

# MY MILITARY STORY

Bill Carpenter

Christmas time 2001

IT is four months short of 35 years since I was wounded in Viet Nam.

A big reason I am writing this is that my father-in-law, Gerald Francis LaMont, was a veteran of WW II. When he was alive, about all anyone, including his wife, knew about his army experience was: he was with Patton, 4<sup>th</sup> Armored, he went ashore at D-Day plus 6, he was a tech 4 rank, he hated Krauts, flash hiders, and 88's. After he died I saw some of his records and learned a little bit.

For 33 years I considered my military history as just part of my life that no one else was interested in, just get on with being a civilian. Now I don't care if other people are interested or not. The book The Ghosts of the Highlands and the web page for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) "alumni association" is what prompted the change.

Most other grunts who served in Viet Nam (VN) have a lot more and better stories than I, especially the LRRP/Rangers. In Viet Nam, a grunt was an infantryman. You grunt a lot when you carry 80-100 lbs through the jungle all day. This story is small potatoes. I was only in one firefight before coming home. The average infantryman who pulled a full one-year tour in VN would be in about 10 firefights (battles). The average LRRP would pull about 30-35 missions in a year, half of these would end with "hot extractions". A hot extraction means that the enemy is shooting at you.

I do not know where this is going, or if anyone will read it but I am doing this for me. Maybe a great-grandson may see it. I doubt that I will live long enough to see Rhett in uniform. My children and I both were a little late in starting a family.

I will try to keep this in chronological order, but I know from the start there will be many tangents. There is no intent for this to be a finished-product manuscript.

When I started writing this, I realized that the correct name for the country is Viet Nam, not Vietnam. My impression is that most proper names in Viet Nam are multiple, single syllable words, not single, multisyllable words. It is not Hanoi, it is Ha Noi, etc. So much for my first tangent.

I hope this little narrative will be preserved with a copy of The Ghosts of the Highlands, my military scrapbook, letters and all, The History Channel's "Special Ops: LRRPs", along with the correspondence in the last couple of years when I rediscovered my military past.

I grew up knowing that I would go to college, and that my parents did not have the money to pay for it. We moved from West Virginia to Denver the day after I graduated from high school, fleeing Appalachia. I enrolled in the Colorado School of Mines that fall. It took me about a month to realize that I did not want to be an engineer, so I dropped out at the end of the first semester, with very poor grades.

I enrolled at Colorado State University with a major in wildlife management the next fall (1961). I enjoyed college after that and was in no hurry to graduate, I would go to school until the money ran out, drop out and get a job until I earned enough to go back. At that time it cost about \$1,100 per year for college, this included tuition, rent, food, books and beer money. But minimum wage was \$0.90 per hour. I had no intentions at that time of going beyond a bachelor's degree. I had a 2.1 grade point average when I graduated. "Anything beyond a two point is wasted". I had to make up for that later.

During this time I got to spend two summers in a tent studying the elk herds in the White River National Forest in the Colorado Rockies. I also was on a hotshot fire crew for the US Forest Service one summer. This is like smoke jumpers except we didn't parachute into a forest fire. We were on a fire in the Snoqualmie Natl. Forest in Washington state when a chopper went down. The pilot was killed but the passenger was alive. He weighed like 300 lbs. We carried him on a stretcher for eight miles to the nearest clearing for a chopper to sit down. We took turns on the stretcher and it took all night to get him out. He died in surgery.

At that time communism was considered the scourge of the earth. All communist countries were bad. The French were driven out of Viet Nam in the '50's. The country was then divided into South Vietnam (the good guys) and North Vietnam (Communists). A lot of people who lived in South Vietnam opposed the government. They were called Viet Cong (VC). So, the US was "helping" the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) fight their enemies, the North Vietnam Army (NVA) and the local resistance fighters, Viet Cong. A common name for VC with the grunts was "Charlie". "Charlie" was also used for the NVA.

The US started sending military advisors to South Viet Nam in the early '60's. Full military divisions were first deployed in 1965. At that time I told people that if I were a Vietnamese, I would be a Viet Cong. I would not like a foreign military occupying my country. The government of South Viet Nam was not a good government. It only took care of the fat cats, (rich people), it did not try to help the lower classes. It was not so much that the Viet Cong were communists as it was that they opposed the government that the US government supported. In my opinion, we were on the wrong side of that war. This is why we lost it. But I still felt that I should support our government, right or wrong.

I finished my bachelor's degree in wildlife management in the spring of 1966. The military build-up in Viet Nam is well underway. I had a couple of friends who had been there as advisors to the South Vietnamese army, At that time ROTC was required for all males during the first two years of college. There was a military draft, and women were

not required to serve their country. I had been in air force ROTC but had failed the flight physical twice. I had 20-27 vision in my left eye. So I did not stay in ROTC my last two years to get a commission. I wanted to fly a fighter. I didn't want to be "support personnel". I also failed the army flight physical twice, same reason. It is almost poetic justice that I lost the bad eye in the firefight. I had grown up running the woods on Miller Mtn. so it was natural for me to enlist to become an infantry officer.

I went through basic training and Advanced Infantry Training (AIT) with a couple hundred other guys who were headed for Ft. Benning for infantry officer's candidate school (OCS). A lot of very interesting guys there. Harvard lawyers, USC football player, Indiana mortician, etc. Really liked those guys. During AIT we had several second lieutenants who had just finished OCS come by and give us a pep talk. What I heard was that OCS is very much a college fraternity initiation that lasts six months. I knew I was headed for Viet Nam and would be gives a platoon to keep alive. I realized that if I was going to be any kind of an officer, I had better get some OJT (on-the-job training) before I went to OCS. So I dropped OCS and became just another army private. 24 years old and a college grad, but still an army private.

Toward the end of AIT some people from "The Old Guard" in Washington, D.C. came by recruiting. Sounded good to me so I volunteered. (Rule number 1: NEVER VOLUNTEER FOR ANYTHING IN THE MILITARY). In the fall of '66 I headed for our nations capital instead of OCS or Viet Nam. Washington is full of young, single secretaries, sounds good to me. The Old Guard was then the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment. It was the spit and polish army unit that fell out for the politicians. Any time you see a Washington, DC event and there is an army guy standing at attention in the background, he is a member of the old guard. We were stationed at Ft. Myers, Va. The post is beside Arlington Natl. Cemetery. Most of our time was spent on burial details.

