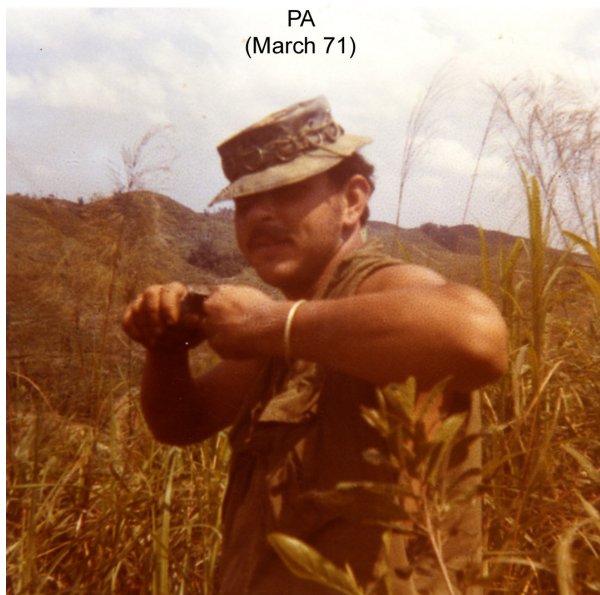


DAVID PALMER

David was from Ligonier Pennsylvania and was known by the letter abbreviation of his state, "PA".

"He has a Heart of Gold and a Family Rich in Love"

We first met in July of 1970 on FSB Welch when he joined the 2nd Squad of our Platoon. Welch was located on a hill overlooking FSB Raquel that we had built in April.



I didn't really get to know PA well until our October Stand Down in An Khe. The 4th Division was going home, but most of us did not have enough time in the country to qualify to go home early. I'm not sure how much time was required.

During the Stand Down we drank a lot of beer and awaited our fate. One of the guys I got to know was a new guy in the 2nd Squad from Queens NY named [Sal Armato](#). I remember

talking to him about the NY Worlds Fair in the early 60s, which I attended a couple of times. During a short period of time, PA got to know Sal pretty well and they promised to stay in touch via mail and meet when they got discharged.



During the last week of October, we shipped out via a convoy to a camp in Qhin Nhon to ship out to our new units. During our short stay, we encountered a Typhoon which flooded the camp and made our lives pretty miserable. Once the weather cleared PA and I were assigned to the 101st Airborne Division up near the DMZ, and Sal was assigned to the Americal Division just south of the 101st Airborne area of operations. We parted ways with Sal and got on a C-130 headed for our new assignment in Phu Bai.

Upon arriving we were shipped to Camp Evans for in-country training! That lasted about 3 days and we were then assigned to the 2/502 (Strike Force) at Camp Eagle.

Upon arriving there we were assigned to

Delta Company's 1st Platoon. We then boarded a Huey for FSB Vehgel, just east of the Ashau Valley.

At Vehgel we were assigned to the 1st Squad, and since we were at the bottom of the seniority list, we were assigned the M-60 Machine gun. PA became my Assistant Gunner.

Around the 9th of November, we met a flight of Hueys at the base of Vehgel and did a Combat Assault further west and closer to the Ashau Valley. The LZ was cold (no enemy fire to welcome us) and uneventful.

The mission was uneventful and on the 13th we humped up a hill for a resupply. On the way up the hill, one of the new guys was having trouble keeping up. Although we carried the heaviest packs, during a break, PA and I went down the hill and helped the new guy named [John Dozier](#). He was a really nice guy who served at Fort Campbell when I was there. We later nicknamed him "BullDozier". After helping him everyone was stunned at our stamina. Compared to the heat, height, and steepness of the mountains in the Central Highlands that we were accustomed to, these so-called "mountains" in the 101st area were nothing more than molehills.

On the LZ a chaplain arrived with our resupply and gave us a service. We sat next to a couple of guys from the 2nd Platoon. Little did we know that these two ([Stan Trygg](#) & [Mike Jensen](#)) only had a few hours to live. During this day, as we found out later, Sal and three others in his unit were killed on a mission with the Americal.

After the resupply, we were ordered off the LZ hill, along with the 2nd Platoon, to a lower saddle attached to the same hill on the north side. We did not feel so good about our night encampment because it was so vulnerable to an enemy possibly firing down on us. It was also a very crowded area for two platoons to occupy. We set up our gun on the extreme northern side at the end of the saddle, in the middle of a trail that descended down a steep hill. This turned out to be a great position for PA and myself, but not so much for the 2nd Platoon.

At 2 in the morning, when it was pitch black, all hell broke loose. The NVA, using the side of the LZ hill, began raining down RPG rounds on top of us, and then they overran us dropping satchel charges along the way.

One RPG round landed between me and a soldier from the 2nd Platoon who was sleeping on my left. I got dazed and lost a good part of my hearing, while the 2nd Platoon soldier was severely wounded. PA was sleeping on my right and my body shielded him from the blast. We immediately went to our gun position. PA acted as my hearing aid. Because of the darkness, I could not identify a target and held my fire. We expected to be attacked from the outside of our perimeter, not from within it.

The whole engagement lasted less than 10 minutes. Other than the flash from the explosions, we did not see much. We dug a gun emplacement for the M-60 expecting a follow-up attack, but none came. The damage was done.

