

Tom Marshall

From: Evans, Jon [REDACTED]
To: 'Tom Marshall-Author' [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 14, 2000 9:47 AM
Subject: FW: A-1s at Son Tay, A War Story

> -----

Tom, just got this and thought you might enjoy.

Thx so much for the visit. I don't know why, but it really was kind of fun and so much more than I expected. You make it very easy man, and for that I'm most grateful!! I never thought that level of recollection would be that enjoyable, but it sure was. My brain hasn't slowed down since. Your insights and intell are incredible. I can't believe I've remained blissfully ignorant all these years, maybe I just didn't want to admit how foolish and full of shit I was as a young warrior. In retrospect, I believe I really knew it at the time, but just couldn't accept it and keep doing the job.

Well man, I've got to dash. I look forward to seeing you again, and really appreciate the time, courtesy and generosity. Hopefully between the 2 of us we can help DIA get a handle on Barker and crew, and finally bring them home. That would propably give John Madden a real sense of closure. Take real good care man. Night Stalkers and Black Widows don't quit (C-101 became a TF-160 unit), and I don't believe I ever heard a Phoenix do so either!!!
 Bubba Jon-Widow 46

>

>

> A-1s at Son Tay

>

> I just got this from a friend of mine. I must warn you, once you
 > start

> reading this, you won't stop... Its Good!

>

> The following is what I remember of the A-1 participation in the Son
 > Tay

> prison camp raid. Wayne Mutza asked for some input to research he's doing
 > on a book he's writing. This is what I came up with.

>

> A-1 participation in the Son Tay raid, 21 November 1970 On the
 > Saturday

> night of 20 November 1970 a C-130 picked us up from Takhli where wehad
 > been

> housed in the CIA compound since deploying from Eglin. The NKP flight
 > line

> was blacked out, even the tower people had been relieved and was empty.

> The

2/17/00

Info removed by VNCA

> C-130 landed, without any lights on it or the runway and ramp, and taxied
 > to
 > the ramp. It had already lowered the rear ramp and when it came to almost
 > a
 > stop ten of us ran out, 2 pilots for each of the five Fat faces we were
 > taking. It then continued on, pulling up the ramp, taxied out and took
 > off.
 > It had other people to deliver to other locations. The only people out
 > and
 > about were the crew chiefs and us. Of course the Wing Commander met us
 > and
 > followed me around like a puppy dog asking question after question.
 >
 > None of which I could answer. He got rather pissed as I recall.
 > Picking up our flight gear we went straight to the birds, cranked up and
 > taxied out. No taxi, runway or aircraft lights were used and no radio
 > either, total silence. (The radio was not to be used till over the camp.)
 > Taking off at the exact second we did a 360 over the base to join up. A
 > C-130, Talon was to rendezvous with us there and lead us on. Timing was
 > everything. It wasn't there. We did two more 360's and couldn't wait any
 > longer. We were, by that time, about ten minutes behind schedule.
 >
 > The backup plan was to navigate ourselves to Son Tay, following the
 > planned route and arriving at the appointed time, 0200 local Sunday, 21
 > November. No way Jose. We had agreed among ourselves earlier that that
 > was
 > not a viable plan. We would fly the course until we got lost, which we
 > knew
 > we would, and then head straight for Hanoi. Hold just south of the IP,
 > which was the Black River straight west of the camp, and do our thing at
 > the
 > TOT. (Time Over Target)
 >
 > The route was NKP, straight to Ventiane, straight north out of there
 > and
 > then drop to low level and weave through the karst and valleys all the
 > rest
 > of the way. Impossible at night for A-1's. A back up rendezvous with the
 > Talon was over Ventiane at the appointed minute but because we had made an
 > extra 360 over NKP waiting we were running late. We had been unable to
 > make
 > up all the lost time, some of it but not all. We hit Ventiane a few
 > minutes
 > late, maybe five, no Talon. We turned north and pressed on.
 >
 > After Ventiane passed behind there were no lights, anywhere, ink
 > black.
 > And then our worst nightmare loomed up. A cloud bank. Being lead I
 > wasn't
 > worried about being hit but the rest of the flight exploded like a covey

