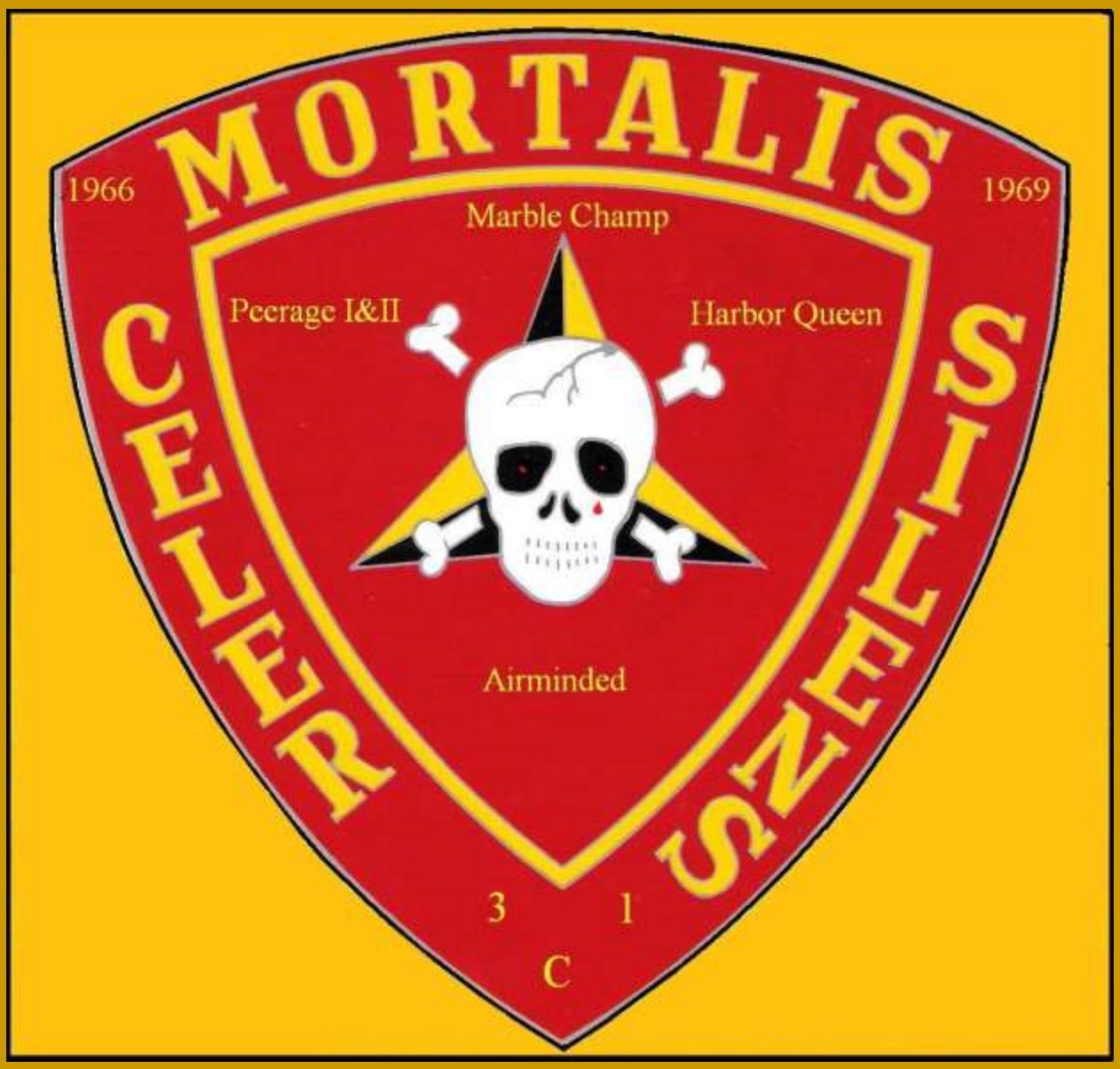
Copyright January 30, 1998

3~CHARLIE~1



On May 10-12, 1996 there was a Charlie Company, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion reunion in San Antonio, TX where I finally got to see my old recon buddy James Smith. It had been almost 28 years since we had last seen each other and there was much to reminisce about. We both confided in each other about our struggles with PTSD over the years. For me, many years had passed and my memories of details concerning specific patrols and dates were hazy. Only the most traumatic events which had directly and profoundly affected me remained seared in my mind. During our conversation, James showed me a worn diary that he had kept in Vietnam. It consisted basically of rough notes that had been taken under some very adverse circumstances. There were many details, dates, and most importantly, outpouring of his emotions relating to the events that he had experienced. I relayed to him that I still had super 8mm movies, mostly of our base areas and some out in the bush (jungle). At that reunion we were able to fill in more information concerning various missions mentioned in the diary. It was at that reunion that we made a commitment to gather as much information as we could, before it was lost to the dust bend of history.

As Smitty made contact with other Recon Marines and informed them of our project, they started to send us pictures, slides and more information concerning various events touched on in the diary. Using the diary as a centerpiece, we started to build this information around it to make it more robust and accurate.

Later that year a book came out titled, “Never Without Heroes: Marine Third Reconnaissance Battalion in Vietnam, 1965-70” by Lawrence C. Vetter, Jr. who had served in Vietnam as a Marine officer in 3rd Recon, Charlie Company. Mr. Vetter’s book was an extraordinarily valuable asset for our project as well as for all other Recon Marines for it was the first accurate well-documented and researched chronicle of 3rd Recon Battalion in Vietnam.

As the Internet started to develop and information concerning the Vietnam War started to become more available for research, we were able to add the recon after action reports to the diary. It was through research on the Internet that we found out that there was more tonnage of bombs dropped during the Vietnam war than in all of World War II and that the heaviest bombing (in South Vietnam) occurred in the northern Quang Tri province along the 17th parallel (DMZ) where we operated. According to the National Museum of the Marine Corps at Quantico, “By 1967 the war near the DMZ, primarily fought by the 3rd Marine Division, exceeded in violence and firepower the sum of all most pitches battles elsewhere in Vietnam”. “Many Marines saw more days of combat in a one-year tour near the DMZ than the overall total their predecessors had experienced in the intense but relatively infrequent Pacific Island battles during the 1940’s”. The northern Quang Tri province claimed most of the Marine casualties incurred during the Vietnam War. It was the most costly war the Marine Corps ever fought with more killed and wounded than in all of WWII.

In his excellent book, titled “Green Ghosts,” Lt. Col. W.C. Floyd USMC (Ret) states the following:

"The reconnaissance operations along the DMZ during the time we operated there were the most dangerous and demanding in all of Vietnam. Recon Marines endured conditions, terrain, tempo of operations, and personnel shortages not even remotely matched by any other similar unit in or adjacent to I Corps. Even the enemy was different: the NVA were fierce, well trained, well equipped fighters who developed an effective counter-reconnaissance strategy. I say that based on the fact that after my duty as commanding officer of Third Force and Third Recon Forward I became the ground reconnaissance and special operation staff officer at III Marine Amphibious Force. I was aware of all of the reconnaissance and special operations in and adjacent to I Corps"

The Northern I Corps area had the distinction also of being one of the most heavily herbicide sprayed areas. Since our base area at Dong Ha was within North Vietnamese artillery range, we were routinely shelled by heavy artillery as well as rockets. In the northern Quang Tri province, especially during the 1968 Tet Offensive, Marines were vastly outnumbered by NVA forces. Even though we had air superiority, it had its limits because of the fact that the enemy could hide under the triple canopy of the mountainous jungle and aircraft could not always be counted on in inclement weather. For Marine Recon teams operating deep in enemy territory, the topography and distance from supporting artillery sometimes marginalized its effectiveness. In the Northern I Corps area, only a small percentage of territory was controlled by friendly forces. The rest of the hinterland area which was referred to as Indian country was patrolled by recon teams. Marine Recon missions in the Northern I Corps were some of the most dangerous and stressful combat missions of the Vietnam War.

