed also. We had three or four teams in each area the Cav was in. And the Cav was everywhere, I Corps, II Corps, III Corps, where ever the Cav was, there were LRRPs. G-2 wanted us to take a more hands on position with our missions. There were Ops but now they wanted us to seek out and destroy the enemy with every means available.

The enemy was mainly VC regulars and some NVA, armed better with the latest weapons plus RPGs and light machine guns.

Now we started to run into trouble, several LRRPs were KIA and WIA. We always had two teams in the field, a third team resting, and the fourth team ready to go. Each team was in the rear for up to 48 hours then out again for 3-5 days, depending on the mission.

The gear each team carried depended on the AO we were going into. Some teams had four Americans and two ARVN scouts, or five Americans and one ARVN scout. Each American carried:

- A weapon, M-16 or CAR-15
- 10-12 magazines of 19 rounds each
- 1 magazine of 19 tracers

We used the tracers on infiltrations, just in case the LZ was hot. Six men firing tracers on auto sometimes got us out of a bad situation. Quite impressive at night especially when the rounds are coming at you.

- 8-10 grenades
- 1 white phosphorous grenade
- several boxes of ammo for reloading magazines
- hand popper
- flares
- rope for extraction
- 1 claymore
- clicker for claymore
- popper flares for trip wires
- at least two smoke grenades
- 1 CS "tear gas" grenade
- 1 battery each for the PRC -25 radio

The TL and ATL carried high frequency radios.

Medic carried the squad medic bag

Radio man carried the radio

Knives, machetes, hand ax, shovel, pistol were optional

Food and water depending on AO, type of mission and how many days out

2-3 LRRP rations a day per choice

a one lb. block of C-4 to heat our water for coffee or LRRP rations, or to blow things up

Everyone on my team carried a thermite grenade, just in case we'd have to drop packs and run. The thermite grenade would burn everything, even melt metal. That way we let nothing fall into enemy hands.

We carried enough gear to supply a VC platoon.

Next we moved to the Central Highlands, LZ Stud I believe was the name of the LZ we were at. Now things got real hairy for LRRPs. Lots of mountains and jungle, bad jungle, triple canopy jungle. Sometimes so thick very little light would get through. Brush so thick you could walk into an enemy's camp before you noticed. It happened to some teams, walked right into enemy positions.

G-2 had the same orders for us, seek and destroy. Open LZs for infiltration and extraction were few and far between. Some LZs had enemy watchers on them. They would report any landings. Some LZs were booby trapped, sharpened stakes, punji pits, even mines. We had to set up radio relay stations on friendly LZs or set up our own on mountain tops because some of our missions were far from friendlies. We didn't trust ARVN LZs. There was a trust factor in those days, because some of the ARVN officers on down were VC. The ARVNs were always talking about LRRP and Green Beret missions. Charlie would know also.

The VC in the area were hard core VC and NVA regulars, and were armed with the best and latest. One of our LRRP teams captured the latest ChiCom sniper rifle. The army had never seen one before. One of our teams captured a Chinese advisor. We had heard some rumors of Chinese and Caucasians being seen raveling with the enemy, dressed in camos and carrying weapons. Plus reports of women VC carrying weapons, they knew how to use them, also. Most of them carried M-16, I wonder where they got them.

The VC and NVA had gotten wise to recon units, Marines, army, Green Berets. Now we had VC and NVA teams that were hunting down our recon teams. They got special training to do it. Some even had 'Yard scouts training them. We had 'Yard scouts, they were very tough and hard core. We took several KIAs and WIAs in the Central Highlands. We even had an LRRP team overrun right after they set up for the night. Two KIAs and three WIAs on one team. These enemy hunter teams were getting good at their job.

Some teams reported hearing dogs in the jungle. Were they tracking us? Not sure but we started carrying black pepper and red hot pepper we could spread on the trail behind us, just in case. We also set up a lot of booby traps on trails we came upon. We never used trails, so we were pretty sure no friendlies did either.

We also ran missions for people dressed in civilian clothes, we called them "spooks". We'd set up electronic devices in valleys and trails, far away from any friendly areas.

We next moved to Camp Evans, for the Khe Shan operation and Tet. For the Khe Shan operation I was sent to a Marine Force Recon unit on an LZ called Witch's Tit. A mountain 400-500 ft. high with the LZ built on top of the highest ridge. We sleep under the LZ pad. There was only enough room for a Chinook to land. I think the LZ was 50' by 50'. I was there to run a radio relay station plus share intelligence with Marine Ops and LRRP Ops. On several occasions I called our choppers in to pull out their teams when they got into trouble. I was there until the relief of Khe Shan was over.