> of
 > quail, everyone in God only knows what direction. Pushing it up I climbed
 > straight ahead and soon popped out on top. Not an A-1 in sight and no
 > hope
 > of joining up again without lights or radio. We were all on our own.
 > After
 > a short time we noticed a speck of light far ahead. A star? After
 > watching
 > it a while we were sure it was below the horizon and no Lao in his right
 > mind would have a light on. Had to be something else. Heading straight
 > for
 > it, it took some time to catch. A fully loaded A-1 is no speed demon.
 > Sure
 > enough, there was our Talon with a teeny-weeny white light on the top of
 > the
 > fuselage and a dim bluish glow coming from the open ramp in the rear.
 > Couldn't see the bluish glow until you were only few meters from it. There
 > were already two A-1's there, one on each wing. We moved up and the left
 > one moved out and we took our place on the left wing tip. A few minutes
 > later the other two A-1's slowly pulled up and once we were all in place
 > the
 > little white light went out, the bluish glow went out and the Talon
 > descended into the black. From there on it was hold on tight as it bobbed
 > and weaved through the hills and valleys.
 >
 > The Talon driver was top notch. His power applications during climbs
 > and descents and gentle banking allowed our heavy A-1 to hang right in
 > there. The three day "moon window" we had for this operation provided good
 > night vis. With one exception. Several valleys we drove through were so
 > deep that mountains, karst, trees or whatever eclipsed the moon. When
 > that
 > happened it was like diving into an inkwell. You could make out only a
 > few
 > feet of wing tip and that was only because of our own exhaust flame. When
 > turns or ups and downs occurred at those times it was tough.
 >
 > As we emerged from the back country out over the Red River Valley it
 > was almost like being over Iowa farm country with Omaha/Council Bluffs up
 > ahead. (Hanoi) Lights everywhere. Soon there after the Talon started
 > climbing and we knew the IP was coming up. We had a controlled altitude
 > over the IP. The choppers, with their Talon, were going to be under us
 > coming in from a
 > different direction.
 >
 > They should have been slightly ahead of us but one couldn't be sure
 > everyone was on time. The control time was over the camp so IP times were
 > adjusted for the different speeds.
 >
 > Then the Talon transmitted the code word. First of anything we heard
 > on

> the radio all night. I can't remember the word but it was to be picked up
 > by a high orbiting EC-135 over northern Laos and relayed back to wherever.
 > It meant we had crossed the IP. (We were two seconds off. The best
 > anyone
 > had done during practice was ten minutes. Of course we didn't have Talons
 > for the practice.) The Talon then accelerated out and up like a shot and
 > disappeared in the night. The heading to the camp was 091 and trying to
 > reset our DG by a giggly whiskey compass was an effort in futility. You
 > remember the high tech, latest hardware we had on board. Good thing all
 > the
 > towns, cities and roads were lit up. With the target study we had done it
 > was like being in your own back yard.
 >
 > Next number 5 peeled off to the right. He was backup in case anyone
 > was
 > shot down and was to orbit a large hill just south of course until called
 > in. As it turned out the hill was an Army artillery practice range and it
 > wasn't long before they started taking a few rounds. They moved off to
 > somewhere else, probably closer to the camp, don't know where. Just
 > another
 > example of the brilliant Intel we had.
 >
 > Then 3 & 4 peeled off to the left to hold just short of the camp till
 > called in. The plan was to call them in when we had expended 50% of our
 > ordnance. Then they would do the same with us, each time expending 50% of
 > what you had left. That way, if someone went down, there would always be
 > aircraft in the air that had some ordnance left for support. Then 2
 > dropped
 > back so we could set up a two aircraft Daisy Chain around the camp.
 >
 > It was like a precision ballet, a computer simulation would not have
 > been better timed. Just as I rolled into a bank along side the camp two
 > flares popped right over it, having been released from one of the Talons.
 > At the same time Banana (HH-3 with Blue Boy assault team aboard.) crashed
 > landed inside the camp compound and the first Apple (CH-53) opened up with
 > mini-guns on the watch towers and the guard quarters. The towers either
 > blew apart or caught fire as did the guard quarters. We didn't want the
 > big
 > fire consuming the two story quarters, attracts attention, but it was too
 > late.
 >
 > At that time we had nothing to do except to make sure no one
 > approached
 > the camp. No one did. We could see the sparkles from a Fire Fight
 > Simulator dropped by one of the Talons on the other side of town as a
 > distraction and soon a large explosion and fire where another Talon dumped
 > napalm on an infantry base armory a few clicks to the South. Then the
 > shit
 > hit the fan. Gear Box (The Command and Control team.) started yelling
 > about