Without James' deep dedication to his fellow reconners, both living and deceased, this project would have never taken off. James spent countless hours on the phone gathering information on various missions from the actual participants. This information plus pictures of the participants, when available, were added to the diary as were topographical maps with mission location, routes and areas where enemy contacts were made. James Smith's work has added significantly to preserving the combat history of reconnaissance marines operating up on the DMZ. Semper Fi

- Sergeant George T. Boks USMC (3rd Recon Battalion, Charlie Company, August 1967 - August 1968)

****

James M. Smith's wartime diary is a gripping account of Recon Marines serving in Vietnam during 1967 – 1969 on the DMZ. Smith brought back memories of Dong Ha, Cam Lo and the Rock Pile, where I Commanded Company "C", 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion from 1966 to 1967.

The author has selected maps and pictures helpful in accompanying each patrol. You are there! You can sense the fear and smell of the NVA's cooking fires. These after-action reports are fascinating straight forward reports… additively readable. We owe Smith our gratitude for rescuing "Marble Champ" Marines from obscurity.

These are real patrols where Marines got killed or wounded. Leadership always rises to the surface. Each Marine pulls his own weight. A successful patrol is one in which the mission is complete and all Marines and Corpsman are successfully extracted. This riveting account makes the Marines and their patriotic service to be very proud of.

Semper Fidelis

Donald R. Gardner

Major General, USMC (Ret)

Smitty's Diary

To the best of my abilities, every effort was made to present the events in this diary as accurately as possible. As a member of 3rd Marine Division's 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, alone with daily events that I kept were cross-referenced with recon patrol after action reports. For further accuracy, I also consulted with as many surviving former recon marines as I could. They contributed vital information for the project. They also provided me with their memories of past events and also contributed many photos and slides. I also added news clippings from the Sea Tiger and Leatherneck magazine which were related to marine recon in Vietnam. Finally, I added topographic maps in which I reconstructed vital routes and locations of important events where they occurred. What mostly prompted this effort was the fact I wanted to pay homage to my fellow recon marines and navy corpsman, with whom I had the privilege of serving. To them all, I will remain, Semper Fidelis.

James M. Smith



James Smith

Dong Ha Vietnam 1967

November 1967 to November 1969

The following work is based on the diary kept by James Smith while assigned to 3rd Marine Division, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion.

It is as it was in a land far away. To a few, it may be words conveying just another war story. To some it may mean nothing at all, but to the individuals who served in this far-away place, it is much more. This diary contains the memories of the living and brings forth the souls of the dead. It recounts the footsteps of "Team Three Charlie One"; Call Sign, "Marble Champ" and other recon teams that lived through the horror of war. These pages hold the fear and sorrow of all who were there. It is about young heroic recon marines, some of whom made the Supreme Sacrifice for their recon brothers in this faraway place, the 'Nam.

James Smith

November 1967 to November 1969

November 1, 1967

Boot Camp is at an end, next stop Vietnam. We've all heard the stories of the "little Rice Farmer," "Charlie", the "VC", and the North Vietnamese Soldiers, and how we're are going to kick their ass and free the South.

The Marine Corps has presented the situation as if the enemy (North Vietnamese Army) are weak people who are untrained militarily and are using the oldest of weaponry, such as primitive booby traps, to defeat the strongest force in the world. I feel as if I am walking into an ambush. This war has been going on for years and people are dying. At this time the estimate of American loses is around 18,000 killed and the death toll escalates every day. There are few training days left, soon I'll will depart for Vietnam.

November 17, 1967

It's time! I've heard the baddest of the bad talk their shit of what they will do in combat. As it's been said, you talk the talk but we'll see who walks the walk. We've been told all will go, but not all will come home alive.

Today we depart for the Nam. We will arrive in Okinawa with a layover until the 22nd of November.

November 21, 1967

We have arrived at Okinawa and from what I've seen, the island looks very nice. Our group has been told that we have base liberty and to enjoy it, for tomorrow (22nd) we leave for Vietnam.

November 23, 1967

It is late on the 23rd, and we've have arrived at Da Nang, Vietnam. Everyone is extremely apprehensive. We have been told to settle in at the terminal and our names will be called. Settling in meant finding a spot on the ground and making yourself a temporary home. I did just that for a week on that hard ground. The toughest was the mosquitoes,

and being new in country first priority was insect repellent. While waiting I didn't do much talking, just kept my mouth shut and my eyes and ears open. Considering we're next to the runway there is a constant number of aircraft being launched. The noise is deafened due to a constant number of jets taking off, which is another situation when it comes to sleeping. These jets are bombers, and each one holds death and destruction for someone in the war zone.

In that week at Da Nang, I felt as if I saw the poorest people in the world. The kids always wanted something to eat and looked as if they needed a meal. Their homes were tattered, some made out of old empty C-Rat boxes. I was, without a doubt, in a land that God forgot.

November 29, 1967

I have been called up with other Marines and asked if anyone wanted to volunteer for Marine Recon. We knew it was an elite group, tasked with dangerous assignments behind enemy lines but we were told it was a choice, recon or being assigned to the grunts (infantry marines).

While standing there, I recall my Dad always telling me if anyone asks you to volunteer for anything, don't! What did I do? I raised my hand and volunteered for Recon.

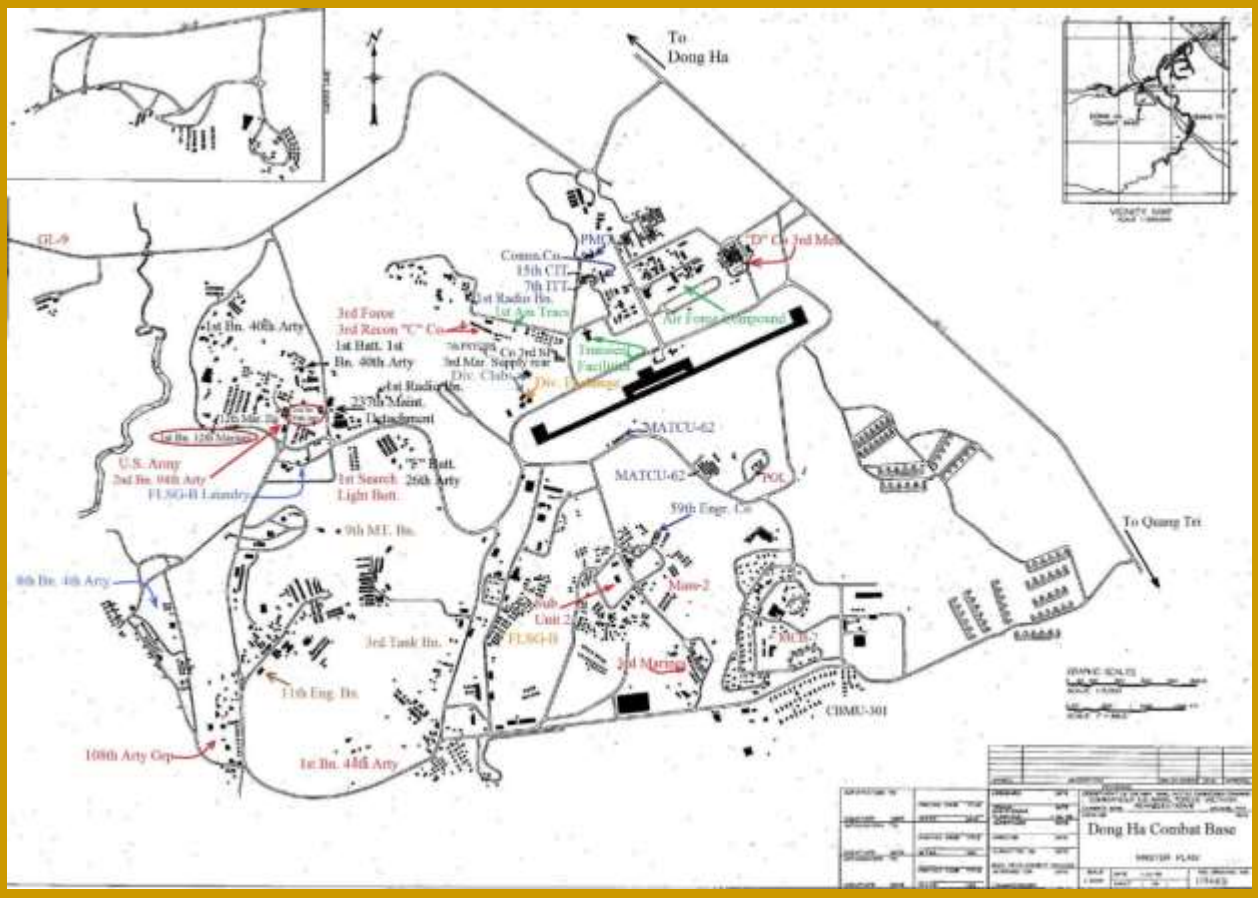
After a brief stint in Recon School, located at Phu Bai was completed, I will proceed to Dong Ha Vietnam in the northern section of the country.