When I got to Ft. Myers, I volunteered again, for honor guard company. One platoon of Honor Guard Company is the guards at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. When it comes to spit and polish and parades, Honor Guard Company is the best of the best the army has. When I joined the company, I was six feet tall, weighed about 225 lbs, and had a 34 inch waist. The tomb guards have three shifts which are set by the size of the soldier: one shift is 5' 10" with 30" waist; the second 6'0", with 32" waist; and the third 6' 2" with 34" waist. To make tomb guard, I had to grow two inches or take two inches off my waist. No way. My job was firing party. We fired the shots at graveside services before taps was played.

Most of honor guard company was guys like me, college grads who changed their mind about OCS. A lot of these army privates had master's degrees. One black man had a masters from Harvard, spoke eight different Chinese dialects, and was a Spec 4 in the army. Big waste there of manpower.

I was involved with the burial of a lot of VN dead. The most memorable burial in which I was involved was the very last one before I left for VN. It was for one of the astronauts who burned up in Apollo 3 spacecraft.

5 January 1967

CARPENTER, WILLIAM D RA16887249

Asg to: 90<sup>th</sup> AG Repl Bn APO SF 96307

Aval date: 15 Mar 67

On 1-5-67 Private Carpenter was assigned to the 90<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion in Vietnam. 96 is the beginning zip code for all mail going to Asia. I am to report there on or before March 15, 1967.

The old guard was first an infantry unit, so all of us were available for VN. About 1/3 of my honor guard platoon received the same orders at that time. At least one of the tomb guards went to VN when I did. No one was immune.

I arrived in VN after the monsoon season. I was processed through the 90<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion (Bn.) to the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile). The 1<sup>st</sup> Cav had developed the technique of using the helicopter for combat assault. At that time, I figured a grunt was a grunt, so I didn't care where I went. I was just glad I was not a marine in I Corps. They were getting the shit shot out of them.

One thing I remember about the indoctrination, other than few of the women are whores, and most of the whores have VD, is a staff sergeant telling us, "When you kill a Chinese or a Russian, not if you kill a Chinese or Russian, because if you are in enough firefights, you will kill one. When you kill a Chinese or Russian, don't tell anyone, all it will do is cause you a lot of paperwork. Everyone knows they are here."

There was a big to-do about medivac while we were in indoctrination. Did they expect a lot of us to be wounded? A couple of nights we were put on perimeter duty. We were given M-14's with one clip of ammo. A clip of ammo doesn't last long in a firefight. A little better than spit wads and rubber bands, but not much.

While I was at the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav's replacement depot, Capt. James came down and gave us a little talk about joining the division LRRP unit, LRRP is Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol. I thought, why not, at least I will be with some good troops to keep me out of trouble. Volunteering again. So I talked to him. I had to come up with an instant sales pitch for this job interview. I don't remember him asking me why I wanted to go LRRP. What I do remember telling him was that the West Virginia hills were very much like the VN hills, and I had been running the ridges all of my life. I also said that I had probably spent two or three years of my life camping out, so sleeping on the ground in the rain was not new to me.

In the last few years I have been ask why I went LRRP instead of taking a desk job, which I could have. I still don't know why. I think it was because of the challenge to see if I was good enough to handle it. I know that the blood-and-gut, destroying the communists, idea had nothing to do with it.

One thing that bothered me then, and I still think about it. I realized then that fear keeps you alive. Gen. Patton once said that bravery is fear under control or something like that. I never felt fear in VN. Fear gives you that edge. I expected to die in VN. I just did not want to make a stupid mistake and get another man killed. Which is what I did. Perhaps if I had some fear, David Ives would be alive today, and Art Guerrero could walk.

I realized a couple of years ago, long after it was too late, that the job of any military person is to keep the other guy alive. The killing and the dying are easier. If I had survived the first firefight, perhaps the fear would have come, and I would have been a better soldier.

I grew up with firearms. I do not remember the first time I fired a gun, it was before I started school. I was taught to respect firearms, and to take care of them. My father's standard line was, "Don't point a gun at something you don't intend to shoot, and don't shoot anything you don't intend to kill." We did not have toy guns, no gun is a toy. Guns kill, in my hands, or the enemy's hands.

Anyway, on March 28, 1967, I was shipped out to Co. A, 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, 8<sup>th</sup> Cav. Regiment to Landing Zone English overlooking the Bong Song Plains. My company executive officer there was a Montana State grad who also had a degree in wildlife management. He told me to hang in for a few weeks and he would get me a Remington Raider job. This is a desk job as in Remington typewriter, not Remington firearm. We were actually at an artillery base on top of a hill near English. It was a new base and we spent most of our time clearing out the green line, laying concertina wire and building bunkers. There was no serious action while I was there.

One of the first things that impressed me about how good the logistics were at that time is that we had a hot meal flown into us every day. If we needed anything at all, tell the Sgt. and it would be on the next day chopper. Of course we were at a fixed base, with artillery and everything. Don't wear any underwear, it will give you a heat rash, use it to clean your weapon. Each squad (8-10 soldiers) had only a couple of cleaning kits for the M-16, we had these cute new weapons, but nothing to keep them functional. The least amount of dirt would jam them. Not fun in a firefight. I wrote home and had them send my .22 rifle cleaning kit. "Just leave it in the old hunting sock".

On Memorial Day, 1968 Life Magazine published pictures of all of the men killed in VN the previous week. I was back home then, planning my wedding. There was a picture of my platoon leader from the year before. He was a captain on his second tour when he was killed. It was a very long war for some people.

I remember going on one night ambush and one day patrol during the little time I was there. We were on top of a hill, of course, the best place for artillery; the small valley below was all rice patties. The ambush was squad size, and the sergeant set the ambush right in the middle of a rice patty. The rice was ripe, so the patty was dry. I thought this was a stupid place for an ambush, until I realized that the sergeant did not want to

ambush anyone. Charlie would not come across open ground like this. If Charlie had come across that paddy that night, we would have no cover and could have been killed.

There was a white Christian, probably Catholic, church on a finger coming down from the hill we were on. It was a very pretty church with a nice view. But it was grown up with brush, abandoned. I remember thinking that it was sad that the local Vietnamese had to give up their God.

When we went out on the patrol, a woman ran on the dykes ahead of us, warning the NVA/VC we were coming. The lieutenant took a couple of shots at her, but missed. Then he said, "Why bother, they already know." We moved into a little village and lined up all of the locals. The LT went down the line asking, "Do you speak English?" A young woman answered, "No Sir". The Lt. had gone a couple of steps past her before he realized she had spoken English. Then she acted as if that was all the English she knew.