> losing Axle. Axle was Col. (Bull) Simons personal call sign. "We've lost
 > Axle" he kept yelling. "God damn, Simons has been killed, we're all in
 > deep
 > shit." At this point I'd like to say that I think the Universe will
 > collapse
 > in upon itself in the Big Crunch before the Army and Air Force will ever
 > be
 > able to talk to each other on a radio and have each other understand
 > what's
 > going on. He wasn't lost like being dead in AF jargon, they just didn't
 > know where he was, couldn't find him.
 >
 > Then the radio erupted with chatter from everywhere. The second Apple
 > carrying half the assault force and Bull Simons, had landed the troops in
 > the wrong place. There heading had been one degree off coming in from the
 > IP. (Whether pilot or equipment error I don't know.) Placing them several
 > hundred meters south of the camp. When the time ran out they saw a
 > building
 > that didn't quite look like the guard quarters but it was the only
 > building
 > around, so landed. That's where the infamous "Fire Fight at The School"
 > took place. We called it a school because it looked like a school,
 > regardless of what it really was. You couldn't just keep referring to it
 > as
 > the white building south of the camp. There were lots of buildings south
 > of
 > the camp. Everything had to have a name. That way everyone knows what
 > you're talking about. The liberal media, though, had a small Field Day
 > with
 > that name. I remember some time later a female TV reporter asking Col.
 > Simons if he had killed anyone at The School. He said something to the
 > effect "I was approached by a big fella, I had a tracer as every third
 > round
 > in my M-16 and saw three go through his middle." The reporter didn't have
 > a
 > follow up question.
 >
 > The troops in the wrong place were screaming, Gear Box was screaming
 > and
 > all the Apples were screaming. The FM and VHF radios were almost
 > impossible
 > to read let alone get anything in of your own. (The UHF was kept for AF
 > use
 > to call the MIG Cap or Weasels if needed or to talk among ourselves.) The
 > Apple that had dumped the guys in the wrong place was the closest so did a
 > 180 and went in to pick them up. All the others took off and headed for
 > the
 > School as well just in case. No one has figured out yet why there wasn't
 > a
 > mid-air. The troops at the school were in a fierce fire-fight the whole

> time they were on the ground. Right after they landed people came pouring
 > out of the building. Most were too large in stature for Vietnamese. The
 > guess was Chinese or Russian but no one had time to check. The estimated
 > kill was between one and two hundred and again, no one had time to count.
 > Bull Simons and the rest of the assault force made it back to the camp
 > without a casualty. The whole incident only lasted a few minutes but it
 > put
 > the entire ground operation off schedule. The two parameter teams, Red
 > Wine
 > and Green Leaf, headed out to do their thing but Blue Boy, the assault
 > team
 > inside the prison compound, had already searched most of the prison.
 >
 > As soon as Simons got on the radio he asked Blue Boy for a status
 > report. The answer was "No Packages so far, still searching." (A Package
 > was the code word for a prisoner.) Simons then told us to take out the
 > foot
 > bridge to the Citadel.
 >
 > We called a group of building surrounded by a small moat the Citadel.
 > It
 > was a few hundred meters southeast of the Camp and had a small foot bridge
 > over the moat on the camp side. Intel told us it was a military cadet
 > training facility and probably had a small armory for small arms. We
 > didn't
 > want anyone coming across that bridge armed and get within rifle range of
 > the camp. Jerry and I put two WP bombs on it and when 2 came in saw the
 > bridge was wiped out and dropped short to get anyone that might have
 > already
 > come across. In the process taking out a few blocks of a housing area
 > between the camp and the citadel. WP does a real number on wooden
 > structures, the fire storm was not small.
 >
 > About this time the sequence of events gets all jumbled up. I have no
 > idea what happened first, second and so forth. About the time Simons and
 > the troops got back to the camp the first SAM took off. You cannot miss a
 > SAM launch at night. It's like a mini Shuttle launch, lights up an area
 > for
 > miles in all directions. The first few were called "SAM, SAM, DIVE, DIVE"
 > but that soon became silly. There were so many launches that you couldn't
 > call them. There seemed to be about four launch sites within a few miles
 > off the camp on the West side of Hanoi. The rest were further east and we
 > didn't think they were a threat to us. Most of the SAM's went high, after
 > The MIG cap, Weasels and the Navy's two hundred plane faint coming in from
 > the East. The idea was to make them think there was a major raid on Hanoi
 > and not bother with a few planes on the West side. It worked, NSA told us
 > later that the Air Defense Commander screamed "Fire at Will," shut down
 > the
 > net and went off the air.
 >