The Cav moved to Camp Evans while I was gone. I reported to Evans and was made a Platoon Sergeant. I also trained new LRRPs and took out future team leaders to judge them whether they were good enough or not. The terrain was mainly brush and rolling hills, to the west were the mountains. The LRRPs could only move at night because of the terrain and vegetation. Hole up during the day light. The Battle of Hue took place during the Tet Offensive.

I took teams out and had some good missions. We even had a chance to make some kills. Most of the time we called in artillery, jets, or B-52s. We also called in line troopers. A lot of troopers didn't want us to go out on missions, because we always found something for them to do. G-2 had us search, find them, get into trouble, and bring in troopers to pull us out. The LRRPs did stir up a couple of hornet's nests that turned into large battles that wiped out a lot of Hardcore VC and NVA regulars.

The last operation I was on was A Shau Valley. Bad AO, bad intelligence, bad operations, bad orders. G-2 wanted the LRRPs to repel onto a mountain top, set up an LZ, and put radio relay and artillery pieces in. Not a good mission for LRRPs. They LRRPs went in, and got shot up in the choppers they were on. G-2 never told us there were NVA on the mountain. After setting up a perimeter and retrieving the wounded, the LZ got probing attacks, after several days, more troops came in, plus more LRRPs, and expanded the LZ. With resupply and the wounded taken out, the LRRPs settled down to business running missions and gathering intelligence. Then it happened, the LZ was attacked again and three LRRPs killed. Snipers got all three.

I had less than 30 days left in country. SSgt. Barnes came and asked me to go and help SSgt. "Mac" McDonald run the LZ. The platoon leader had been wounded in the attack and Mac was in charge. I gathered my gear and left on the next chopper. The NVA knew they couldn't overrun the LZ so they set up snipers to keep us busy. Most of their manpower were getting their butts kicked down in the valleys by the Cav.

Mac and I spent most of our time crawling from foxhole to foxhole directing fire, picking out targets, calling in artillery, getting shot at, and once in a while mortar rounds. Due to the high range and steep incline the rounds weren't accurate, just annoying. There were only two usable trails into our LZ, no more mass attacks occurred.

One night I got a radio call. I was told I was three days AWOL. I was supposed to report to base camp to go home. I told them to come and get me. They did and within 24 hours I was on my way home. I never knew what happened after that until the first LRRP reunion I attended. After that, my nightmares went away.

Our living conditions varied according to the areas we were in and how often the LZs would get hit. At Phan Thiet we lived in bunkers, Bong Son tents with walls made of sand bags all around them, Central Highlands, we lived underground or pits with sand bags around each pit. It was the same at Camp Evans, graves, 6' X 4' X 3' deep with sand bag walls. Some LRRPs were almost buried alive when a round landed close to our area.

The whole time I was with the LRRPs, I never at in a mess hall. We never had our own and we wouldn't supply KPs, so we couldn't eat in some other units. Other units didn't like us around them. We'd wear our tiger stripes, carry ChiCom weapons, no insignia or rank on our uniforms. We use to go to the EM and NCO clubs, but we'd usually get drunk and fight our way out. Some trooper would say something and was all it would take. We us to fly back to base camp and buy stuff at the PX and get our beer, wine, booze at the supply NCO clubs. We'd either buy the booze or trade weapons, NVA uniforms, web gear and patches, helmets, etc for it.

One time we bought so much stuff we couldn't put it on our chopper to fly back to the one LZ. We had to "borrow" a ¾ ton truck and a jeep and catch a convoy back to our area. We put new numbers on the jeep and truck and used it until we moved to another area. We left the "borrowed" vehicles at the airstrip. Our LT and Sgt didn't want to know where the vehicles came from. Our LT and Sgt. did use the jeep a lot, and the truck came in real handy when we had to get to the airstrip with all our gear, or pick up a team coming back.

We had to steal, or trade for, everything we wanted. We got OCO landing strips to build the roofs on our bunkers. We got sand bags and lumber, furniture, refrigerators, coolers, BBQ grills, steaks, hamburgers, potatoes (real ones), eggs, real ice cream, and milk. We built a bar, lounge area, the engineers plowed a huge hole for us and built us a 20' by 50' underground bunker, we had three layers of sand bags for a roof, PCP walls, and ceilings. We used it for a lounge, bar, radio room, and CP. When our unit moved, our old area was highly sought out by troops replacing us.

We had some great parties and Bar B Qs. Ask the Red Cross and USO girls, everyone attended, even off duty MPs. MPs didn't bother us after we CS'd their area one night. .Many night Doc Gilcrest and I would pass out under the stars on top of one of the bunkers. Doc was my medic and ATL on many missions. We were very close, he became unit medic.

The attitude of the LRRPs towards the war was different form the regular troopers. Most of us were airborne rangers, some asked to go to Nam. We were all volunteers for the LRRPs, so we knew what we were getting into. Many troopers said we were insane for what we did, four or five Americans going out on a mission. Doing some of the things we did, I know I felt safer with those LRRPs than at any other time. Everyone knew what to do and what was expected from them, we looked out for each other. I never ordered my men to do something I wouldn't do first.