While we were on the patrol, we moved into a few hooches set up in some coconut palms between the patties. One of the houses was a country store of sorts. Lot of rice in crock jars, etc. They even had a ledger of transactions. Several different languages were written in this ledger. This is supposedly in the pucker brush of VN and there is someone running a little store who understands several different languages. And we are supposed to be the great white hope.

While we were at the country store, a very well built Vietnamese man came walking down the path. He was wearing an NVA blue uniform. He was not armed. He walked right into the middle of the platoon before he realized we were there. The NVA does not own the Bong Song any more. We took him prisoner. A guy in my platoon had a brother killed in a firefight just a few weeks before. He beat the shit out of the prisoner, no one said a word.

We took the prisoner back to the base. Blindfolded of course. I pulled guard duty on him for a while. His wrists were tied so tight that his hands were swollen to twice normal size. I told the lieutenant, he said to loosen the ties. When I did, the prisoner grabbed my hand and started crying and talking in Vietnamese. Was he thanking me or begging for his life? ARVN took all prisoners that were captured by the Americans. The word was that the South Vietnamese army tortured most of them. A common practice was to question two prisoners at the same time. If neither talked, they would take them up to about 1000 ft. in a chopper. These are people who had never been higher off the ground than climbing a tree. When they got to the right elevation, they would throw one out and then ask the other one if he wanted to talk. I often wonder what happened to this guy.

Just a soldier serving his country.

We found all kinds of tunnel entrances in the hills under and around the base.

3 April 1967

CARPENTER, WILLIAM D RA16887249

Atch to: 191<sup>st</sup> MI Det

Purpose: For dy with Div LRRP Co

When I got my orders to join LRRP, the XO from Montana told me. He was ticked, "I had plans for you." LRRP already had the reputation of taking the best from the field units. About a week after reporting to Co. A, I was headed for LRRP.

If you want to know what LRRP was all about, read The Ghosts of the Highlands, Acceptable Loss, or LRRP Company Command by Gregg P. J. Jorgenson. "The Ghosts ----" is the biography of Capt. James while he had the unit. I am mentioned in chapter eighteen. But they have me as Allen Carpenter.

Six of us came to LRRP together. Until then the unit was 18 men. Today they have taken the unofficial name "The Original 18". The unit was new, without a TO&E. It was a detachment, working directly under division headquarters. To put it another way, we were a bunch of orphans without a home. Someone had come up with the name, "The James Gang" for us, after Captain James, the unit commander. It was, at that time, very experimental. When the six of us came in, we had to set up our own GP tent to sleep in, it took a couple of days to "requisition" canvas cots for us to sleep on. The entire idea of a division LRRP unit was very new. Most of the sergeants (NCO's) had ranger training, but few of the enlisted men (below Sgt. in rank) had any, it was all OJT.

As best I can remember, the unit consisted of the following:

#### HEADQUARTERS

Capt. Jim James, CO

Lt. Ron Hall, XO

SFC Fred Kelly, 1<sup>st</sup> sgt.

SSgt. Tom Campbell

Sgt. Thomason

Sgt. Rudy Torres

#### TEAM ONE

SSgt. Ron Christopher, TL

Sgt. John Simones, ATL

Spec. 4 Dick Spina

Spec. 4 Doug Fletcher

Spec. 4 Art Guerrero

Spec. 4 Geoff Koper, medic

#### TEAM 2

SSgt. Pat "OB" O'Brien TL

Jim Ross

John Suggs, medic

Gary Biddle

Block

Richard Lopez

#### NEW GUYS

Tom Calkins

Bill Duncan

Leonard Lyle

David Ives

me

an E-5 sgt. whose name I can't remember

SSgt. Jim Burton was the original leader of Team 2, but broke a leg or something like that on his second mission. I do not know what his status was when I was there.

Only these 25 can truthfully claim to have served in the 191 MI LRRP detachment. MI stands for military intelligence.

Sgt. Kelly was the oldest of the bunch, about 40. Capt. James was 28, Lt. Hall was 25. Simones was 28. The staff sergeants were in the 25-28 year range. I was 24. The rest of the guys were about 20 or so, maybe 22. War is for young men.

James was assigned to the cadre at the Special Forces training center after this tour. He retired from the army a full colonel. He lives in Maine at the time of this writing, and has a son who is an airborne captain. He was nominated for the Ranger Hall of Fame a few weeks ago.

Hall left the army after this tour. He owned some Harley Davidson dealerships in Texas and was a very successful businessman.

Kelly was a career NCO.

Campbell, Biddle and Thomason all went to OCS after this tour. Campbell retired a lieutenant colonel from the army.

Torres stayed with LRRP as the commo sergeant for several tours.

"OB" was a career NCO. He lives in Florida now.

Suggs extended his tour before getting out. He lives in Georgia now.

Ross went to Special Forces after this tour. I do not know if he careered the army or not. He is a loan officer in a bank in Florida now.

Simones careered the army, then went to college and became a schoolteacher in Boston. He later was a veteran's advocate before retiring a second time.

Fletcher got a master's degree and had a suit and tie, beltway bandit, job in Maryland by Washington, DC. He died of diabetes in the summer of 1999.

Guerrero was distribution manager for the Denver Post newspaper in Denver, CO. He was national president of the Newspaper Guild at one time. He took a bullet through the shoulder, which damaged the spinal cord. He was also shot through both legs. He became a paraplegic, about 15 years after we were hit, from the spinal cord damage.

Koper is an architect on Cape Cod, Mass. He took a round that went in through his shoulder and ended up in the pelvis. Other than having his spleen removed, there was no permanent damage, "Other than a twinge now and then."

The above list shoots down the drunk, homeless, Viet Nam vet theory.

Us six new guys are to be team 3 after we complete training. The idea of pulling a mission with five other new guys scared me. The buck sergeant said he had made his rank in the National Guard. He was fascinated with weapons and killing. He outranked



the rest of us new guys. The idea of him being team leader of team 3 scared me even more. I don't know what happened to any of the guys who came in with me.

One member of team 1, Spina, who was from New Jersey, was at Recondo School. He came back the day before we went on the mission. SSGT Ron Christopher had been the team leader for team 1, and was leaving the unit. Ives and I replaced Christopher and Spina on team one. Simones became team leader and Fletcher was the ATL.

Sometime during the second week of April, our address/designation was changed to HHC G-2 LRRP. This is Headquarters and Headquarters Company, G-2 is the intelligence branch. I think the unit has an official TO&E now.

A group of Montagnards was moved into An Khe on April 14. Two of them will work as scouts with four of us to make up a team. They brought their families with them. I helped set up GP tents for them to live in. They got their name from the French, "Montagnard" is French for "Mountaineer". The real name for these people is "De Ga". This West Virginia Mountaineer was looking forward to learning from the Vietnamese Mountaineers. Never got to do it.