> We were at our briefed 3 thousand feet until the SAM's started coming
 > our way. Intel told us we wouldn't have any trouble with SAM's at that
 > altitude. A lot some pencil pushing puke knows. We all hit the deck and
 > kept an eye on the launch sites close to us and sure enough, someone
 > decided
 > to try for the guys to the West, us. The site closest to us, just a few
 > miles to the Northeast launched one that never got to the horizon. I
 > watched it rise and almost immediately it leveled off. Then the thing
 > stopped moving on the windscreen. You know what that means, collision
 > course. We dove into the Red River and turned west. Jerry was flying and
 > I
 > was turned around keeping an eye on the damn thing as it charged at us
 > over
 > my right shoulder. I kept bumping the stick forward saying "Lower, Lower."
 > Jerry kept bumping the stick back saying "We're going to hit the water."
 > When the rocket plume on the thing seemed as big as the A-1 I yelled break
 > left. We went up and over the river bank, about fifty feet, and leveled
 > off
 > at phone poll height going straight south.
 >
 > We never saw the thing again. It either hadn't had time to arm or
 > buried itself in the water/mud so deep that the flash of detonation was
 > masked. That's another thing you can't miss at night. The detonation of a
 > SAM. It's a lightening bright flash, quite large. They were going off
 > over
 > us constantly and when you got used to them you didn't even bother to look
 > up. For about a thirty minute period there were no less then three SAM's
 > airborne at any one time and other times so many you couldn't count them.
 > I've never heard an estimate of the number fired that night but it has to
 > be
 > in the hundreds. All the SAM misses would self detonate, either at a pre
 > set altitude or motor burn out, don't know which.
 >
 > Like I said, you wouldn't look up at a SAM detonation because they
 > were
 > so numerous unless something was different. Then there was something
 > different. The flash was yellowish instead of bright white. Looking up
 > there was a large fire ball with flaming debris falling from it. "Damn,
 > someone got nailed." Then suddenly there was a flaming dash across the
 > sky
 > heading southwest, then another and another. Three dashes were all I saw,
 > couldn't spend any more time looking up.
 >
 > Later we learned that a SAM had detonated close to a Weasel and filled
 > his bird with holes. Fuel was streaming out and his AB was igniting it in
 > dashes across the sky. Since he was losing all his fuel anyway he left it
 > in AB till he ran out. He got to the southern PDJ before bailing out.
 > About
 > this time Blue Boy calls Axle and says "Search complete, negative
 > packages."

> Silence, then Simons asks for a repeat. "Search complete, negative packages, repeat negative packages." More silence.

>

> I don't know what anyone else was thinking then but for me it was setup,

> ambush. But hell, we'd already been there twenty minutes and they'd have sprung it by then. So then it turned to "What the hell are we doing here?"

> And "How the hell are we going to get our asses out of here intact."

> Simons

> must have been thinking the same thing. He called for the parameter teams to pull back and the Apples to come in for pickup. Then he told us to take

> out the Big Bridge.

>

> All sounds very simple but it sure wasn't. First of all we had no hard

> ordnance and couldn't take out the Big Bridge. We had no more WP bombs and

> that was the only thing that would have damaged a wooden bridge. The bridge

> was Red Wines objective and were supposed to blow it but because of their late start hadn't reached it before the pull back order.

>

> A little poop about the Big Bridge. The bridge was a few hundred meters

> northeast of the camp on the road that ran in front of it. It was about a hundred feet long, heavily constructed and could carry any vehicle up to a tank, we were told. Red Wine was supposed to blow it and hold the road while Green Leaf went southeast and held the road there.

> During training the engineers said twelve pounds of C-4 would take out the bridge. However, to be sure they were going to double it and use

> twenty-four pounds.

>

> Col. Simons said that he wanted to be doubly sure and doubled that to forty-eight pounds then added that two people would carry forty-eight pounds

> each making it ninety-six pounds of C-4. I would have liked to see what ninety-six pounds of C-4 did to that bridge but it wasn't to be.