We were brothers then, and the rest of our lives. Even though I didn't see them or hear from them, I think of them often. We were all glad and proud of what we did, what we were, and who we were.

Many men should have gotten more medals and recommendations than they did. Everyone should have gotten a medal for bravery every time they went out on a mission, or returned from one. The brass said, why give them a medal when they are just doing their jobs, what was expected of us. Medals didn't mean that much to us, our friends and co-LRRPs meant everything to us. Duty, Honor, Comrades.

This issue with the teams carrying M-79s: it depended on the AO we were working in. In open area we carried two, the TL and ATL, and everyone carried six rounds. The M-79 round would have to travel 15-20 feet before it armed itself to explode. If in a dense jungle area, they were useless, Ops ok. I shot a VC one time, the round didn't go off. I hit him in the head, it killed him anyway. There were other rounds for the M-79, CS, flares, shot shells, etc, etc. If the mission called for its use, we carried it. When we were in the Central Highlands and around the DMZ, the jungle was too dense. During the Battle of Hue and Tet, the M-79s were used quite often, open areas, towns, cemeteries, etc.

Some of us chose to carry AKs. Some missions called for carrying AKs. We'd set up on ambush and when we fired our weapons the enemy would signal us to stop. They thought we were VC or NVA because we were using AKs and they saw our ARVN scouts. They were really surprised when we didn't stop firing and mowed them down. The M-16 sometimes jammed, the problem was finally corrected, lot of good men died anyway.

I carried an AK-50 when I was in the rear areas. That's an AK with a folding metal stock. We would wear our tigers everywhere also. One time we went to an Air Force base at Dong Ha to buy beer and supplies. We had to wait till the supply store opened. We went to the nearest EM bar to get drunk, they weren't going to let us in because they thought we were mercenaries or CIA spooks. Naturally we didn't tell them anything different. We were finally let in and had a couple of drinks and left. It made us feel good and added a spring to our step when we went anywhere and people stared at us.

I remember going with Capt. Gooding to a couple of meetings. I carried my AK-50 and NVA web gear, tailor made tigers and floppy hat or Black Beret. I would stand at parade rest or attention right next to him, or right behind him. The other officers would give us a look, or not look at us at all. Gooding and I thought it was very humorous, good PR for the LRRPs.

When we went to recruit new members, we looked the best we could, whether it was in tigers or tailored camo jungles. The Black Beret was everything, we even wore it on missions. Finally, orders came down from command that we weren't allowed to wear tigers or carry ChiCom weapons in rear areas. The Black Beret was banned from use in the rear. We only wore it on forward LZs, we still carried AKs, just not at base camps.

I guess command didn't want anyone to be different from everyone else. We were finally ordered to wear steel pots everywhere, except on missions. The rules and regulations got so Mickey Mouse in the rear areas, that we tried to avoid going anywhere when we weren't on a mission. The forward LZs were OK, but not base camps.

I think that's about it. I hope I didn't bore you. I hope you were able to read my writing. Machines and I are not user friendly. I tend to get mad and break them. It does get kind of expensive. If you need anything, let me know.

Dale Markovich  
 "Mark"  
 67-68 LRRPs

#### POSTSCRIPT

I may not be accurate with some of the names, but the men on my teams I'll never forget, some of the others I might forget. If we spent more than a couple days together, it was not very often. We would stay with the people we were most at ease with. Dean Brown, John Hardesty, Steve Fox, Rufus Bacon, "Lucky" Wells, Roy Olson, Dave Reber, "Bugger Red" Rubin, Al Volkel, Greenfield, Tucker, Noto, Turbitt, Lambert, Hand, Curtis, Parkinson, Mac, Barnes, Campbell, Hall, James, Gentry, Glover, Brown, Teagle, Modolo, Perez, Juan Elias, Cline.

We were lucky we spent a day or two with the other LRRPs. Most of the time we were in the field, where we wanted to be or on forward LZs. My closest and best friend was Doc Gilchrest. We shared a lot, drank a lot, got into mischief together a lot. I still care a lot about him.