A few days before my only mission a new batch of 8-10 guys came in. By mid-June the unit had grown to 165 people, Montagnards, tracking dogs and handlers, the whole nine yards.

Not too long after I got to LRRP, Art Guerrero came over with the standard "Where are you new guys from" questions. He was from the Mexican Barrio of Denver, what is now called "inner city". "I am a Mexican, not Hispanic". He was divorced with a daughter. We hit it off more than just the hometown boys bit. Art has a very interesting history, more than I want to put in here.

I do not remember the training being that tough. The runs winded me, but running is supposed to wind you. Two-a-days for football were a lot harder. I was comfortable with weapons. I knew how to read a topo map. I could climb a rope quickly without using my legs. Sgt. Kelly would yell, "Use your legs." I would answer, "That slows me down." I knew first aid. The only thing I didn't know was the radio and the immediate action drills. The idea of calling in artillery support worried me. At the end of the two-week training, David Ives and I were chosen to become part of team 1. Dave had gone through radio school, he was not infantry trained.

Dave and I are issued tiger fatigues. The only people authorized tiger fatigues are Special Force, LRRP and ARVN. The only tiger fatigues available are ARVN size. I am given Vietnam XXL. It is about two sized too small. The sleeves are a couple of inches too short and the waist a couple of inches too narrow. I feel like McGilla Gorrilla in the outfit.

Team 1 had been functioning since January, several missions, and no real firefights. They were literally the first 1<sup>st</sup> Cav "Ghosts". They were the first to confirm that the

NVA were using elephants to move heavy equipment. They had about 10 missions in, had worked out a lot of the kinks.

John had been in the Marine Force Recon before coming over to the army. Art had been with 1/7 Cav, Custer's old outfit. He had earned a silver star in the A Shau Valley before LRRP. Doug was married, had been with 2/8 Cav before LRRP, and had also earned a silver star in the A Shau Valley. Geoff had been a ward medic in a field hospital. Good people, they would take care of this newbie.

The Beatles song "Strawberry Fields Forever" has a very interesting tie into team 1. After I was picked to join the team, and before we went out on my only mission, the other men of team 1 took me to the NCO (non-commissioned officer) club for a beer and a "wanna get to know you" meeting. While we were walking across the base, Simones, the team leader, kept quietly singing "strawberry fields forever" over and over soto voco. Those are the only words I know to the song. For the next 33 years, whenever I was a little down, I would sing "strawberry fields forever" to myself. It helped to remind me that things weren't that bad after all.

There is another interesting part to the "strawberry fields" part of story. You can read about it in "The Ghosts --- ", on the night before the mission, Dave and I were getting ready for the mission. The captain came down to our tent just to touch base. Dave was playing "Strawberry Fields Forever" on his tape recorder. I made contact with Jim Ross, of Team 2 in the spring of 2000. After they had finished their tours, Ross and Capt. James had both returned to Ft. Bragg to the Special Forces school, the captain, now a major, was part of the cadre. Jim was a "student". They got to be very good friends. Ross would go to James' house often, the major would play "Strawberry Fields Forever" over and over on his tape deck. Ross said that he went to see James in the early 1990's, some 25 years after LRRP, the, then retired, army colonel had a tape of "Strawberry Fields Forever" in the deck of his car. Even Special Forces officers care too, 30 years later. Ives was the captain's only LRRP KIA. No other team got hit hard during his command.

Team 2 pulled a very interesting mission just before mine. The SOP at that time was to make the insertion just as close to dark as possible. The team would go 100-200 yards and find some thick brush and "lay dog" for the night. Well, after Team 2 holed up, they noticed a fire not that far away, and another and another and another. They had been inserted right in the middle of an NVA battalion. Six of them, 300-500 NVA.

Charlie never knew they were there. The next morning the skies opened up on Charlie. When the Captain tried to go in and pull out the team, his chopper was shot down. A Quick Reaction Force (QRF) platoon came in to help them. This evened out the odds some, 30 of us and 300 of them. They weren't pulled out until the next day. 24 hours of constant firefight. Not one of them was wounded. We all carried enough "stay awake pills" we called bennies to last for a week. Team 2 did not have one pill left. They were juiced for two days after the extraction. This battle is written up in The Ghosts of the Highlands.

I have included a map of our AO (area of operation) so that you can locate the following if you want to. The coordinances given are UTM.

Team 1, four old pros with two new guys, was inserted on the evening of Thursday, April 20, 1967. We were put in close to the head of a stream, coord. "right 485 up 700". We were to more or less follow this stream and see what we could see. The stream ran to the SW. The closest US army troops were at An Khe about 15 kilometers (km), about nine miles, south of us. The nearest friendlies were at Kan Nak, some 7-8 km away. Kan Nak was where the stream we were on ran into the Song Ba River. The Green Berets had a base there at one time, but there were only local militia types there now, who may even be VC. Don't depend on them. Our E&E (escape and evasion) plan was to head for Kan Nak.

We were outside of any artillery cover. Because of the mountains, radio contact was difficult. Later in the war, radio relay points were set up on top mountains to correct this problem. We were to report in morning and evening, but most of the time, base had to put a chopper in the air for radio contact.

On Friday we went through a lot of elephant grass, 7-8 feet tall. The blades cut exposed skin. This is when the word "leach" took on a whole new meaning, the buffalo grass was loaded with them. Walk, pick off 6-8 leaches, walk, pick off 6-8 leaches. Other than hearing someone cutting wood, nothing out of line. This is when I learned that the local version of our chickens ran wild in the woods. I heard a hen cackling and thought we were coming to a village, was told it isn't that way.

Saturday was when I started making mistakes. During the morning, we had moved from some open timber to some pretty thick new-growth jungle. You have to go slow to keep quiet, and you couldn't see more than 10-15 feet in any direction. Remember there are six of us 15 km (ca 9 miles) from the nearest friendlys. We stopped for the first, of two, meal of the day. We were low on water so Art and I took the canteens down the stream to fill them up. This was about 100 yards away.

Realize that I had grown up coon hunting. I was use to finding my way in the woods at night, reading the lay of the land, etc. Well, when Art and I went back up the hill to the other guys, Art veered to the left. I knew this. Well, instead of the WV ridgerunner telling the barrio Mexican what was going on, the new ass private decided to not say anything to the experienced jungle fighter. Mistake number one.

