

James C. Harton, Jr. wrote:

>

> Speaking of anniversaries, I was flying counter mortar,
counter human wave

> assault thirty years ago Jan 30, 1998 and so were a bunch of
us.

>

The first night of TET.....there I was. In the mortar pit in
Ban Me

Thuot. I had been in -country for 2 months. Since I had an 11c
MOS I

was assigned to the mortar pit. Our CO was expecting 'trouble'
so they

sent us out to the pit early. I don't remember exactly what time
it was,

but they first attacked East Field. The attack on us came later.
At the

start of the attack we were told to fire along the north
perimeter. We

fired a WP as a marking round. Unfortunately it was a little
short and

landed in the ammo dump. Big Bang ensued and lit up the rear
guard

tower. (Sorry Bales<G>) After that we managed to walk the rounds
along

the north perimeter. That allowed a couple of helicopters to get
off the

ground. For a large part of the night we shot at whatever we
suspected

we enemy positions. The incoming rounds continually went over
our heads

and landed all around our position. This went on to just before
first

Earl Baldwin, 09:52 PM 11/24/97, Re: Thirty Years Ago

light. I could hear a droning noise in the air and I could see a shadow in the sky. And then ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE! I'm guessing that it was either Puff or Spooky and being within 200 yards of all that hitting the ground it was the MOST horrific noise I have ever heard. As you might suspect that quieted things down for a little while. Then.....just before sunrise, we were receiving a lot of fire from the front gate (rubber plantation) and just about that time the guys in the guard tower at the main gate decided to turn on the flood light. This really inspired the NVA. They started small arms fire and mortars back at the guard tower. Unfortunately, the mortar pit was behind the guard tower. All the long rounds landed all around the pit that I was still in! After first light we were unable to look up over the sand bags without drawing small arms fire. We fired, I don't know how many rounds, of 81 for hours. We were able to fire WP in a small field across the main road which must have landed right in the middle of a platoon of NVA. We could see them flopping around like fish out of water. That ends my first night of TET and that's what I was doing 30 years ago.

I was so scared that night I have never forgotten it and when later I was asked if I wanted to fly I said "You bet your ass! I want OFF the ground!" There is nothing worse, in my opinion, than to be taking fire and having no place to go.