November 30, 1967

Now in the 3rd Marine Division, I will be departing to Dong Ha, Vietnam where the unit I am assigned to is located. Dong Ha is located about 12 miles south of the (DMZ) Demilitarized Zone, which is about 5 kilometers from either side wide and separates North and South Vietnam alone the Ben Hai river. This area is what is referred to as the "I Corps." I will be a member of the 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, Third Marine Division, Charlie Company.

Arriving at the unit, checking in at the company office, I have been placed in a team. The team's military designation is Three Charlie One, and its call sign is Marble Champ.

(Map) Dong Ha Combat Base



After I am shown the teams hooch, (living quarters) I am told the team is on patrol and won't be back for two days. I am told to sleep in one of the team member's rack until I get my own tomorrow. As night approaches, I am beat and ready to sleep. Once I find a rack (bed) I settle in. I can't believe this guy can get any rest in this bed. It's like sleeping on river rocks. The next morning, I had to see what the hell was under this mattress. At first glance I could have shit. Pulling the mattress back, there were 10 to 15 M-79 rounds, five or six M-26 grenades, M-16 and M-14 ammo, an extra M-16 rifle and three or four red and yellow smokes. I've been told this rack (bed) belongs to the patrol leader of team Marble Champ. His name is Paul Stover and he will soon rotate back to the States. Whoever he must be, this is the kind of guy you could send to the jungle in a jock and he'd come back with a full wardrobe riding a goddamn bicycle.

As I waited for the team to return, I was able to meet and talk to the team next door and got some insight about Recon mission's and how they operated. Everyone was very helpful, and made me feel at home in my new unit.



Paul Stover

December 1, 1967

Today should mark my first day in Charlie Company and the designated recon team. My team members have returned from their patrol and I have now met them all. Man, they are not only the toughest-looking guys, but are what in the Nam is called “salty.” With Paul Stover soon to go home, my new patrol leader will be Richard “Dick” Vance. Dick is a young man who appears to be a true leader. I

can see in his eyes the seriousness of a pro and the wear on him from the responsibility of his job.



Dick Vance Dong Ha Vietnam

Dick is in charge, lays down the rules and we follow his orders. Team members of Marble Champ know what it takes to make the mission work and carries out all the rules and responsibilities of their designated positions. The team as a whole is briefed prior to a mission by a division intelligence officer. As patrol leader, Dick's job is probably the most difficult of all. His responsibility is to re-check over each man's gear making sure everything was in operating order and that the right equipment is being taken out for that particular mission. He also goes through all the past intelligence reports on the area that the team will be sent into. Intelligence reports consists of all past contacts with the enemy in the area, recent enemy troop movements, topographic lay of the land and many other aspects of intelligence that will be required to

carry out a successful mission. I would say Dick's responsibility was awesome in that the lives of all the team members depended on him making the right decision at the right time. One miscalculation on Dick's part could get the whole team wiped out.

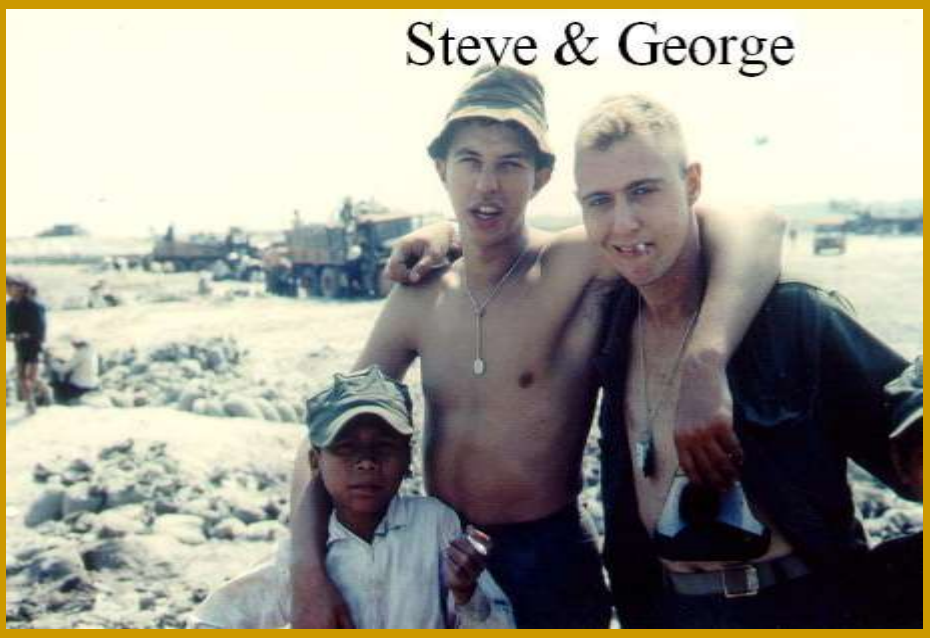
Tony Cosgro is our designated assistant patrol leader. Cos, as everyone calls him, likes to smoke his cigars in the rear between missions. He also runs point for the team while on patrol. It's been said that Cos is the only man in the unit that has ever taken down a sniper in the bush. Cos works with Dick very closely to organize the team and analyze the area where the mission is to take place. They determine what is needed on the mission and who will carry it. If Dick is killed or wounded, Cosgro would take command and make decisions on the team's next move. As assistant patrol leader, Cosgro helps to establish the location of the team and the direction of movement at all times.



Tony Cosgro

During my tour, I worked with quite a few radio men, but the two that stick out in my mind as the best were Steve Laktash and George Boks. I know it takes a cool head to do the job and these guys had what it takes. Without these men, and the necessity of having constant communications with support units, the possibility of survival would be nil. Throughout the war, the radio man in the jungle and in the rear in

the COC's (Center of Communications) played one of the most important roles in reconnaissance operations.



Their job as primary radio men had many duties. These men carried their standard load of provisions and armament plus a 27-pound radio with spare batteries. Once inserted they had to stay in contact with aircraft as well as constant radio contact with the rear to inform them of position reports and whether the team was secure, stationary or moving. They were also responsible for coding our locations throughout the area in which our missions took place. They carried what was called a shackle sheet, which was a system that encrypted messages sent by the recon team. This prevented the enemy from deciphering the information sent back by the recon team. They had to know all call signs of the arty "artillery" support, all types of aircraft, and any friendlies "Army or Marines" in the area. In case of enemy sighting, enemy movement or a contact that resulted in a firefight, the radio man had to be able to keep a cool head - very cool in order to request the support needed to save the lives of their team members. They also

had to be able to read the map and plot precise locations for calling in artillery strikes.

The distress call “Marble Champ, CONTACT, CONTACT, CONTACT, TAKING FIRE,” would immediately get the attention of all ears at the rear. From that point, Steve or George would feed precise information about the situation to the rear and request what would be needed to support the team members. This required extraordinary effort because during a chaotic situation such as this they had to effectively lay down a line of fire in support of the team while at the same time keeping the communication with the rear support intact. Steve and George were true professionals and an asset to team Marble Champ.