>

> What made things worse was that the out bound and pull back routes for

> the parameter teams were different. Since each team out bound had to take out any possible threats they didn't want to retrace their steps and

> possibly run into someone they missed. He would have been one pissed off Gomer. There was a lot of housing just outside the camp. Intel said it

> was

> for the camp commander, married officers and maybe some camp workers. The teams outbound went house to house making sure no one was going to be a

> threat. It was a slow process so between starting out late and an early

> pull
 > back they had no chance of reaching their goal.
 >
 > Since they hadn't got to the end of the outbound route there was no
 > way
 > they could follow the pull back route. The radios went bananas again.
 > "There's part of Red Wine's team in Green Leaf's area of responsibility
 > and
 > part of Green Leaf's team in Red Wines area. Do not fire without
 > identification." This was repeated over and over again. So much so that
 > the teams couldn't get in to acknowledge. They were so out of breath that
 > they couldn't say but one word between two or three panting breaths. It
 > wasn't fun to listen to.
 >
 > Some time during all this we had expended 50% of our ordnance and
 > called
 > in 3 and 4. They had done the same and called us back. We dumped the
 > Rockeyes on the bridge. The Rockeye is a Navy fast mover ordnance we had
 > to
 > certify the A-1 to carry while in training at Eglin. It's a
 > multi-munitions thing with gobs of little shaped charges to take out
 > vehicles, even tanks I guess. Not very good for bridges. We put a lot of
 > holes in it though. After that we laid down continuous strafe till everyone
 > was in the Apples and on their way.
 >
 > I might add we never saw any vehicles or people moving anywhere near
 > the
 > camp. There was a lot of traffic on the East west road along the Red
 > River,
 > about a klick north, going in and out of Hanoi but no one turned toward
 > the
 > camp. Also about this time, the SAM launches were slowing down but the
 > MIG
 > calls were increasing. Roughly twenty minutes into the forty minutes this
 > took we started picking up MIG calls. Intel told us they had no night
 > qualified pilots so we would have no trouble with MIG's. Right. There was
 > one call of an air to air missile firing. Said it zoomed right past his
 > plane. I don't know who it was and never saw any myself. That was the
 > only
 > call of a firing I remember hearing. But the MIG warning calls from
 > Collage
 > Eye or whoever makes those things were coming regularly.
 >
 > Once the Jollies were off and running we putted along above and behind
 > them, guessing where they were since it was dark and no one could see each
 > other. Everyone was to call the IP outbound. One by one we heard the
 > calls, thank God. Then we hear this voice "Is everybody out?" "Who are
 > you?" "This is Apple something or other." "Where are you?" "I'm back at
 > the holding point waiting to be sure everyone got out okay." "God damn
 > jerk." We told him to get his ass airborne and head for the IP as fast as

> his funny machine would take him. He acknowledged. By this time we had
 > nearly reached the IP ourselves. Jerry and I looked at each other and
 > said
 > "We don't have a choice." With possible MIG's around a lonely Jolly all
 > by
 > himself makes for a pretty good target. We turned around, climbed to a
 > nice
 > MIG target altitude, three or four thousand, and went Christmas tree.
 > Every
 > light we had was turned on and we slowly drove back to Hanoi. With MIG
 > calls coming every few minutes I was sweating profusely. Don't know if it
 > was hot, I was scared or just pooped out but I was soaked. It seemed an
 > eternity but as the camp and the West side of Hanoi was slipping under the
 > nose we heard the IP call. Lights out and Split-S. We beat feet west for
 > the IP on the deck. Getting away from the river valley and into the dark
 > country side we climbed to a safe altitude to clear the mountains en-route
 > to Udorn. Then started to take care of some pilot stuff. We had used up
 > the left stub tank getting there and most of the right. We were on
 > internal
 > over the target and used the centerline while holding. Time to clean up
 > the
 > fuel mess. The right stub ran out almost right away, just a couple
 > minutes
 > were left in it. Time to jettison. That's when the longest two seconds
 > of
 > my life occurred.
 >
 > I hit the button but instead of falling away it pitched up, slammed
 > back
 > against the leading edge making it into a vee shape and came bouncing
 > along
 > the leading edge of the wing toward the fuselage. I can see it to this
 > day,
 > making four bounces and then falling away under the wing. It all happened
 > in one or two seconds, didn't even have time to say "Oh shit." I
 > sometimes
 > wonder what would have happened to the right horizontal stabilizer if it
 > had
 > decided to pass up and over the wing instead of under. I don't dwell on
 > it
 > though, too scary.
 >
 > The five Jollies, three carrying the assault force and two empty
 > because
 > of no prisoners, were all together having had to hit a tanker in order to
 > make it back. The A-1's were spread out who knew where but still in radio
 > contact. As we crossed the PDJ we picked up the beeper of the downed
 > Weasels and soon made voice contact. They were both all right. #1 was
 > cool
 > but #2 was a little panicky. Not because he was being threatened but