Art decided we were to the right of the group, and went to the left even further. If you are following on the map we are traveling to the SW away from the other guys. Ta Da, we walk right up onto a "high speed runner". A high speeder is a very wide, well-cleared, smooth trail that foot soldiers (the enemy) can travel on at high speed. They would not cut down the trees, so that the canopy of limbs would hide the trail from aircraft. You had to be on the ground to see it. Finding things like this is LRRP's job. This one was wide enough, and cleared enough to drive a jeep on. Realize that in this

area, this is almost like coming on to an interstate highway. This means that this trail has a lot of traffic, not just local woodcutters.

Remember that the whole LRRP concept is very new at this time. To a great extent, every LRRP was in OJT, in a sense, we were writing the book for future guys. We made enough mistakes in this 24-hour time period to fill at least one chapter. I am sure John and Doug later used this mission to pass a lot of "don't" to the next guys. Thirty-two years later John's comment was, "What happened, happened".

Next mistake, we proceeded to check out the trail instead of going back and reporting in. Art and I are walking all over this dirt with our distinctive boot tracks. We found some Maltese Gates (booby traps) that were not set. This means NVA/VC are using this thing. I set up security while Art checked things out. But I was on the wrong side of the trail, if Charlie came through, I would be cut off. Remember that through all of this we do not know where the other four guys are, and they don't know where we are. I have an idea, but not exact.

We are on the little finger coming down from the NW at "right 469 up 672", look at the map.

As we are working this trail, we come to a small hooch (building), about 8' X 8' set on low stilts. There are several firing positions (foxholes) in an arch on the downhill side of this hooch. The opening/door to the hooch is on the uphill side, away from the firing positions. Don't see any people though. The hooch and the firing positions set on a little flat area on the side of the hill, the trail comes down on the upstream side of these fortifications and curves around in front of it.

Art decided to check the hooch out. He has on the web gear, which makes him about three feet wide. We had left our packs with the rest of the team. He can't get through the door. I am pulling security, aka looking for Charlie. Art sees some paper on a shelf on the wall across from the door; he tries to go through the door and gets stuck. At this time I hear voices (not in English) from the other side of the hooch, about ten feet away. I let Art know we have company. He is stuck in the door. He finally gets free, soundlessly. He tells me to take off while he pulls rear security. The "high speeder" is between us and the cover of the jungle.

"See what you see, hear what you hear, smell what you smell. Don't act before you think." This is when I made a mistake that was fatal for David Ives. I acted before I thought. I took off too fast, and hit the brush too hard. Art was watching the people, he said that there was a woman and some men; the woman had something in her hand. When I hit the brush, she screamed and threw the item in the air. Art said later that I sounded like a buffalo going through the brush.

Everyone knows what happens when you make a woman mad. She turns to the men in her life, father, brothers, uncles, etc. and says, "What are you going to do about it"? I

always tell everyone that the reason I was wounded is that I got a woman mad at me. Never make a woman mad, she will get even.

Now the WV ridgerunner took over and got us back to the other four guys. There is the 20 questions situation on why it took us so long to go 100 yards to get some water. We called in a "sitrep" (situation report).

We are on the NW side of the stream. There was a clearing on the hillside across the stream from us. The field was big enough for a chopper to land in case we needed extraction. We moved over beside the field and set up for the night. We could hear someone following us as we were moving, a "trailer". It was getting late by then anyway. We set up in the standard defensive position for the night, gave another sitrep and ate. When it was darker we moved about 20 yards to a different position that John had checked out earlier. This was SOP (standard operating procedure). We were right beside an open area for extraction if it was needed. We are on the north side of the little cove at "right 474 up 672".

The following is an e-mail I got from Geoff on 1-2-02 in response to my questions about his version of what happened on 23 Apr 67. Realize that like me, this is 34 year old memories.

Hi Geoff,

Got questions for you. When we were extracted, I remember only Art, you and me on the chopper. Was this James' command chopper? Did James stay on the ground with John, Doug and Dave? Were there other choppers in the air at that time to take them out?

I guess I am looking at my mortality, but I decided to put our "small unit action" on paper for my grandchildren, if they should ever be interested.

And with that, Merry Christmas and have a good 2002.

Bill

Bill:

Sorry that it took me so long to reply to your E-Mail - house guests for the holidays created SEVERE disruption.

Obviously, what I am about to write is my own memory of what happened during the chaos that we lived through during and after we were hit but I think that it is fairly accurate. I do not think that we were on James' ship; I believe that we were med flighted out on either a Medevac or a slick ship that was sent to get us out. As I remember it, James did not land until after we took off and after the Quick Reaction Group arrived. I think that ultimately Ives, Simones and Fletcher did leave on James ship. We (you and I and Art) did have to walk a fair distance (considering the condition that we were all in) to a clearing in order to be picked up.

You and Art were taken directly to the 2nd Surgical Hospital while I went first to my old unit (47th Medical Battalion) because neither I nor the medics at the 47th thought that I was as badly wounded as I turned out to be. We all thought that I had been shot in the shoulder and that the bullet made a "clean hole" (didn't hit anything important). Also, I wasn't bleeding too heavily. However, when they couldn't find an exit wound and my blood pressure started to drop off of the chart they got concerned and sent me by ambulance over to the 2nd Surg. where I was operated on. A few days later I was sent to the 85th Evac Hospital where (I think) that I saw you and Art shortly before you guys left. Also, Jorgenson claims in his book that I saw James in Qui Nhon but I do not remember him coming there. I did however see both James and Ron Christopher in An Khe. Despite what is said about the army, I think we received excellent medical care.

I remember being embarrassed when I was lying, completely naked, spread eagle on an exam table and all kinds of nurses walking by.

If the following is not some dream cooked up when I was a little out of it, I remember that when we arrived at the spot where we were attacked the next morning, Art and I laid down on a slope facing uphill behind the root of a very large tree that was next to us and that created a depression on the downhill side that was about 10" or so high; Ives was laying down to our front without any protection. When the shooting started we were screened by the fact that we were laying behind the tree root. At first both Art and I thought that there was firing coming from our rear (downslope as well as from our front) and he fired at least one M79 round in that direction. We then concentrated on the fire to our front. Now, our tree root gave us a problem, in order for Art to aim and fire he had to raise himself up higher than the root and he exposed himself - I believe that this is when he was shot in the arm. By now Ives had been shot at least once and was asking for help (even though he attempted to assemble the PRC25 whip antenna). When I tried to climb over the root I was shot in the chest which stopped me cold for some time (it could have been seconds or minutes - I don't remember). When I finally managed to crawl to him he was dead and the firing had slackened off to almost nothing. Art and Fletcher were by this time making sure that there were no more live VC to our front and since I was now next to the radio I started to talk to An Khe (Ives had managed to get the radio going before he died; I don't remember who I spoke with - it may have been James). I was not as coherent as I thought I was and John took the set from me not long after I started talking.