While Steve or George was the primary radio man on a particular mission, there was always a member of the team that carried a secondary radio. This was done as a safety measure because the radio was the team’s only lifeline and if the primary radio man was wounded or killed, it was the secondary radio man’s job to take over and call for any support needed. The secondary radio was also at times employed in monitoring secondary frequencies. Each team member knowing how to do the other man’s job in case he went down was important and might make the difference between whether the team survived or would be wiped out.

There was one man per team assigned to carry the M-79 grenade launcher. Team Marble Champ had the good fortune to have a young Marine named John Romero from Crawly, Louisiana as their designated M-79 man. I’ll never forget this man for the rest of my life not only because of his bravery but also for his good nature. John was better known in the team as the Mule, for along with the standard load of

food and water, etc., he would also carry a total of 100 M-79 HE (high explosive) rounds, at ½ lb. each. John had the extraordinary ability to put more rounds on target faster than anyone else I knew. He was a very important asset to the team and a true professional marine.

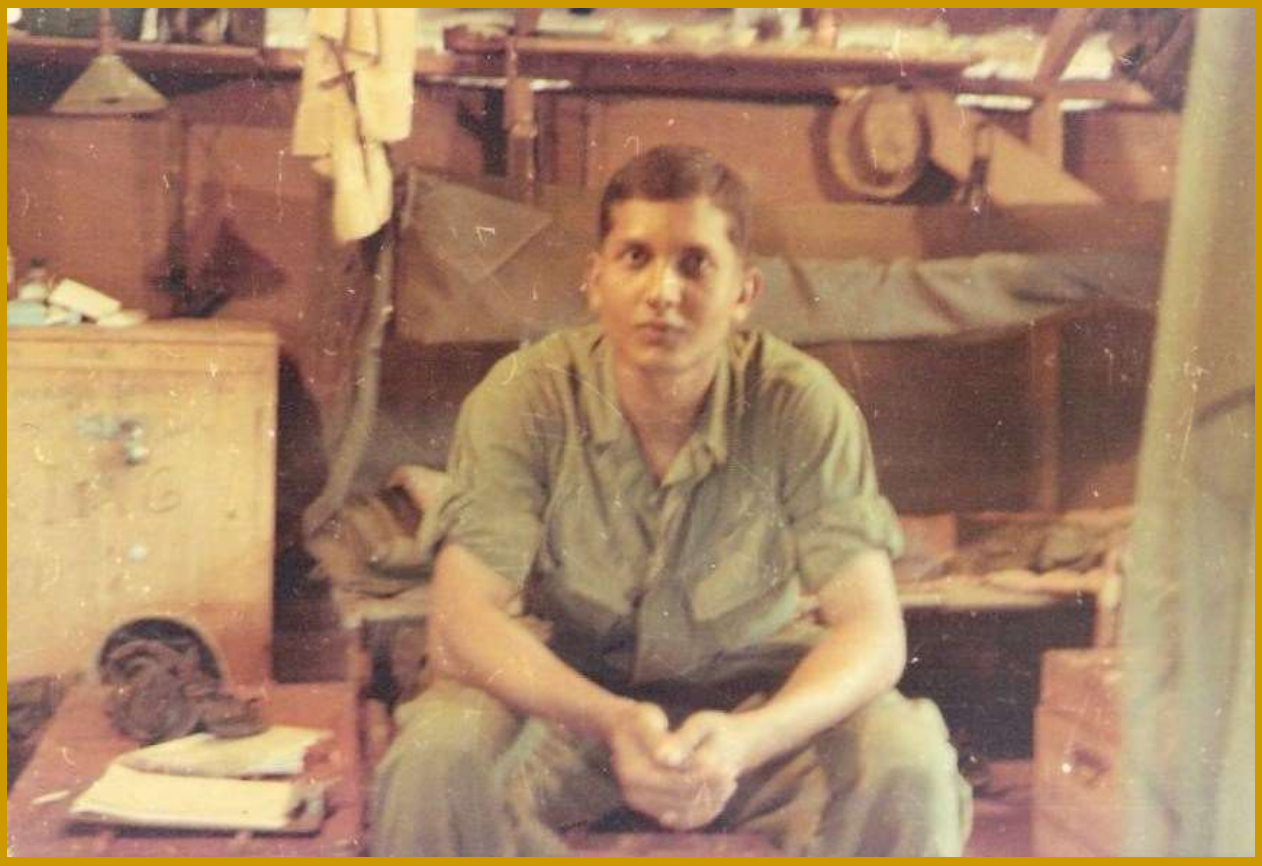
On future missions I would witness John stick his finger in his mouth for wind direction, fire his M-79 grenade launcher straight up in the air, and after 15 to 20 rounds, it would be as if an arty barrage were falling down around our position. With the enemy only meters from our position it was kiss my ass, Charlie.



When walking through enemy territory, the team would stay in single file, somewhat spread out for safety. The last Marine in the column was called “Tail End Charlie.” His job was to make sure that the trail the team made was well covered as possible and that the team was not being followed. Darrell Schokman had this designated position.

Due to the lack of sometimes having a Navy Corpsman, Darrell also held this position and carried the medical supplies for the team. He was from Pasadena, California but he was originally from Ceylon. He was dark-skinned with light-colored eyes. I remember a story he told of a bird called the “Did You Do It?” bird. It was of two lovers that were forbidden to see each other by the father of the daughter. One day, the father killed the young man and disposed of him in a trunk. The man owned one of these birds and it witnessed the incident. The bird was known to remain silent until a human would get close to it. At that time, and only at that time, the bird would say “Did You Do It?” To say the least, the bird drove the old man to a point of confessing to the crime. Darrell, on a few occasions just before a contact with the enemy, said he could hear this bird and seconds later, a firefight would erupt.

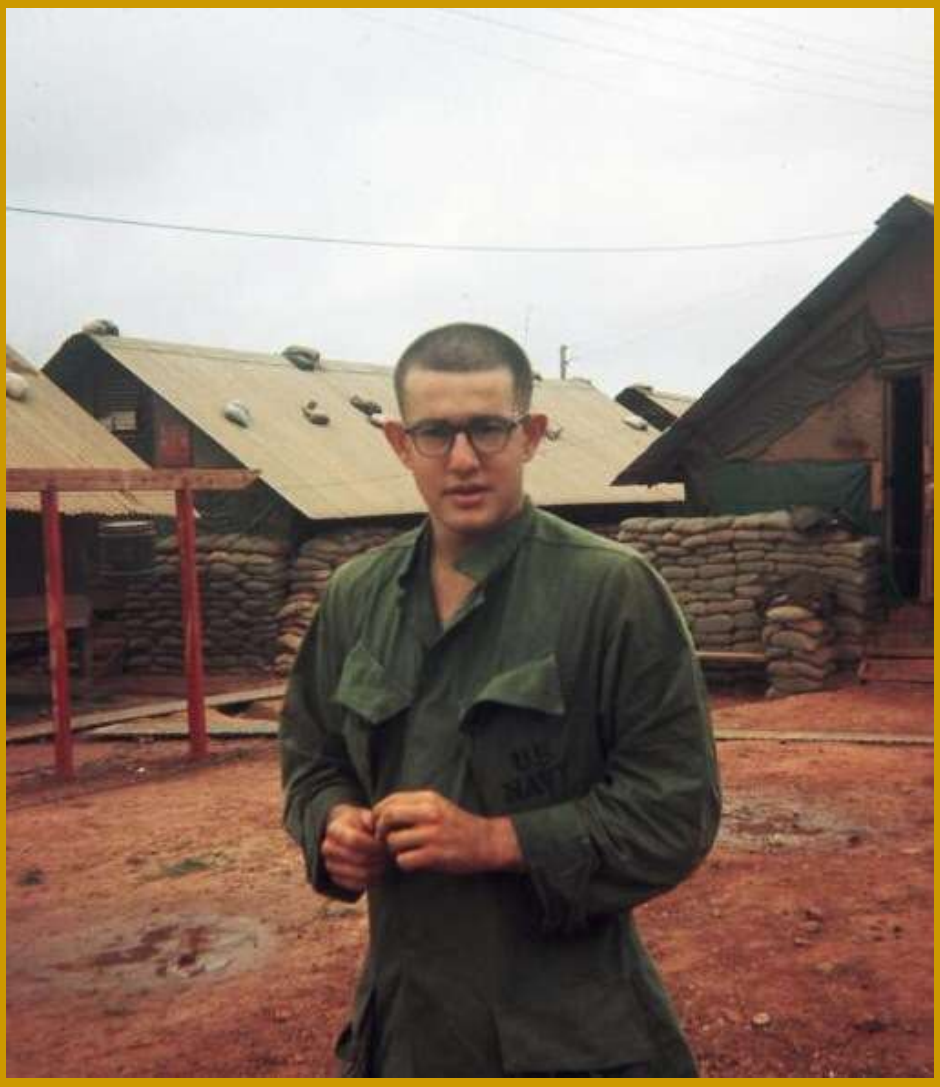
If enemy contact came from the rear, cool heads had to prevail. It could be an attempt to drive the team forward and into an ambush. Darrell was an outstanding Recon Marine and kept the team’s rear safe.