> because he was all alone, in the dark, in the woods, in Laos. I didn't
 > blame him one bit.
 >
 > Then we made contact with four Sandy's launched out of NKP in answer
 > to
 > the Weasels May Day. They didn't know who we were because of the call
 > signs. Took a hell of a while to convince them that Peach and Apple
 > really
 > meant Sandy and Jolly.
 >
 > The call sign battle had been long and arduous but in the end we lost.
 > I'll never forgive the Air Force for either picking them or allowing them
 > to
 > be forced on us. At least the Army had call signs that if not macho were
 > at
 > least neutral. Blue Boy, Red Wine, Green leaf, Gear Box and Axle. What
 > did
 > the whimpy Air Force come up with? A-1's Peach, Jollies Apple, the HH-3
 > that crash landed in the compound Banana, Talons Cherry and the C-130
 > tanker
 > Lime. A damn fruit salad. It was embarrassing, down right humiliating.
 > I'll
 > never forgive those pencil pushing Air Force pukes for that.
 >
 > Anyway, it was decided that the two empty Jollies would hang around
 > with
 > the four Sandy's and make a first light pick up. From what I understand
 > it
 > was uncontested and pretty much a piece of cake. Landing at Udorn we were
 > all rushed to debriefing, a building right on the flight line. As I
 > walked
 > in I was met by a group of Intel people with wide grins across their faces
 > and seemed higher then kites. I thought they were lunatics. They asked
 > "How many prisoners?" I said "None, the camp was empty." The grins
 > disappeared and their faces turned pale. "What?" I repeated it and
 > thought
 > they were going to pass out.
 >
 > What had happened was after leaving the target area the Army did a
 > head
 > count and got it all screwed up? For a while they thought someone might
 > have been left behind. For several minutes over the radio we could hear
 > the
 > chatter between the Jollies. "I've got thirty-three, I've got
 > thirty-five,
 > I've got thirty-two, I've got thirty-one." Seemed to go on forever.
 > Finally
 > they got it right and no one was left behind. The high orbiting EC-135
 > must
 > have been relaying all that back to Udorn and it was interpreted by the

> Intelpeople as a prisoner count. They all though we had rescued thirty
 > some
 > prisoners.
 >
 > Once that got squared away debriefing fell apart. People running
 > every
 > which way. I don't remember ever being debriefed and don't think anyone
 > ever was. What preparations had been made to receive prisoners I
 > don'tknow
 > but they had to be considerable and now were all down the tubes. It was
 > almost a state of panic. Col. Simons, Jerry Rhine, Dick Meadows and maybe
 > others were whisked off to meet with Gen. Leroy Manor at Monkey Mountain,
 > Da
 > Nang. The rest of us were left in the lurch and forgotten about. The sun
 > was coming up by then and we all wandered out onto the ramp. Sat down on
 > the cement cross legged, Indian style, in circles of about ten. Us in our
 > reeking sweat soaked flight suits and the grunts with their blackened
 > faces,
 > guns, grenades and what-have-you hanging off them. They were bleeding
 > from
 > every square inch of exposed skin from dozens of cuts, scrapes and
 > bruises.
 > We were all just sat mumbling to each other. No stories were being told.
 > We had all just done it, seen it or heard it and knew what had happened.
 >
 > Then someone came out and handed a bottle to each of the circles.
 > Everyone took a sip and passed it around and around and around, till it
 > was
 > empty. All of us still just mumbling to ourselves and each other. I can't
 > attest to what was going on at the other circles but there wasn't a dry
 > eye
 > at ours. A tear running down every cheek. A gallant effort with nothing
 > to
 > show. To hell and back for naught.
 >
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 >
 >
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