An interesting sidelight to all of this is that when we got into position the night before, Art and I were laying right over the rough trail that we had followed into the clearing. That night while I was on watch (Art was also awake) and it was pitch black we heard a rustling noise coming from somewhere down trail from us. It kept getting closer and louder and we could now hear snorting along with the rustling. Art whispered to me that it was a wild boar and while I was still prone pointed my CAR15 in the direction of the ever increasing noises. Art, who was laying next to me, laid his CAR on my hip and pointed in the same direction. We could still see nothing but we decided that we would have to fire if it got much closer. However, at the last minute the boar (if indeed it was one) seemed to hesitate (maybe it smelled us) and moved off downslope into the brush. I have thought about whether or not our firing at the whatever it was could have either sprung the ambush prematurely (and saved us from being fired at when it was light and we were good targets) and possibly saved Ives who I don't think that they could have seen then.

I think what ultimately saved us was the fact that while you, Art, Ives and I were located in a group John and Doug were set up to our right and might have been as much as 10' away. When the VC checked us out at first light they may have thought that the four of us to their front constituted the whole group and did not realize that Fletcher and Simones existed until they began a heavy fire into their flank. I have an image of John (and possibly Doug) standing and firing on full automatic across our front and into the ambush. When I spoke to John Simones last year he led me to believe that he was at fault for getting us into the shit and getting Ives killed. I don't know if that is true or not (I personally don't feel that way) but I give John and Doug all of the credit in the world for fighting like tigers when the heat was on and giving us the chance to survive.

That is it for now, I hope that you had a great Christmas and that the New Year will treat you guys well.

Geoff

I'm back; Geoff took a round through the upper chest, which ended up in his pelvis. In between it did some damage, including rupturing his spleen. Some major internal hemorrhage there. Another hour or two and he would have died.

Art and Geoff heard noises in the dark. It now seems strange, but I slept well that night, knowing that Charlie was out there and could hit us at any time. You get tired humping 100 lbs. through the jungle all day. I still don't know how Geoff did it. He weighed about 150 lbs. Would Charlie try to crawl up on us during the night? I was wondering what it would be like to kill a man with a knife in hand-to-hand combat. I felt inadequately trained. Today I realize, a person can be trained on how to kill, but they cannot be trained to kill. Just do it.

I kept remembering one of the war stories of the time. A Special Forces guy was on a patrol like this, they heard Charlie crawling in on them, he rested the end of his rifle on his foot, when Charlie touched his foot, he shot Charlie.

I am not a morning person, I never have been a morning person. David and I had the 5-7 a.m. shift. Another mistake, putting two new guys on the same watch. We were under strict orders not to initiate contact. Perhaps all we had were some trailers. During this watch, I sat up against my pack, which was in turn leaning against a tree. Don't sit up, it's easier to see you, too much target, but if I lay down I may go to sleep. There was another problem. Either the LRP rations, or the malaria pills, had given me a diarrhea. This is a quandary. It is about 6:15 a.m., Sunday April 23, 1967; the sun is just coming up. I tell Dave, pick up my rifle and some toilet paper and walk far enough away from the other guys and take care of the diarrhea.

No problem, I don't see anyone, but I didn't look too hard either. I knew if they knew I saw them, I was dead.

I went back to sitting against my pack while the other guys stirred a little, ready to start another day. The next thing I know, I am laying about 8 feet down the hill from my pack. I had heard nothing, I felt no pain, but I was dazed and knew I had been hit. I crawled back up the hill to my weapon, ammunition and pack. As I got to the pack, a burst from an automatic weapon hit the ground in front of me. A lot of dirt and rocks kicked up into my face. I remember thinking, "Whow, Just like in the movies." Weeks later I realized that at least one of the rocks was really a .45 caliber round which bounced off the ground, went through my lower left jaw, through the roof of my mouth and stopped about ½ inch from my brain. It broke my jaw, did a lot of nerve damage on the way, along with taking out about 8 teeth. Art said later that some of the teeth were hanging out of the hole where my lip used to be. A couple of years later, the bullet worked loose and I spit it out. It is the flat one I have framed.

The bullet is what took me out of action; I think that if I only had the grenade wounds, I could have functioned some. The grenade had taken out the left eye, chewed up the muscles in my left forearm pretty good, shattered the knuckle of my left ring finger, and put a bunch of minor holes and cuts in me. Yes I was bleeding a lot. I later learned that I had a hole in my left hip and left thigh. Did the grenade do both or are they the entry/exit wounds of a bullet? I don't know. What damage would the grenade have done if I had been lying down instead of sitting up, I don't know. I think that my pack took most of the blast from the grenade.

After this, events are flashes of consciousness a few seconds long. I do not know what order they occurred in.

*I am trying to cover my sector and return fire, but I cannot see. I feel a lump under my left eye. Months later I realized that the lump was what is left of my eye and lower eyelid. If I put a little pressure on the lump, I get a little dizzy, but for a few seconds I can see some. I think, with the right pressure I will be able to see to return fire.*



I try to raise my rifle to return fire, but my left hand is too weak to support it. This is when I realize that a lot of the muscles of my left forearm are hanging in shreds. So I take my right hand and shove the muscles back where they belong. Did I think they would stay there? I don't know. It didn't work, so I prop up my left arm, and rifle with my right hand, but when I move my right hand to pull the trigger, the rifle sinks, I need three hands.

Dave and I were sharing a poncho to sleep on. We were literally shoulder-to-shoulder. Some time in there, I realized that Dave is dead. I guess it was because he was lying there on his back, not moving. I do not remember seeing any wounds on him. Art said later he was shot through the head. Maybe the grenade had wounded him, and then he was shot while trying to get the radio functioning. I don't know, I just know that I knew that Dave was dead. All of my grenade wounds are on my left side, and Dave is to my left. Some of the shrapnel from the grenade would have hit him.

I cannot hear very well. Art reached up and yanked on my foot to wake me up. He tells me to get the radio to him. I am passing in and out of consciousness now. I told him I couldn't see to return fire. He said he knew that so get the radio. I said Dave's dead. He said he knew that, that is why I needed to get the radio to him. Dave's pack with the radio in it is on the other side of Dave. So I crawl onto Dave to reach his pack. This pack, with radio, weighed 80-90 lbs. I am lying on my chest, I reach out with my right hand and grab the pack to drag it down to Art. Gee, I can't pick it up. So I grab the pack and try to slide it down toward Dave's feet to Art. Try lying on your chest, reach out with one hand and move an 80 lbs. canvas container. I did not get it all the way to Art.

