

I arrived in Vietnam the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1970. After arriving I spent 4 days in the 190<sup>th</sup> replacement center. I was finally shipped out to 2/12 in the 25<sup>th</sup> infantry division Xuan Loc. My MOS was 11B10 (grunt). I was put on point when we went on patrol. Walking point, and being new, and not knowing anything about what you were doing, was the order of the day. I spent 5 weeks walking point, carrying the prc25 radio, and climbing in spider holes. When we returned to the rear area, we could shower, and we picked a shirt and a pair of pants from a pile that was supposedly washed, and that was our clean clothes for the next 2-3 weeks. On this particular day armored personal carriers came to rolling in to our camp, with dead and wounded from a major fire fight. This was the first time I saw dead Americans, and the experience left me numb.

The next day a staff sergeant from a scout dog platoon came to recruit dog handlers. Since my parents raised pure bred German Shepherds, I already had an interest. The following day he gave a talk in the mess hall, and I volunteered right then. Two of us volunteered, and it was at this time he gave us detailed information about the job, and what we would be expected to do on this job. I agreed, and he told me I was not to leave this compound. He said he would have orders down for me in a day or two. Knowing the army, I didn't think it would be that fast, if at all. The next morning I was on a C-130 transport plane, to Chu Lai.

I began my training in Chu Lai with the 48<sup>th</sup> infantry platoon scout dog, in the month of January 1971. The dog I was assigned to was named Wolf, #66MO. We took an immediate liking to each other. He had been without a handler for almost 2 months, and he was happy to have the same person paying attention to him everyday. The sergeants in charge of training were very helpful in training you to read the dogs signals, and alerts. After 3 weeks of training I pulled my first mission with another dog handler, without his dog. The sent us to an area that was considered neutral, no contact was made with the enemy of this mission. After that mission, I was in rotation to do my own missions.

Wolf was an off-leash dog, he was trained on voice command and hand signals. In the jungle I only used hand signals. Every mission Wolf and I learned more about each other. I learned how to read his sense of smell, like when he had his nose in the air, sniffing in the direction of the airflow, we knew something was there. That was a definite alert. He was extremely good at finding trip wires, he never missed one. He would be walking down a trail, or in the jungle, and at the same time he would stop, jerk his head to the side, depending which side the wire was, and look me right in the eyes. This told me there was a trip wire there, no ifs, ands or buts. Sometimes when he came upon a booby trap he would just sit down, and look me in the eyes. This was a booby trap alert. If he were tired he would always lay next to me, not where he was actually working. This is how I knew that there was a booby trap in the area. I remember the first time Wolf low crawled to me. In was a funny incident, while we were on a mission.

Wolf had been alerting to a strong scent in the air, but we couldn't see or hear anything. So we kept going, cautiously. Another unit, approximately made

contact with the VC, and a large fire fight ensued. We were told to hold our position while the command and control (C & C) chopper, with the colonel in it, made the decisions. Which was to have the cobra gun ships fly directly over our position and fire their mini guns at the enemy. When they fired, the shell casings started falling on us and we were all scared to death. We thought they were firing on us in error, as the hot brass was falling on us and all around us. It was then that Wolf did a super fast low crawl over to where I was. When he got to me he tucked his nose under my arm and looked up at me as if to say, "do something." By that time we had made radio contact, and realized that they were firing on the enemy and not us. After the gun ships finished their firing runs, the colonel sent us up to check out the area for dead VC. It took us about 45 minutes before Wolf started alerting to a strong scent. We followed the scent, and came upon a small trail high up on a ridge. We noticed that the trees and bushes were torn apart from the gun ships. Wolf went wild with the scents. We went farther down the trail and found three dead VC. I praised Wolf, told him good job, and gave him a few dog biscuits. My Mom always sent me dog biscuits so Wolf always had good treats. We went over to the dead VC, so we could get close, and so I could praise Wolf even more, letting him know he did a good job. He pranced around them, and kicked up some dirt, and looked up at me, knowing he did a good job.

Every mission we went on we went in on a chopper. Wolf loved to fly, I sat in the door with my feet hanging out, and Wolf sat next to me. He loved to sniff the air as we flew. If we were landing in the jungle he was all excited, he couldn't wait to get out and start his job. But, if we were going into a firebase, he didn't like it. The chopper kicked up a lot of dust when it landed and Wolf hated all the dust. When I told him it was time to get off, he would look at me, and sometimes I had to help him off. He had a personality of his own, if he didn't like something, he didn't like it.

An incident on a chopper flight happened while Wolf and I was being transferred from one place to another in the jungle. The re-supply chopper had landed, unloaded supplies for the troops, and Wolf and I got on. There were already two soldiers on the chopper, besides the crew. An RPG (rocket propelled grenade) hit the chopper as it lifted off. It was hit in the transmission, and immediately crashed, in flames. Two people were killed, and the rest of us got out with injuries. I remember the chopper that picked us up to take us to the hospital (dust off), after Wolf got on, it was determined that there wasn't enough room for him. The pilot said I had to leave Wolf behind. Someone on the chopper tried to pull Wolf off by his leash. Wolf bit him, I pulled Wolf close to me, and the pilot just took off, with us both in there. As we took off, I looked at the wreckage of the crashed helicopter and felt very lucky we were alive.