Darrell Schokman

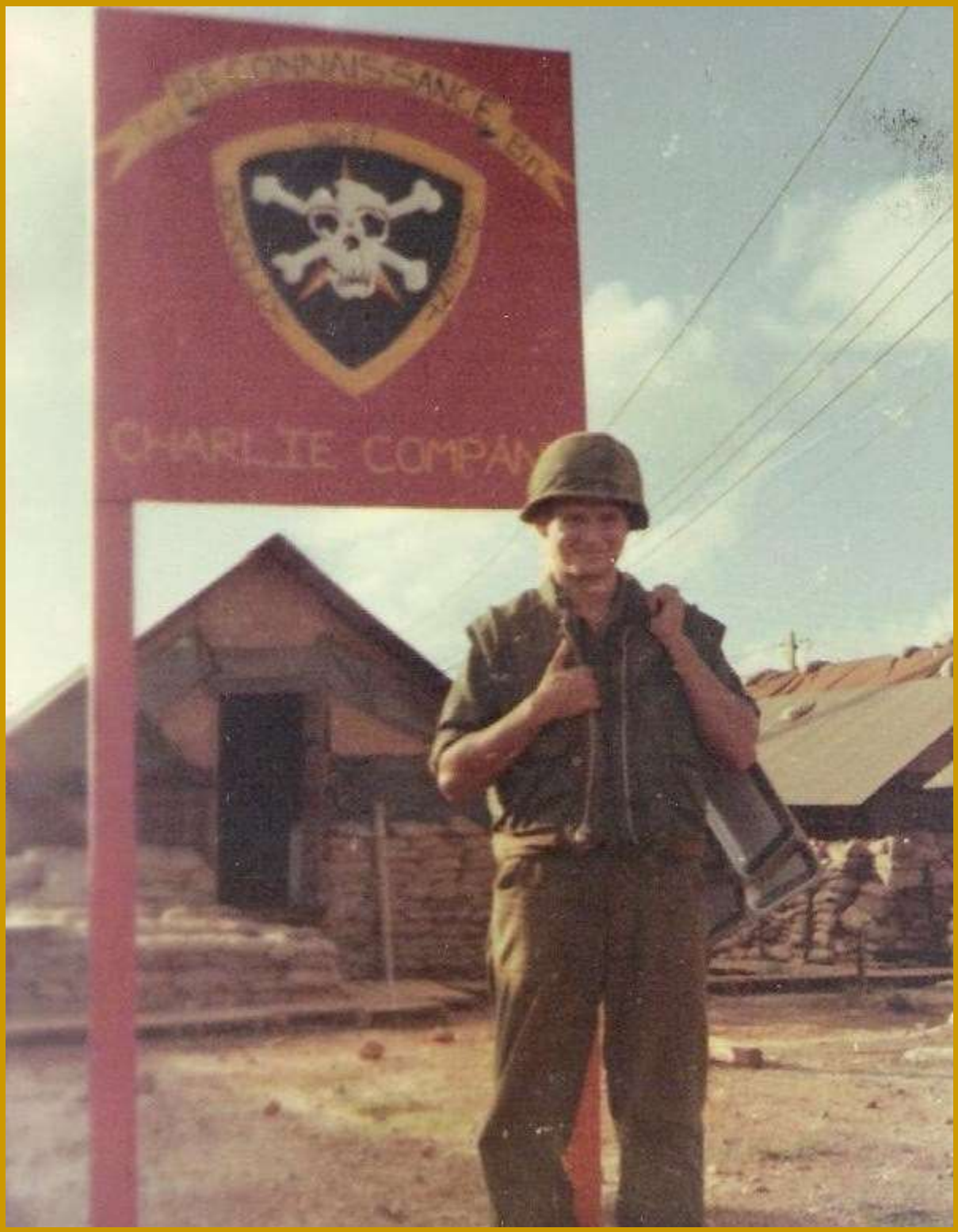
It was a little later in my tour that Dale Watchorn, a Navy Corpsman, was assigned to the team. He knew his job and proved it more than once in firefights with the enemy.

On secondary radio as well as other positions, team mates like Jim King, who came to Vietnam at the same time I did, and those that came later like Al Moore, Mike Green, Jerry Beasley and Randy Rhoads would also be very important in the missions of team Marble Champ.