I knew that both Art and Geoff had been wounded. How did I know this?

Don't worry about what is going on behind you, take care of your sector. I made that mistake on a training maneuver at Ft, Myers, know better now. Training helps.

Where is the fear? No time for that, do your job, the other guys' lives depend on you. I have already screwed up enough and Dave is dead.

At least two times during this, it could have been more, I try to raise up to do something, anything. Each time I have the sensation of being hit on the back of the head. It was not painful, but felt very forceful. The sensation was as if something was shoving my head down. This is what I was talking about in the letter home about being "hit in the head with a rock". Was my head/brain just rebelling to being moved the wrong way to quickly? Was God shoving me out of harm's way? I have to put that in for the paranormal and/or religious people.

I regain consciousness; Doug is carrying me to the chopper. He has me in his arms like a baby. Wait a minute, I weigh 225-230, Doug is about 6' 2" and 210 lbs or so, but not big enough to carry me alone. But he is doing it. John is walking beside him. Is he carrying someone, too? I don't know, I don't care, its over!! Wait a minute, I have my rifle in my

left hand. My right side is toward Doug. The rifle is dangling down. Is the weapon on safe? What if the trigger catches a branch and a bullet hits someone? I'd better check the safe. I can't lift my left arm, so I move my right hand to check the rifle. Doug says, "It's ok, it's over, it's over." His voice is so calm, like a father comforting a child with a bad dream. I don't remember actually being loaded on the chopper.

I come to, it is so cool. I lift my head and see my blood on the chopper floor. Hay, if I can see my own blood, I am going to make it, I am alive. I look out the side of the chopper at the forest below, so green, so quiet, so calm, just like the WV hills. It would be fun to walk in the woods to watch the squirrels play in the trees. Maybe I can take the dog out this weekend and let it run a coon. I see feet to my left; there is a pool of blood around the feet. Someone is sitting on the bench. It is Art, he says, "It's ok, it's over, it's over, lay back down." At sometime I raise my head and look to my right, I see another pair of feet, no blood; somehow I knew this is Geoff. Where are John, Doug, and Dave? I guess they took another chopper. They would not leave Dave.

#### WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

APR 25 67

Mr and Mrs Ova M Carpenter, don't phone, report delivery

The secretary of the navy has asked me to express his deep regret that your son, PFC William D. Carpenter was placed on the seriously ill list in Vietnam on 23 April 67 as the result of gunshot wounds to left arm, left thigh, buttocks, facial fractures and loss of left eye. He was on reconnaissance patrol when hit by hostile small arms fire. In the judgement of the attending physician, his condition is of such severity that there is cause for concern, but no imminent danger of life.

I come to again; they are taking me off the chopper. They pull me out and put me on a stretcher lying on the ground. A female in OD green fatigues, with short curly red hair and freckles bends over me. She smiles and I think I smile back. She is talking, but not to me. Little Orphan Annie is in the army. It's ok, it's over, it's over.

I come to; they are cutting my clothes off of me. Don't take my boots, I want to keep my boots, only guys who have "been there" have jungle boots.

I come to, I am on a gurney being wheeled down a hallway, someone is holding my hand.

I come to, they are putting me on an x-ray table, they lay me on my chest and extend my head forward. They then rest my chin on the table. PAIN, "You stupid son-of-bitch, the jaw is broken, this really hurts, pad my jaw some way." I don't care whom this private is talking to or what their rank is. They padded my chin to do the x-ray. This is the first time I had felt any pain through all of this.

The story about me saluting the captain is in The Ghosts of the Highlands. I did not know that Art and Geoff were in beds beside me. They were on my bad side. I did not know this until I talked to Art after we were back in Denver. Geoff does not remember this incident. I will admit that at least part of the reason I saluted the captain was, I was being a smart ass. I remember seeing Lieutenant Hall with Capt. James. Apparently John was with them I don't remember seeing him. I would come to and say "Hi Sir" and go back to sleep. At that time, I thought Capt. James had visited me several times.

A Donut Dollie (Red Cross worker) wakes me up, -- would you like to write a letter home? -- I can't, my hand is messed up. -- I will write it for you—I don't know what to write. -- I'm sure you will think of something. I talk a little and go to sleep, she is still standing there when I wake up. This was repeated several times. I don't know how long it took to write that letter.

28 April 1967

CARPENTER, WILLIAM D RA16887249

Awarded: Purple Heart

Reason: For wounds received in connection with military operations against a hostile force.

As soon as I was staying conscious for a while, I was put on a stretcher and loaded on a plane, probably a C-130. The plane was gutted, and had metal racks to hold stretchers. We were stacked three high. I left country completely naked; I had my pocketknife, my Buck hunting knife, and one dog tag in a bag on my stretcher. Why did I have only one dog tag? What happened to the other one? Those three items are my entire memorabilia from VN, except for some shrapnel. The pocketknife is in a drawer somewhere, Danny broke the Buck knife several years later, when he was 10-12 years old.

I had an overnight layover at Clark AFB, Philippines. I am laying in a bed and in walks a guy who had been on the hotshot fire crew a couple of years before. He was now an Air Force medic working at this hospital. Small world. I said, "Dave, you son-of-a-bitch, what are you doing here." A colonel/chaplain was standing right behind him. I think God understood.

I was taken to Camp Zama, Japan. Me and my intravenous jug that was attached through the biceps of my right arm. I guess no other veins were available. The next day, a

Japanese woman comes in to change the bed. She grabs the sheet on me and pulls it down, and screams. I am still naked. Someone brings me some pajamas.

Sometime later, I need to pee. I grab my IV stand and use it as a cane. The bathroom is only 2-3 beds away. An E-6 medic is sitting at a desk at the other end of the room. He yells, where are you going? I told him. Back in bed, I will bring you a pee jug.

A medic wakes me up trying to set me up. They have a portable x-ray machine, and are going to x-ray my chest. Why? You have a fever over 103 and you aren't breathing well. Do you think that me just getting busted up pretty good has anything to do with it? Could be, we just want to make sure you don't have pneumonia.

