

**TALL COMANCHE
CHARLIE CO. 2ND/5TH CAVALRY
1ST CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
4-6 OCTOBER 1969
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM**

On 4 October 1969 C Company, 2nd Battalion 5th Cavalry was inserted into a clearing northwest of Fire Support Base IKE. Their mission was to interdict North Vietnamese Army forces that were crossing over from Cambodia.

The Company was commanded by Captain J.L. Kuykendall, (Comanche 6) the ramrod was First Sergeant William (TOP) Allen, 3/6 was 2Lt Tim Holden, acting Platoon Sergeant was SSG John Curtin. Attached to the Company was 2Lt Brian Phipps who was new in country and was sent with us for some experience. (He got it.) Also attached to the Company was a Forward Observation Team from A Battery 1st 77 Artillery that included 1Lt Dan Bertram, (Birth Control 28) Recon Sgt. Charlie Dickey (Birth Control 28 Delta) and RTO Sammy Price.

The Landing Zone was Green and a perimeter was quickly established. One thing about the LZ it had plenty of water. Lt Holden took a dive off an incoming Bird and had to be helped up. (Before he drowned)

As the Company expanded its perimeter it became apparent that the area had seen a lot of NVA activity. Ambushes were set up on some well-used trails and the Company settled in for the night. Before daybreak the Company was probed by a sizable force of NVA (probably trying to get to water).

During the resulting Firefight 3 NVA were killed. As the Company searched the area they encountered AK fire. A wounded NVA thought to be an NCO apparently was pulling a rear guard action. In short time he was wounded again and taken prisoner. The Men of Comanche treated this man with respect and dignity. First Aid was administered. The man was given water and the Medics gave him morphine for his wounds. He died before he could be picked up

As the Company began to move out they once again encountered AK fire and a firefight ensued. This was to be typical for the day. The NVA kept setting up small ambushes meant to hinder us in our pursuit. We took Machine Gun fire, RPG's and Chi-Com grenades. These actions took a toll on Comanche.

According to Mike Hayes, 3/6's Platoon Sergeant SFC Miguel Calzada had left for R&R just prior to the mission. Knowing that he had a new and untried Lt in Tim Holden, Pepe Calzada moved Sgt Hayes from squad leader to be Holden's RTO with instructions to "look after Holden".

With Pepe gone SSG John Curtin became acting Platoon Sgt. John was wounded the night of the 4th. He was medevaced out. John had been scheduled to leave the field on October 5th. SSG Bob Davis took over as Plt. Sgt..

The recollections of both Mike Hayes and Dan Bertram (confirm these small but effective ambushes posed quite a burden for everyone the Company. In almost all exchanges of fire the Company took casualties. On the 5th we took only wounded. But we were losing fighting men.

Mike Hayes recalls that the Company set up around a smoldering dead tree which he thought made a good target and also that the Company did not dig foxholes that night. Dan Bertram remembers Capt. Kuykendall telling him to call in the Delta Tangos close.

The morning of the 6th we moved out in our standard three columns Mike Hayes recounts that we began to see NVA Bunkers that were well constructed. I remember seeing NVA weapons and other material (the more we saw the more nervous I became).

Major contact came at mid-morning. My memory tells me we had just stopped for a break; some one had broken a pack strap or was doused with red ants. No sooner than my butt hit the ground automatic weapons fire came from our right front. A firefight began in earnest. My position at that time was behind Comanche 6 and Birth Control 28. I moved forward into the CP just as Gene Fussey who had been walking point on the right file was brought into the CP. Gene had been hit in the chest by automatic weapons fire (I believe it was an RPD, 30 Cal. Machine Gun.) Doc Hooks and at least one other Medic worked on Gene but his wounds proved mortal.

At this time Lt Bertram called for tube artillery support and the 2nd/20th ARA (Aerial Rocket Artillery) the legendary BLUE MAX was bounced. The Cobra Gunships were inbound to our location immediately.

Leaving Lt. Bertram with the CP I made my way to 3rd Platoon who was attempting to flank the enemy, my job was to direct the Cobras that day. As we attempted to maneuver we drew fire from another RPD. The Platoon broke away from the fire some went left and a few of us went to the right front. This movement to the right took into the kill zone of a 51 Cal Machine Gun, which opened up on us from about 15 meters.

At this time all Hell was breaking loose to the front and to the left and right flanks of the Company. Dan Bertram relates that he, Capt. Kuykendall, a couple of RTOs were in a small space between some trees and were drawing fire from NVA soldiers. Top Allen who was never very far from 6 grabbed his AK (his weapon of choice) and said, "I'm going to get those SOBs". He walked off to the right front. There was a flourish of small arms fire and then it stopped.

About ten seconds later Top came walking back. He was pale white, his right arm-hanging limp. There was a large bullet hole in his right shoulder, which was streaming

blood Doc Hooks took him to the rear of the CP where the wounded were being collected.

There is some doubt about which SOBs TOP was going after that day. The few of us from 3rd Platoon who broke to the right found ourselves cut off from the rest of the Company. We were taking heavy fire from Machine Gun, AK 47s, RPGs and Chi-Com hand grenades. We called for help.