Dale Watchorn

Combat Navy Corpsman

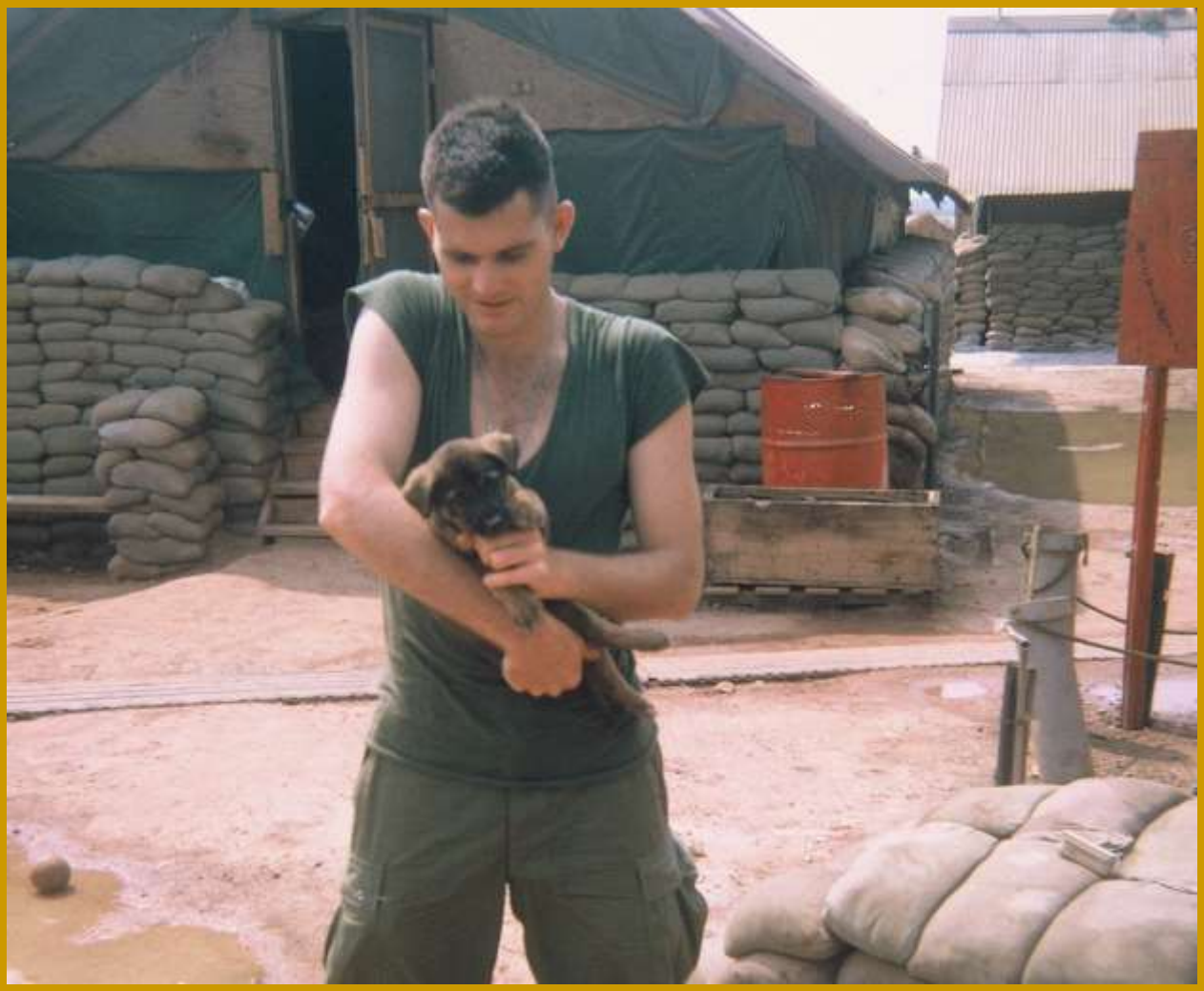


Jim (Cowboy) King

Bravery and Semper Fidelis describes Jim


3rd RECONNAISSANCE Bn
SWIFT
CHARLIE COMPANY
COMPANY COMMANDER
CAPTAIN S/M HARTNETT
COMPANY FIRST SERGEANT

Al Moore



Mike Green



Jerry Beasley



Randy Rhoads

I'm assigned as point man, and will be trained by Tony Cosgro. I will do the job to the best of my ability. My duties are to lead the patrol on its missions looking for any signs of the enemy. I'm to look for any type of booby traps, pungy pits or trip wires. Not only are there trip wires on the ground, but booby traps in the trees as well. Point is a very intense job because at any second I could trip a booby trap or lead the team into an ambush. If I missed the signs of an ambush, I could get the whole team wiped out and I will probably be the first one to get killed. While on point I am the only member of the team that is allowed to walk with my rifle off safe while on the move. I will carry an M-14 loaded with 7.62 MM rounds or M-16 depending on the mission with 5.56 MM rounds and have a selector on my rifle on automatic fire at all times. The second, fourth and sixth rounds are tracers to help me adjust on my target. This magazine with tracers is used only during the day. The reason for this magazine was that while moving in the bush, a point-to-point contact could be from five to twenty feet away depending on the type of vegetation, and to quickly adjust on my target was important. It meant whether I would live or die. At night, the magazine was changed to standard ammo full metal jacket rounds. When I was in the lead, I expected as much silence as possible behind me. Team members knew to watch their step and be as quiet as possible. The team needed to move in as much total silence as possible. If a twig snapped or equipment rattled, this might tip the enemy off subjecting the team to an ambush or a premature ambush with me as point, the first one in the enemy killing zone.

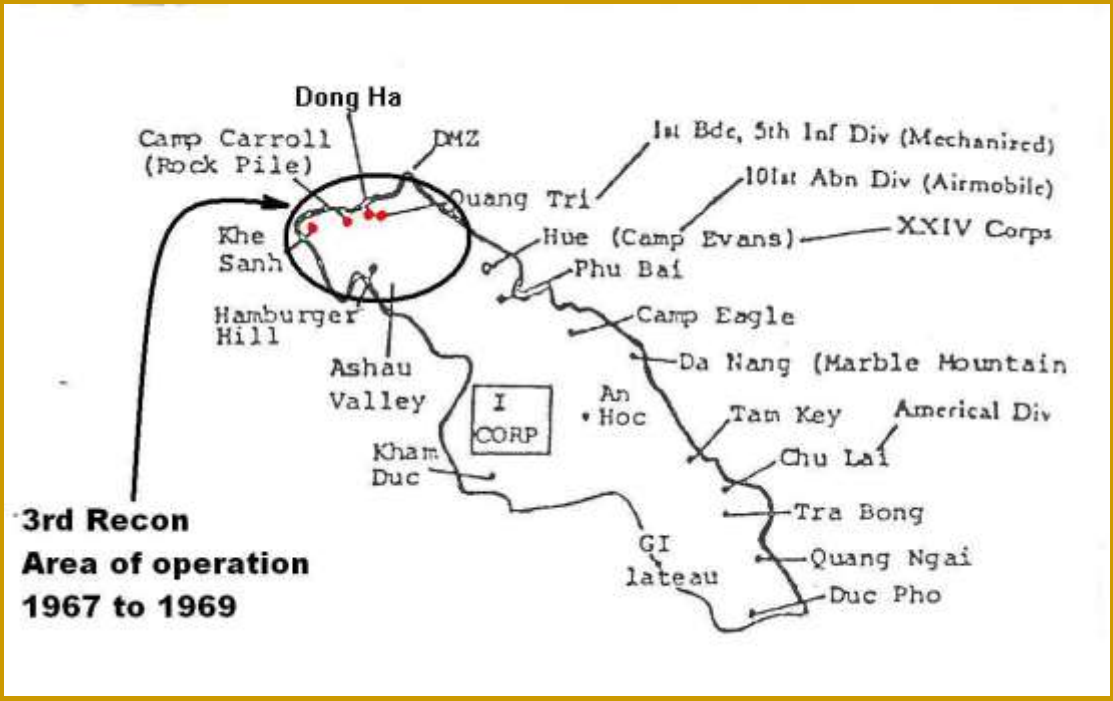
All patrols during this period of time were conducted in free fire zones, which meant any one in that assigned area was considered enemy and would be dealt with accordingly. The local civilian

“indigenous” population in this part of Vietnam had been relocated therefore anyone we encountered was considered the enemy.

There were ways of moving in an area that Cos had taught me before his departure. Jerking one’s head to the right or left very quickly and raising your rifle as if you were going to fire worked every time when in an area that made you uncomfortable. I would find out just how well this worked in some future patrols. As point, it was important to keep a cool head. On a point-to-point contact with the enemy, it was not how fast you could shoot, but how accurate you were on the first burst of fire. As hard as it was, you only had one chance to take good aim and hit your target otherwise you would be a casualty.



James Smith



Above Photo from: "The Defining Year"

There were many brave men I had the honor of serving with while a member of team Marble Champ 3Charlie1. I pay high tribute to these 18 men, and without them there would have been no hope of my returning home alive.

RECON MARINES I SERVED WITH IN TEAM 3 CHARLIE 1

Paul Stover	John Romero
Dick Vance	Mike Green
Tony Cosgro	Darrell Schokman
Steve Laktash	J. Wayne Thompson
Jim King	Jerry Beasley

George Boks	Randy Rhoads
Donald H. Boswell	Robert Jenkins
Aaron L. Moore	Danny Tirado
Dale Watchorn (Navy Corpsman)	Fred Ostrom

RECON MARINES

Recon Marines are a team of four to eight Marines trained to make long-range patrols deep into enemy territory. Their job is to search out the enemy, observe and report on enemy units within their zones of operations. Four-man teams were called Keyhole recon patrols. They were strictly observation and intelligence gathering patrols. Stingray patrols, on the other hand, were composed of eight Marines which were tasked with engaging the enemy with artillery, air strikes and small arms. Also, every attempt will be made to capture a prisoner and retrieve vital enemy documents. Predominantly, all of our missions were Stingray patrols.

The standard load per team member depending on the mission would be 500 rounds of ammo in magazines, a bandoleer of 100 M-60 machine gun rounds in our backpack, claymore mines for the nights harbor site, six M-26 fragmentation grenades, one red and one yellow smoke grenade, a white phosphorus grenade, one CS gas grenade with gas mask, and extra rounds for the M-79 grenade launcher. Also, the radio man would carry extra radio batteries and incendiary grenades, which were used in an emergency to destroy the shackle code and radio so they would not fall into enemy hands. Considering that each patrol would last from four to six days, each team member would carry a minimum of five to seven days of food consisting of canned and

dehydrated meals and an ample supply of water in canteens. All of this along with your rifle, cleaning equipment, maps, compass, pop-up flares, knife, poncho, signal mirror, bug juice, camouflage grease paint, personal hygiene pouch, foot powder and dry socks were also taken. Some of this equipment such as extra M-79 rounds, M-60 machine gun rounds, starlight scopes and radio batteries were spread throughout the entire team.

