

April 8, 2010

HELLO!

I AM TOM MARSHALL I WROTE THE PRICE OF EXIT BETWEEN 1993 AND 1997.

WELCOME TO THE PRICE OF EXIT ANTHOLOGY!

IN 2009 I AM A COMMERCIAL PROPERTY APPRAISER IN ORLANDO, FL

IN FEBRUARY, 1971, I WAS A 21 YEAR OLD ARMY WARRANT OFFICER, FLYING AN OH6-A HELICOPTER, IN THE 101st AIRBORNE DIVISION, IN VIETNAM.

THIS DOCUMENTARY FILM GIVES YOU AN AUDIO VISUAL GLIMPSE INTO HISTORY.

YOU WILL SEE PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND HOME MOVIES, TAKEN BY MYSELF AND OTHERS. AS WELL AS ARCHIVE FOOTAGE, SOME SEEN FOR THE FIRST TIME.

YOU WILL HEAR AUDIO TAPES RECORDED BY HELICOPTER CREWS, IN DEADLY COMBAT ACTION, OVER FIREBASE RIPCORN in 1970,

and LAOS IN 1971.

Let's take a look at the history leading up to Lam Son 719, with glimpses of major events in Military Region I, "Eye" Corps, South Vietnam.

Here are glimpses of two major land marks in northwest I Corps, the Marine Firebase Rockpile, a conical mountain just below the Demilitarized zone,

The Razorback Mountain, seen to the left, a jagged limestone karst ridge, lying northwest of the Rockpile. Both were scenes of intensive combat between Marines and the Communists in 1966, through 1968.

1968

The Communist staged an invasion, during the TET Lunar New Year Celebration, in February, 1968. Viet Cong staged military assaults throughout South Vietnam in February, 1968.

The Communist North Vietnamese Army moved an infantry force through Laos and invaded the ancient imperial city of Hue. In response, the 101st Airborne Division was moved into Camp Eagle, northwest of Hue, in March 1968.

The invasion of Hue and the ancient imperial citadel, was another military loss, but a propaganda victory for the Communist North. The American Anti Draft movement had its' beginning at Madison, Wisconsin in October, 1967. The Democratic Party's National Convention in Chicago, during August, 1968 was the scene of extremely violent, anti draft demonstrators fighting police in Chicago. The Anti-draft movement had fully matured and would spread its anti American slogans and anti-military service protests, until the draft ended in late 1971. The movement would simply disappear.

Here are some scenes at Camp Eagle during the era.

06:30 mark

1969

You will now get a glimpse of two major actions that occurred in I Corps during 1969.

Dewey Canyon was the Marine Airborne Invasion of a small area of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network of roads, used by communists to infiltrate the south. In February , 1969 Marines heli-lifted into a communist infested area and destroyed camps with military munitions and supplies. Here is a glimpse into that operation.

The following is an excerpt of a U.S. Marine Corps commemorative film of the operation, in the A Shau Valley on the Laotian border, twenty miles south of Firebase Vandergrift:

10:51:30 intro Mark

The Battle for Hamburger Hill occurred in May, 1969. Elements of the 101st Airborne division discovered two enemy trucks and a munitions storage area, approximately 12 miles southeast of the Dewey Canyon Operation.

Lt. Gen. Melvin Zaius, the Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division, was loudly criticized by Massachusetts Senator Edward Kennedy. Kennedy cited the loss of 55 US soldiers as "tragic and senseless loss of lives."

During a news conference at Camp Eagle in the wake of the successful military operation, an impassioned, if not angry, General Zaius responded to the accusations of Senator Kennedy.

Afterwards, you will hear the prophetic words of CBS News Analyst, Eric Sevareid, discussing the current events and prospects for the future.

You will see actual military archive footage of the operation.

14:19:10 mark

Firebase Ripcord, July 8, 1970

In April, 1970, U.S. and South Vietnamese armed forces invaded a communist base area in Cambodia. The invasion was highly successful. Many weapons and munitions were captured or destroyed. It sparked violent Anti-Draft protests stateside. Knowing the growing anti-draft sentiments and leanings of liberal Senators and Representatives, President Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, elected not to notify the Congressional Oversight Committee, knowing the mission details would be leaked. The politicians would knowingly jeopardize the troops involved, on political grounds.

In response, the senate narrowly ratified a bill, preventing the President and the US Military from using US ground troops anywhere outside of South Vietnam, except the previously invaded areas of Cambodia.

The lack of Vietnamese speaking US Advisors, in the yet to come 1971 Laotian Invasion, would doom the South Vietnamese military forces.

The Cooper Church Amendment,

doomed the Lam Son 719 Operation to failure,

seven months before it would commence..

The audio tapes were recorded aboard an A Company, 158th Aviation Battalion aircraft, the Ghostriders who retrieved the last men from the mountaintop with enemy troops attacking through the wire perimeter.

23:43 Mark

The Price of Exit follows the timeline of my 12 months tour in Vietnam, acknowledging the historical bookmarks, before and after my tour of duty.

With three months flying an OH-58 A jet Ranger out of An Khe. I carried Infantry Company Commanders around the central highlands. I also flew artillery spotting missions and countless other tasks.

I had experiences and a personal perspective of the war, that did not reflect the northern I Corps experiences and Special Operations Group support. I only took visible machine gun fire one time. It was my last flight to a 4th Infantry Division firebase, in November, 1970.

By November 21, I was in the Phoenix, a UH-1H Assault Helicopter Company, in the 158th Aviation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division, Camp Evans, South Vietnam.

You will see some Home movie footage of me in an Oh58-A, some footage taken by me in a Phoenix Huey, as well as archive film footage. The sound effects are true to the era and the aircraft types.

You will see scenes of Quang Tri Airfield, the largest northernmost airfield with complete base facilities and a hospital.

You will then see the CCN pad, combat Command North, Forward Operations Base, which was top secret. It was filmed by an Army team in March, 1971 after the Special Forces had terminated operations there. A n Air Cavalry unit operated out of htre afterwards.

The slides were taken on several different missions, over a six week period in December, 1970 and January, 1971. With one exception, I usually took no more than 1 photograph per mission.

Special forces cross Border missions, aboe the northwest DMZ and over the Laotian Border, were most dangerous missions we had at the time. We were supporting Green Berets, Special Forces as we referred to them at the time.

These were almost always hot, with enemy small arms fire. We even took antiaircraft artillery fire, with flak close enough to hear the explosions, over the incredibly loud noise of the Huey helicopter in flight.

47:50 mark

The First of Fifth Mechanized Infantry at Quang Tri was a unit with tanks and armored personnel carriers operating along the DMZ and Laotian Border areas. The Phoenix pilots I flew with had great respect for the men. They had a reputation of being always ready for combat. They were the U.S. unit nearest the communist north vietnamese homeland. They were a very big part of the security force west and north of Khe Sanh during Dewey Canyon II and Lam Son 719.

In late January, 1971, I was granted a transfer to the 163rd Aviation Company at Camp Eagle. I was a voluntary indefinite "lifer," with previous in country experience in an OH-58A. I then transitioned into the OH 6A helicopter. It was there, I had the experiences I had dreamed of.

THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL WAS INVADED BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES IN 1971, IN AN OPERATION KNOWN AS LAM SON 719.

U. S. ARMY AND MARINE AIRCREWS SUPPORTED THEM. IT WAS ARMY AVIATION'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH THE SOVIET STYLE INTEGRATED AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM. WITH HEAVY ANTIAIRCRAFT ARTILLERY.

I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS GLIMPSE INTO HISTORY, WHICH IS LARGELY UNTOLD AND UNTAUGHT.