

Douglas Young

From: A. Michael Patacca [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 06, 2001 9:37 PM
To: Jay Phillips
Subject: Your welcome, but I owed you.

Jay,

You're welcome but you don't owe me anything. I asked you to enter harms way that day. In exchange I owed you the only thing I could offer: getting you back out. There was another member of the squad who helped you. A short fellow with dirty sandy-colored hair, and like many others he had a mustache. He was on your left shoulder and I was on your right. I remember he pulled on you while he sat upright and scooted himself backwards. I thought it was odd in that it would attract more attention to us. Funny what goes through your mind.

After we got you back the order of things gets a bit fuzzy. It was intense after Cpt. Boatner got wounded. Most of the CP received wounds in a single volley of cross fire. That included the CO's RTO, SP O'Malley. I was really busy the rest of that day and night.

Q'Malley was our RTO when I first joined the platoon. I'm fairly certain the engagement that is described by the "Soloway Journal" on Feb 19 was really the 1st Platoon on recon that morning. It was my first day with you guys after a couple of weeks with "A" Company. Boatner asked me to recon the area with the platoon. Along the way, we found / commo wire or det cord; it was the blue wire that VC used. While we cut it someone in the platoon stepped out onto the trail we were following to sit down. He got hit by what sounded like 30 caliber fire. I remember Doc going to him... I think you guys carried him out while we were still dealing with the situation... I know he died. Is that the event you recall in your guestbook comment?

You should have been with me on March 9 when we were on roving patrols outside Cu Chi and we reinforced an A Company platoon that was over run on the night position they had made. You also should have been with me on March 29th when we inserted to create LZ Jess. We were assigned to A Company again upon landing. We had 2 KIA and 10 WIA that day.

My recollection of names has never been very good. You'd think it would be easy to remember given the events, but it is not. I've got some 35 mm slides I will have transferred to disk. It should include some pictures of that time period. I can't guarantee it.

Mike

-----Original Message-----

From: Jay Phillips [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Monday, August 06, 2001 7:51 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Tall Comanche Website - "Welcome Home"

Oh my.

Now I know the answer to the question: "What do you say to the guy who saved your life over thirty years ago, when you first have the chance to thank him?" The answer is: "Damned if I know. Thanks - the only word we seem to have for this purpose - is so clearly inadequate."

Douglas Young

From: A. Michael Patacca [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 05, 2001 8:21 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Company C 2d Bn 5th Cav - Tall Comanche Website

Hello Cpt. / Phillip,

It's good to see you're okay after the experiences of April 6, 1969. I wasn't sure what had happened to you after that day. I had heard stories, but there really wasn't any way for me to confirm anything in the bush. It seems the records and communications were as bad then as our memories are now. The Tall Comanche website where I saw your picture says I joined the company on April 30...obviously slow paperwork from HHC.

I served as your 1st Platoon Leader from about Feb 18 to April 6. Then I held the company reins from the time you left until Cpt. Young was assigned. Even SP5 Jay Phillips, my 1st squad leader won't remember me. He was already drifting into the daze of shock when I pulled him across that grassy field and dusty logging trail on Easter Sunday. I looked up and saw you standing and shouting for me to get down as we entered the openness of the trail. But the enemy gunners saw us too, and a volley of 30 caliber and AK47 fire cracked the air, and I can still see you and the CP going down.

In spite of the records, I recall it was my first morning with Company C on February 19th. I had just finished an OJT with A Company. I led the 1st Platoon on a reconnaissance. The KIA was a fellow I hadn't even met yet. For just a second, he stepped out on the trail we were paralleling and sat on an ant mound while the "Point Man" cut the "blue" wire we had just found. O'Malley was my RTO at the time, and Doc was attached to us that morning. I remember Doc sprinting forward even before we had secured ourselves against the enemy fire.

And I was there on March 9th when you asked 1st platoon to reinforce B Co. 2/5 when B Company was overrun by VC regulars. B company attempted to execute a night ambush. While Col. Kingston argued with General Forsythe over conditions at LZ Grant, we had two battalions in the Navajo Warhorse AO (Hua Nghia Province) setting up platoon size night ambushes about one "click" from the Cambodian border.

B Company was attacked by the 272nd Regiment of the 9th VC Div. My 1st Platoon was in its ambush position watching the aerial fireworks of upward moving 51 caliber tracers and downward streaming gunship tracers. We took cover and concealment behind the baked clay mounds that formed the border-like damn of a normally flooded patty. At the time, the patties were dry and hard. When the call came from you, we moved in darkness to reinforce the B Co platoon that had 14 KIA and 31 WIA. The Lt was killed. He was from Towson, Maryland: virtually my hometown. I remember my folks sending me a newspaper clipping and wondering if I was there.

Shortly afterward, I spent a week in a Cu Chi hospital with some others who also had acute dysentery. It was probably from the water in the hamlet where we camped. While I was in the hospital, my daughter was born on March 17. I didn't have the strength to enjoy the moment. The stay was short, and I returned before the Company's move on March 29 to the orders of operation "Montana Scout". We gave back the hardened rice patty fields to the 25th Division, and returned to what I fondly refer to: our lives as airmobile, jungle grunts and LZ rats.

After several hours of waiting on a dusty airfield in Cu Chi, we airlifted to a place 22 kilometers northwest of Tay Ninh City. The target was a suspected base of the NVA 1st Division's 101 Regiment. They didn't disappoint us with an unfounded suspicion. It was a sizable bunker complex just inside the wood line of the grassy landing zone. You'll recall you assigned my 1st Platoon to A Company upon landing. A Company was the lead in the assault along with a bulldozer. It was a long day with 2 KIA's and 10 WIA's in my 1st Platoon. Another KIA was the NG "Medic" assigned to me. I can't remember their names, but they gave birth to LZ Jess.

8/25/2001

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