At times, when fully loaded and proceeding into a high-risk area, the weight carried by each team member exceeded 100 pounds.

When the Army Special Forces camp at Lang Vei was overrun by the enemy with the help of enemy tanks, we also started taking out a few LAWS (anti-tank weapon) on each patrol.

To operate in silence the team would use specific hand and arm signals to communicate. These would be passed on from the point man to the tail end Charlie.

Some of the silent hand signals were as follows:

A closed fist meant to freeze and not move in any way. The fist meant to freeze, then a flat hand in a down motion, meant to get down as quickly as possible and be prepared for enemy contact. Pointing to the eye, ear or nose meant you see, hear or smell something or someone, and enemy contact could be imminent. Other signs were a simulation of breaking a stick and holding up five fingers which meant to stop and take a five-minute break. If the patrol leader made a circle above his head, it meant to set up a 360-degree defensive perimeter. There were other signals, but the purpose of these signals was to eliminate noise and protect and conceal the location of the team. It was

also the team leader's decision if our food could be heated up. If we knew we were in an area infested with enemy, there would be no heating up of food. As well during the monsoons, the enemy can smell heated food for a long distance giving the teams location away. Therefore, no heated food during this time while on missions. Tops and bottoms of empty cans were cut out, flattened and taken along or discretely buried. The team leader insisted on nothing left behind to mark our trail. These were just some of the rules. If a team member had to defecate, he had to make sure that he defecated into a dug-out hole, buried it and covered it over with vegetation so as not to leave any trace.

Camouflage was constantly applied and reapplied to your face, hands, and on the front and back of your neck. White or black skin shines when it's wet with sweat and can be seen.

All of the above guidelines had to be strictly followed because missions were performed in heavily enemy occupied areas and this is why Marine Recon was called Celer, Silence, and Mortalis: meaning, Swift, Silent and Deadly.

My time has started in the company and Vietnam. I have met the team members and like any green boot (new guy) am ready to start off in the right way.

After nine days of raining off and on, and I mean heavy rain, my first mission will be coming up on the 10th of December 1967. My job will be second point. Tony Cosgro will be teaching me the job of running point.

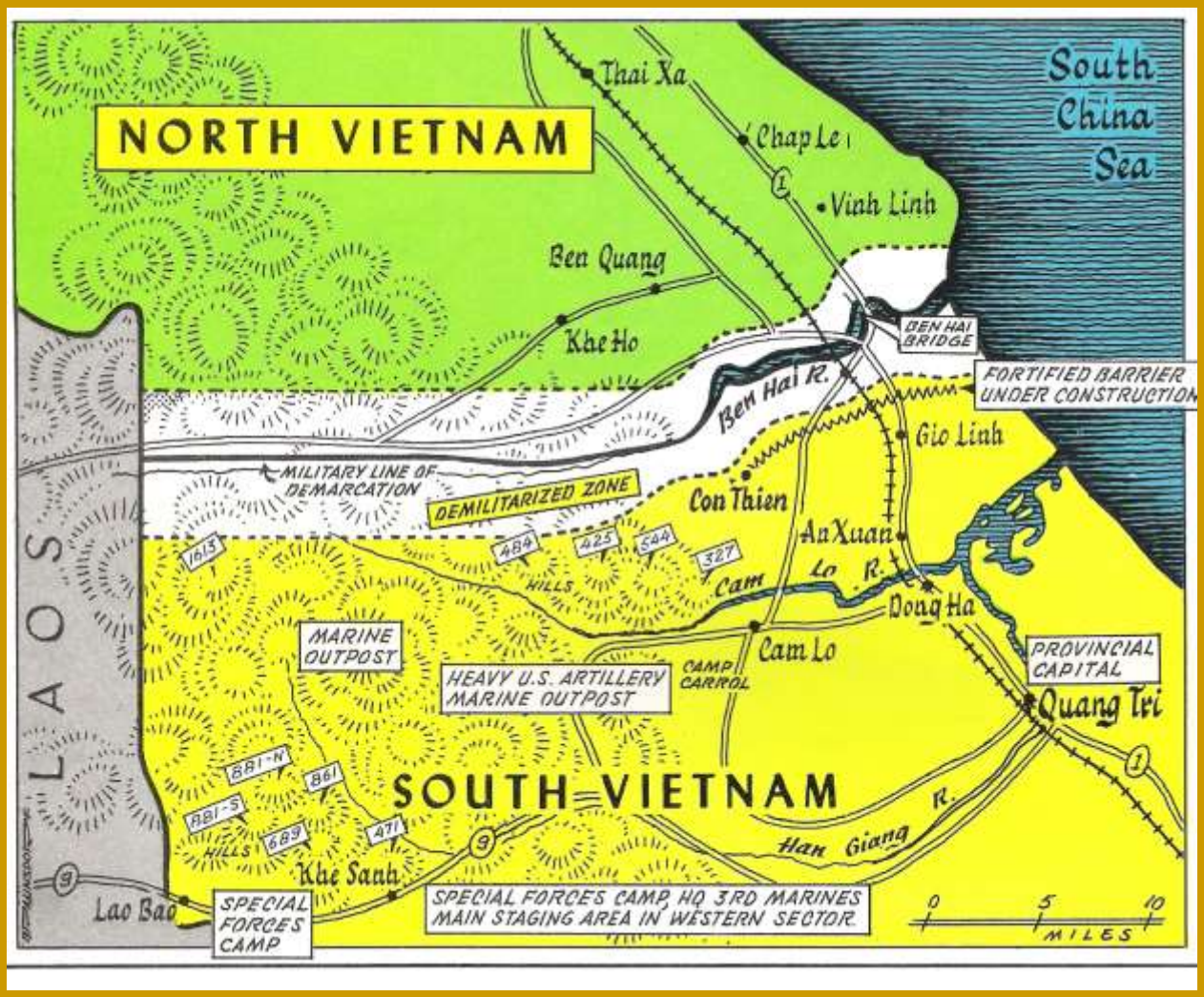
Before our mission is under way the team will be briefed by the 3rd Force Recon company S-2 Intelligence officer Captain George O'Dell. Captain O'Dell would inform every team going on patrol with every possible bit of information available concerning their recon zone. Before becoming an Intelligence Officer, Captain O'Dell had spent time in an infantry unit as platoon commander as well as in 3rd Force Recon and had his share of bush time running missions in the team call sign, "Ice Boat." With his previous experience deep in enemy territory coupled with updated intelligence information, the teams had vital information that would be needed to successfully complete the mission.

Once we returned from a mission, Captain O'Dell would conduct each team's debriefing, thereby increasing, and updating intelligence information concerning the location and events of that mission.