A couple of weeks later, I am at the debarkation center in Japan, heading home, Geoff comes walking up. I don't know how he knew I was there. We talked for a few minutes, his flight was leaving. What do you say to someone you almost died with? Both of you are headed back to the real world, and may never see each other again. It would be over 32 years before I communicated with him again. Later a bunch of us were sitting in a room waiting to board a plane. In walks a one-star air force general. He walked down the line and shook every man's hand, and said "Thank you." When he got to me, I stood up at attention. He said, "Sit down son, I am here to salute you." Some officers cared.

On May 23, 1967 the plane I am on lands in Denver. I am home. Happy 25<sup>th</sup> birthday Bill. A major gets on the plane, he is looking for Private Carpenter. What did I do this time? Majors do not escort privates. I am the first off the plane. Standing at the bottom of the ramp is my family. Really happy 25<sup>th</sup> birthday Bill. Ann (my sister-in-law) had basically raised hell with everyone until she found out when I was coming home. "I'm sorry ma'am, we can not release that information." The Red Cross got the information for her. I don't know that I ever thanked Ann for doing this for me.

I am 45 lbs. lighter than I was when I left 2 ½ months ago, have a 28" waist. I can be a tomb guard now. The first day I am home Momma fixes me one of my favorite meals, brown soup beans and corn bread. My mouth is wired shut so that the broken mandible can heal. I stuff the food through the hole where the teeth use to be and smash them with my tongue. First solid food in over a month. Tasted good. Some of the beans get hung up in the wire holding my mouth shut. Don't care. Until now the only food I had by mouth was through a straw. Every try to suck thin mashed potatoes through a straw? They taste like cardboard. Sucking jello through a straw got to be fun.

I find out that a guy I graduated from high school with, Johnny Hamrick, is an army clerk in Hawaii. All army Viet Nam paperwork went through his office. When any hometown boy's papers came through, he would call his mom in Webster Springs, who would tell their family. Mom often knew where Junior was going before Junior knew. So the sequence is: Johnny to his mom to Carolyn to my mom.

6 June 1967

CARPENTER, WILLIAM D RA16887249

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal with "v" Device

Reason: For heroism .....

Why did I get the Bronze Star? The only constructive thing I did was try to get the radio to Art. What I really did was get the shit shot out of a team. John, Doug, Art, and Dave all got Silver Stars and Geoff and I got Bronze Stars for this mission. I guess six guys nine miles from home who take on a bunch of the bad guys deserve something.

I am released from Fitzsimons Army Hospital as an outpatient on June 23, 1967. I still go back to the hospital several times for reconstructive surgery on my face. I spend a lot of time in physical therapy rebuilding my left arm. I am an outpatient until the next February, even though I am discharged from the army in January. Because I had enlisted, instead of being drafted, I am medically retired, instead of being discharged. Retired military personnel still have full military benefits, such as medical care, PX privileges, etc. This saved me a lot of money through the years in health insurance. Thank you taxpayers.

4/23/67 wounded; 5/23/67 home; 6/23/67 out of hospital.

There is a very interesting postscript to this that I still cannot explain. In the fall of 1968, I am married and back at Colorado State University, trying to get grades to get into vet school. One afternoon I receive a phone call from a woman who says she is Geoff's mother. She ask if I was the Bill Carpenter who had been in LRRP with Geoff Koper. Yes, I am. She said Geoff had died from his wounds. Geoff was from Princeton, NJ. I am in Ft. Collins, CO. Art had kept track of people and told me that Geoff was in college. How did she find me, I didn't ask.

Not very many people knew the connection between the two of us. I was speechless. My war is over, no more people are going to die in "my war". We are both safe in the real world. I made a few comments, but can't remember what else was said. I thanked her for calling me and hung up. This was before called ID and all of that stuff. After I hung up, I realized that I did not even know where to send flowers. Going to the funeral was out of the question.

Well, Geoff had not died. I still do not know who made the phone call, or why. A few weeks before, the Denver Post newspaper had done a feature article about Art. I was mentioned in the article. There are a lot of sickos in this world; one of them may have wanted to deflect some of their mental problems onto me. The war was an excuse to do this.

Following are some examples of how this country took care of the Viet Nam veteran.

When I was discharged from the army I got a lot of "advise" about all of the veterans benefits. I knew about a lot of them, but decided to check it out anyway. I went to the VA Regional Office in the Denver Federal Center. There was a big room full of "Veterans Advisors". I sat down at one of the desk; the VA rep was a WW II vet who had also lost an eye. I told him I was there to see what was available to me. He looked around the room to see if anyone was near, he then leaned over the desk and whispered to me, "I can be fired for telling you this. We are not allowed to offer anything that the vet does not ask for. We can only answer questions that are asked. Go over to the rack and get all of the brochures, read them. Then come back and ask questions." The US government was not there to help the Viet Nam vet.

Because of my disability, I qualified for vocational rehabilitation through the VA. This was payment of all educational expenses, including books, and a monthly living expense for 48 months. That little firefigt paid for vet school. This was equivalent to the GI Bill the WW II and Korean War vets got. The regular GI Bill for Viet Nam vets who were not disabled was a flat dollar amount for the same time period. A classmate of mine got the regular GI Bill. He was married and had two kids. He got \$225 a month. Our government told him that would pay for all of his family's living expenses and all of his educational expenses. It did not even pay for the rent on their apartment. It did not even pay for all of his educational expenses. Another example of how our government took care of the Viet Nam Vet.

Another addendum:

I feel it is important that history records that the US military did not lose one major battle in the Viet Nam War. We lost very few of the minor battles either. What happened in Viet Nam was that we had no business being there in the first place. The only people who did not know that was President Nixon and his cabinet. I believe that President Johnson realized this, and that is why he did not run for reelection. Nixon and his people would not let the military run the war. They micromanaged it to the extreme. They dictated not only what targets the Air Force would bomb, but when they would bomb them. They decided when and where ground troops would move. They often announced this on national news ahead of time. The invasion of Cambodia is a classic example. All the NVA had to do was withdraw behind the line Nixon drew in the jungle, and wait until the US troops pulled out. The pull out date was announced ahead of time.

Nixon unnecessarily prolonged the war for two years to get himself reelected in 1972. The US public gave the politicians the benefit of the doubt at first, but by 1969 or so, the public turned against the war. Unfortunately, the person in uniform was the one who suffered for this, not the politicians. Read what the traitor, Jane Fonda, did and why she was not executed for treason. She has the blood of thousands of people on her hands. I will never forgive this country, and the people of this country, for not executing Jane Fonda.

The North Viet Nam government knew all of this, they knew that all they had to do was to continue sending the sons of America home in body bags and the people of this country would eventually put in a government that would pull out the troops.

We, the military of this country, won every battle. The people of this country, and their politicians, lost the war.