During this time Sgt. Hayes and myself were working together to direct gunship fire. Sgt. Hayes was more or less acting 3/6 for by this time in the fight Bob Davis had taken some shrapnel and was with the medics and Lt. Holden was somewhat overwhelmed, this being his first firefight

Sgt. Hayes gives this account of what took place "you and I worked together on some fire missions. I remember talking to you as rounds were snapping the branches over our heads. We talked for quite a while as we waited for the artillery and cobra strikes. We were right on the line and I was throwing smoke grenades to mark our position for the cobras. During that time it was believed that 2/6 was moving to our left and there was confusion as to who was firing at us. 2/6 or the NVA. It was determined to be the NVA."

However at the same time AK fire was heard from our right rear. I called BC28 to ascertain if we were surrounded or was Top Allen firing his AK. Dan Bertram assured me it was Top Allen.

It is at this time the question of who Top Allen was going after when he was wounded is raised. Top could have been going after the NVA who were firing at the CP or he could have been trying to rescue the cut off troopers.

It was reported to me that Top grabbed Larry (Grandpa) Bradshaw and a couple of other guys and went forward to meet the enemy. I can remember hearing Top yelling and cussing and laughing and of course his AK firing. Troopers told me that Top shot a sniper out of a tree but another sniper sprayed Top and his group with AK fire. Top was hit and Grandpa Bradshaw took a round through the chest (both survived)

During the time Top Allen and his men were advancing the men in my position were taking AK fire from above after Top's action we took no more fire from above. In order to find out just exactly what was on Top's mind we need to interview Larry Bradshaw and any other members of Top's group that day.

NOTE: To a reader who was not there that day it should be pointed out that the action described took place over several hours. From about 10:00AM to about 4:00 PM and without significant let up in the amount of firing from either side.

As the day progressed the situation of the men from 3rd platoon cut off in front became increasing perilous. We were losing men to enemy fire. According to Mike Hayes after a cobra strike he went forward to carry Ken Hollister to the rear. Ken had had a sucking

chest wound (he survived) As Mike returned to the line (maybe a minute later) he recounts that we were in heavy contact and he remembers putting out a lot of rounds and that he could see the NVA moving to our front. According to Mike several RPG's were fired in our direction and one landed in the middle of his group. As a result Mike was wounded along with Lt. Holden and Russ Killhorne.

It was about this time I called on Cobra Flight Leader 27 Bravo (Captain Joseph Hogg) to fire on our position as in my opinion the NVA were launching an assault in an attempt to overrun our position. (This story is posted on the Tall Comanche Web Site under the title FO and the Cobra)

As all this was going on to the front other actions were taking place. We were expending large amounts of small arms ammunitions, 5.56, (M16) 7.62, (M60) 40mm grenades (M79) and frags (US Hand Grenades). We also required medical supplies and WATER.

For the uninitiated, water was a precious commodity. We had only what we could carry and therefore practiced water discipline. We were resupplied by air every 3 days. My own load was 9-10 quarts for the three-day period. This was used for drinking, making coffee and used in Freeze-dried rations called LRPS.

However during and after a firefight the flow and ebb of adrenalin left most men with an incredible thirst. As a result the Company requested an emergency drop of Class Five (small arms ammunitions), medical supplies and WATER.

As the resupply Bird hovered over the Company's position when it began taking heavy fire. One of our log guys on the Bird was wounded as well as a Door Gunner who later died from his wounds. His name was "Hayes" and he is listed on the WALL right next to Gene Fussey (Source Mike Hayes)

The Medevac Birds was busy as well. Mike Hayes had to wait his turn they're being so many wounded some critical. Mike recounts that when two Birds came in the first carried out three troopers with sucking chest wounds who were on stretchers. I was the first guy up in the next Bird he was extracted by way of a jungle penetrator. When the penetrator breaks the tree line you could see forever and felt very vulnerable.

Mike had to wait for five other troopers were lifted out of the jungle and all this time the Medevac Bird had to maintain a hover making it an inviting target for the enemy. God Bless those pilots and crews.

According to Dan Bertram contact was broken off around 1600 hrs. The Company moved back a short distance and set up a NDP (Night Defensive Position). Being with Capt. K I knew that Arizona 6 (Battalion Commander) had ordered us to attack the NVA position at dawn the next morning. You and I fired in the DT's real tight that night.

Many troopers spent a sleepless night. First call came at 0400 hrs the next morning. While the Company was getting ready for dawn Comanche 6 got a call from Arizona 6.

It seems the S-2 (Intelligence) had decided that we were up against such a big force that they were a target worthy of an ARC Light Strike (B-52's). We were ordered to pull back to our original LZ position on the 4th and be picked up so the 52's could make their bomb runs. I was never so glad to hear such an order.

Tall Comanche was withdrawn to fight another day and the Unit's Guidon was returned to Fort Hood Texas in April of 1972. (1)

This story a small part of what took place between 4 and 6 October 1969. It is based on the memories of Mike Hayes, Dan Bertram, and Charlie B. Dickey.

1. Capt. Dolf Carlson, the last Vietnam Commander of C Company, 2nd Battalion 5th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division (Air Mobile).