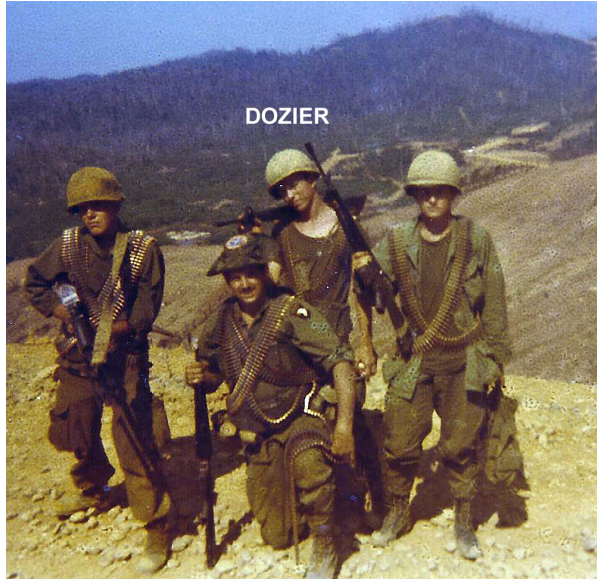
During the night, the medics took care of the wounded, and night medivacs were called in to evacuate the badly wounded. Each chopper would hover over our position with a searchlight on and then drop a basket for the wounded. We expected the enemy would shoot at the searchlight, but they didn't.

As daylight came the sight was not pretty. Although the severely wounded were evacuated, there were still the walking wounded that needed to be sent to the rear for treatment. All of the severe casualties occurred within the 2nd Platoon. The 2nd Platoon also had one M-60 Gun destroyed and the other was stolen by the NVA. Only the two Guns from the 1st Platoon remained.

PA and I were called upon to join our 1st Squad Leader, with a Radioman and a Grenadier to go back up to the LZ and secure it. The five of us were hoping that the NVA was long gone. As we climbed the trail we found signs from where they had fired their RPGs from. The trees had partially protected the area where the 1st Platoon slept, focusing the bulk of the fire on the 2nd Platoon's sleeping positions. After they finished their RPG fire, they then ran through the 2nd Platoon position and down the west side of the saddle.

After a very cautious climb up to the LZ, we found it unoccupied. We set up a defensive position and then radioed down to the rest of the unit to come up to the LZ.

The final tally was 2 KIA, 10 badly wounded, and one soldier had to be restrained because he had lost his mind. There were no casualties to the NVA.



During the evacuation of the wounded, one of the choppers noticed enemy movement in the valley adjacent to the LZ. Perhaps this was the unit that had attacked us? A pair of F-4 Phantoms were called in to address the sighting. We popped smoke on the LZ to mark our position in relation to the enemy sighting. Shortly after, and at tree top height, the two Phantoms buzzed our position. Their noise and turbulence overwhelmed us. By the time we adjusted our eyes to their buzzing, they were two faint dots on the horizon. On their first pass through the valley, they used their Gatling Guns to see if they could stir the enemy up. On the second pass, they fired their load of rockets, and on their final pass, they filled the valley with napalm.



Shortly after, we left the LZ and entered the valley to see if we could find remnants of the enemy. Other than burnt jungle and rocket craters, there was nothing found. From there we continued our mission.



The official assessment was that we were hit by a squad of NVA Sappers and an RPG Team. Based on the craters in our sleeping area, about 20-30 satchel charges and RPG rounds were hurled at us. One RPG round failed to detonate along with 4 satchel charges.

A couple of weeks later PA got a letter from Sal's sister informing him of Sal's death. He was devastated, and always brought up Sal when we talked.

In between missions, PA and I adopted [Run Through the Jungle](#) by Credence Clearwater Revival as our Gun Team theme song. My sister

Debi had sent me a cassette including the song. Before we got on the choppers for our next mission, I would play the song and we would play air guitar on our weapons. The rest of the Platoon thought we were a little crazy. Maybe, but it was a great way to prevent insanity.

In December I had to go to Camp Eagle to get a bad case of jungle rot treated. PA took over the M-60 and not long after was shot in the ankle. He spent the next couple of months in the hospital and rear recuperating. We got back together until I left for home at the end of April.

We kept in touch via mail and phone. In 1972 I got a chance to visit him and his family in Ligonier, PA. In 1987 he came to MA for a construction job and stayed with us for a short time before going back to Ligonier.

Around 2011 while reading a VFW magazine, I saw that the [Virtual Wall](#) was looking for pictures of the fallen. I went to the site and saw that under Sal's name his family left remembrance notes to him. I contacted his brother via email and sent him Sal's picture which was one of the last taken of him. It turned out that his parents were still alive and that he also had a sister. I promptly put them in touch with PA, who was really able to fill them in on his relationship with Sal. They really appreciated his call. In the meantime, I got Sal's brother information on how to get the mission logs for Sal, which he did. Subsequently, he was able to get in touch with some of Sal's unit members. It gave the family more closure. Once in a while, I get a call from Sal's brother. A really nice family.

At the end of 2014 and the beginning of 2015, I had trouble contacting PA. Ed Hubbard called me around that time and helped me get in touch with him again. Ed had been the 1st Squad

Leader and later became the temporary Platoon Leader when our Lieutenant Cassetty went to the rear.



Over the years Ed was in touch with PA now and then. PA really liked him.

When I talked to PA I found out that he was diagnosed with lung cancer and was being treated in the Cleveland, OH VA, and was staying with his son Chad in nearby Canton during treatments. As he was going through his last round of chemo at the beginning of October he suffered a cardiac arrest that he survived. My wife and I drove to Canton and visited him at Chad's house. He was in good spirits and under the loving care of his children and grandchildren.

He called me on Pearl Harbor Day to say he was doing good. His last words to me were; "I love you Caz". On Christmas Night 2015 he passed away.

Last time together at his son Chad's home in Canton, OH



" We all love you PA "