Something Wolf and I always enjoyed together were my family's care packages. My Mother, sisters and brothers always made those packages a family project. They sent one every two weeks, with anything I had asked for, plus any goodies for Wolf or me. They always sent mosquito repellent, since the only place you

could get it was the black market. Mosquito repellent served two purposes, it kept the mosquito off the two of us, and it was great for getting leeches out of Wolf's fur. If you squirted a little of the liquid on the leech it just shriveled up and fell off. They sent Hunt's snack packs, pudding and Jell-O. They also sent Kool-aid, packages of dried soup, and chocolate chip cookies. They also sent 2 canteens I requested from a camping store. And last but not least, plenty of dog biscuits. Everything was packed in a box, with a plastic bag for a liner, and popcorn for protection. I always opened the box with Wolf, and if a box came, I went to the kennel and brought him to where we would open it. Wolf developed an attitude if I opened a box without him. He would give me the cold brush off if he saw a box was opened without him. Wolf loved the popcorn that was the first thing he ate. He loved to root around in the box to see what was in it, and as he went he ate the popcorn. Nothing went to waste; everything went with us to the field, even any popcorn that was left. These boxes were an important part of our life, and a great moral booster. The efforts of my family were always greatly appreciated by Wolf and I.

Setting up for NDP (Night Defensive Position) meant that Wolf and I were in the center of the position. We usually set up at dark, we set up trip wire flares and claymore mines, and lined our avenues of approach. This way everyone knew where all the positions were in the NDP. The reason we were in the center was Wolf was in a defensive mode all night. Anyone that would get too close would be attacked. If we were in an area that had trees I strung my hammock with my pancho liner stretched over the top of the hammock, and then out to the sides. I kept the hammock about a foot off the ground, it was better to stay low. Wolf crawled underneath me, and I crawled in-between the hammock and the pancho liner. This kept us dry, especially in the heavy rains so common in the jungle, and ready to respond at a moments notice to any sound. Even though it was dark he would respond immediately to any threat. I remember one night, I was not on guard at the time, I always pulled guard with the troops in the field, even though I didn't have too. I heard a slight noise, a snap of twigs, and the rustle of leaves, as if someone was walking by. I rolled out of my hammock down next to Wolf. I whispered to him if he heard the noise, but he was already aware of what was happening, and his nose came up and hit me in the face. We crawled out from under the pancho and tapped the Lieutenant on the shoulder with my car 15. He crawled over to me and asked me what was wrong. I told him the dog had alerted to movement to the northeast, and I had heard it too. By my experience, I told him it was at least 3 people and they were headed our way. He immediately woke everyone up, and we were on 100% alert. Within 5 minutes the first VC hit our claymore. When the claymore went off, two trip flares went off. Not knowing if the blast from the claymore set off the flares, or other VC had tripped the flares, we started firing. We had 3 M-60 machine guns, 2 M-70 grenade launchers, my car-15, and the grunts had M-16's. Everyone was firing at once, and it looked like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. We could see the muzzle flashed from five weapons, so we knew there we at least 5 VC. The firefight lasted about 4-5 minutes, and then we realized that they weren't firing anymore. They had either left the area, or were

dead. I told the Lieutenant to have everyone be very quiet (lay dog), no movement, just listen for any sound. We could hear the sounds of them dragging bodies. We had the M-79's fire some rounds out in the area where we heard the movement. Within 5 minutes, courtesy of FSB (Fire support base) MaryAnn, we had 155 Howitzer artillery rounds headed for the VC. They fired between 50 and 60 rounds. At first light we were ordered to go search the area. We found one dead VC close to our position, he probably died 2 to 3 hours after the firefight. We followed blood trails and Wolf was doing a great job. About 300 meters through the jungle we found another body that the VC left. It was probably abandoned when the artillery began. We continued on, until we came out into a open rice paddy. We could tell that this was the area that the artillery made direct hits. We found numerous blood trails, a piece of black pajamas, and AK-47, in the mud, and one Ho Chi Min sandal. This told us that they were on the run. We climbed back up into the tree line to rest, I told Wolf what a great job he was doing. After a brief rest we made a sweep of the area, and found a small bunker complex. Inside we found a primitive hospital room, a small amount of ammunition, cooking supplies and medical supplies. We felt that this was not a living place, but a storage facility. We knew this was a storage facility because there was no water supply close by, and no pit toilets. The army engineers flew in by chopper and blew up the facility while we pulled perimeter security. At the end of that day, we all flew home to our respective base camps, end of another mission.

This was one of around 100 missions that my dog Wolf and I walked point. Because of the keen senses of Wolf, many men were spared life threatening injuries or even death at the hands of the VC.