There was a time in '67 and '68 when what LRRP teams saw, or reported, was questioned by rear-echelon intelligence officers who had never been in the field. G-2 and S-2 in certain areas said some teams had falsified sitreps or contact in order to be pulled from the field early. I had never seen or heard about any team making false reports in any of the areas I was in. There were rumors that the unit was to be split up and sent to the line companies. It got so bad, G-2 wouldn't believe us unless we brought back proof of kills or made contact. When an LRRP team made contact or pulled an ambush, the first order of business was getting the kill out of there. Not walking through the area looking for weapons, gear, or bodies. One of my missions was questioned by G-2 because we had killed two VC. G-2 said the area was clean and void of Charlies. A line company had just been through the area within the last 24 hours and reported it squeaky clean. We got picked up and taken back to the LZ. When, much to my surprise there were several officers in nice clean, starched jungles waiting for us. We unloaded the chopper, walked up to our onlookers, and dropped weapons and gear from the dead Charlies right at their feet. We turned around and walked back to our area for a hot meal and shower. No one spoke about what had happened. It turned out there was a list of names taken from the gear that were VC militia or supporters, or name of interest from the villages in our area. Never heard anything else about the mission. Did our debriefing

and went to get some cold beer. We prove our point, and disgust, for G-2 and S-2's attitude.

Like I said there were bad missions, bad areas, and bad prior intelligence. Some times we were told there was to be no team extraction and either sit tight or go to another area. Sometimes we had primary and secondary objectives, if one failed, do the other. We were given little choice in our missions. If we didn't like them we did them anyway. If we didn't do it someone else would have to.

Truth be known, there were no braver men anywhere, no finer, no more committed, better trained, or dedicated to doing their jobs than the members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav LRRPs. I am proud I was one of them, and had the honor to serve with them.

Once a LRRP always a LRRP

LRRPs never die, they just move on to another AO



## MEMORIES

By Keith Phillips

Shoot low Rangers, they're ridden Shetlands!

It seems that our country has experienced one tragedy after another since 9/11/01. After 9/11 we had the Space Shuttle, then Hurricanes repeatedly hit Florida and most recently Hurricane Katrina and then Hurricane Rita. In my capacity as a Special Agent I have had the opportunity to provide assistance in all except the Florida hurricanes. Katrina, though, takes the cake. I was providing protection for EPA's sampling teams and involved with search and rescue. I spent nine days experiencing a stench that would make the burning of diesel fuel and human waste, in a cut off 55 gallon drum, by a mountain Yard with black teeth, seem like a bouquet of fresh cut flowers.

At one moment a Huey came over the top of us while the smell of decaying bodies invaded all my senses. As I looked up my ears were filled with the sound of the popping blades and all I could see was the large red cross on the nose of the Huey. Just for a split second I was thousands of miles away. Later that day as we were making our way through the Ninth Ward, a round hit my government ride. I was with a former Marine (Gulf War vintage). We never heard the report of the shot nor did the coward take a second shot so we could get a fix on his location. If we could have identified a target that "nit wit" would of realized it is not wise to shoot at a Ranger and a Marine each trying to out do the other. It should be noted that once the busses started taking survivors out of New Orleans we stopped getting shot at. I'll let you ponder that one.

During my time in New Orleans with all the helicopter traffic I began thinking about a mission I pulled just before I went on R&R in early February 72. The Team consisted of Smitty (Thomas E. Smith, KIA 02/20/72) Team Leader, I was Assistant Team leader, Elvis Osborne (KIA 6/9/72) was walking Rear Scout. I believe "Stubby" and "Jackson" (David W. Jackson) were with us. The sixth person I can't remember.

We had been paralleling a hard packed trail, which ended up going through a defoliated area. The underbrush had regrown and the trees were sticking up out of it like toothpicks. Due to the thickness of the underbrush we were forced to start walking the trail. We had just crossed a high-banked stream (creek by Texas standards) when we heard movement in the direction we were traveling. Elvis and Smitty went on a point recon, which resulted in contact with a small contingent of VC. As soon as the firefight started I was on the horn bouncing the "birds". By fire and movement, Smitty and Elvis were making their way back to the Team. Once we had visual on their location we began providing covering fire. At that point Elvis stood up and threw a grenade yelling of course, "GRENADE"!!!!!! As fate would have it, the grenade hit the only, toothpick of a tree, in that direction. As we all watched the grenade was coming back at Elvis like a Smart Bomb by today's standards. Elvis seemed frozen as if he had got to close to a curb on a bicycle and could not pull away. At the last moment Elvis disappeared into the underbrush and fortunately the grenade fell short of his position. In hindsight that was just the prelude of what was to come.

By the time we got Smitty and Elvis back with the Team the Gun Ships were on location. We popped smoke and the gun ships identified. As we watched the Cobra Climb and then lay over to start his gun run we realized he was rolling in on our smoke. Without hesitation we all went into the high-banked stream. As I was going underwater I observed Elvis diving into the approximate four-foot deep stream with at least a foot of mud in the bottom, HEAD FIRST.

The gun Ship's rockets were sure enough dead on our smoke. As the rockets exploded and we came up out of the water all I could see was Elvis' feet sticking about six inches out of the water. We grabbed him and pulled him out. He didn't need "camie" after that. He had mud in every orifice of his face. We all made it out with only *torn flesh* from underbrush. Ain't life Grand.

*Keep Your Powder Dry*