Photograph; Captain George O'Dell

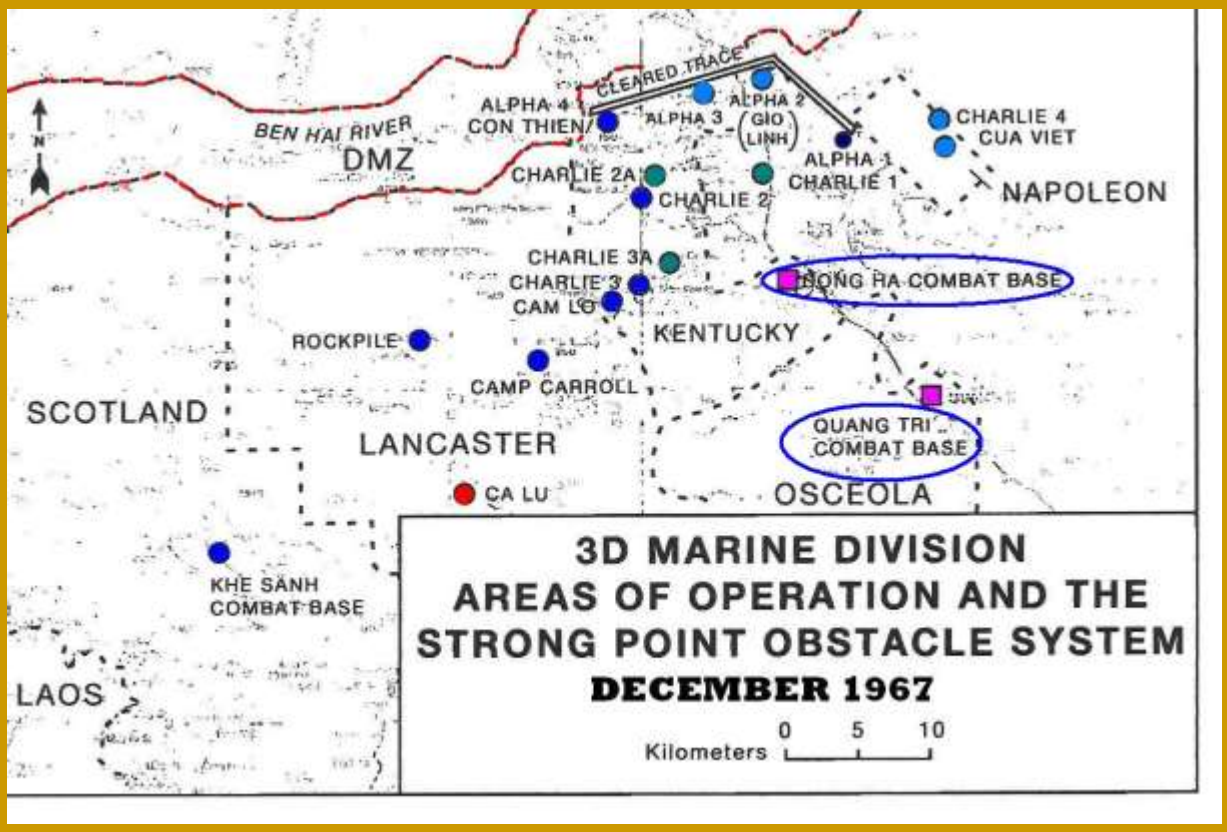
S-2 "Intelligence Officer" 3rd Force Recon Co.



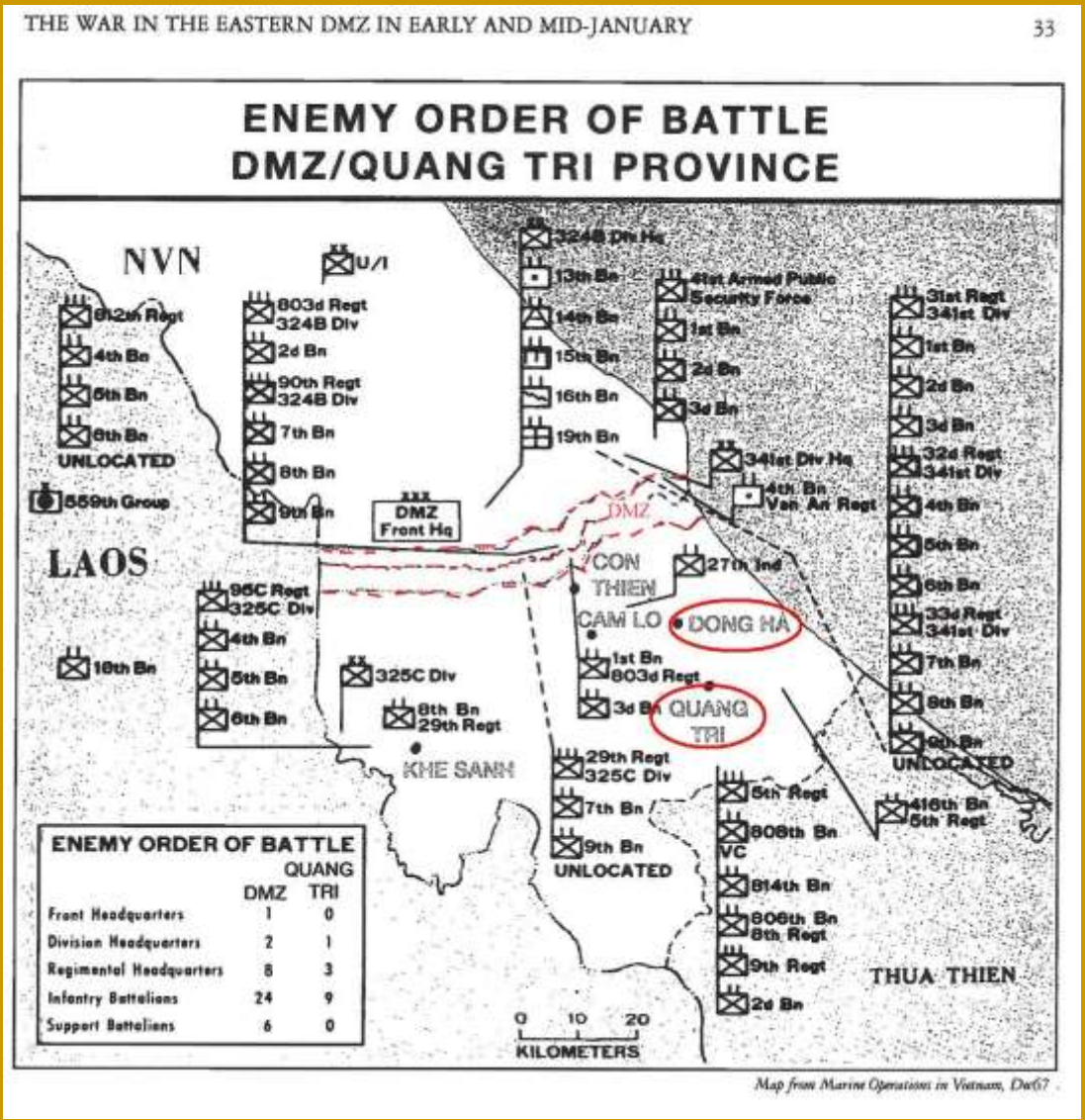
Map from: "An associated press close-to-the-news book." 1968 The above map shows I Corps area of responsibility for 3rd Marine Division, 3rd Force and Recon Battalions.

FIRST MISSION: DECEMBER 10, 1967

Marble Champ, 3Charlie1, is on what is called a “Rough Rider” and trucked to a small forward base called Charlie 2, located close to the DMZ, where the patrol will begin. At that point, the team will walk to the assigned recon zone. This patrol is my first, and it will be a regular Stingray Recon mission. We are to plot any and all enemy trails, observe for enemy activities and, if possible, call in supporting arms on enemy sighted. This patrol will take us very close to the DMZ, which separates North and South Vietnam.



Above map from: “The Defining Year” shows base locations 1967-68



Above map from “The Defining Year” shows enemy units within I Corps area of operation from December 1967 to January 1968.



Team Marble Champ 3Charlie1 1967

Rear: Pete Stahl (3C1) Tony Cosgro, Shields, Jim King, Steve Laktash
Front: Darrell Schokman, Thomas Ringler, James Smith, Dick Vance

As the team coordinates our departure from the base, we walked out of C-2 to the North. I am running second point behind Cos, and took special notice of the lay of the land and its vegetation. I watched Cosgro and the way he moved as point, often looking to the rear, watching the

rest of the team. After a few hundred meter walk out of C-2 outpost, all is quiet.

Although things appear calm, there is the feeling that we are not alone and are being watched by the enemy. As we move toward our recon zone, it is important to move through the bush as quietly as possible. As we move silently through the bush, we can only hope we are not being watched, thus we can obtain the element of surprise if we come upon the enemy.

Most Recon team contacts with the enemy were point-to-point, as well as a contact from the rear. In this area the North Vietnamese have superior numbers and move about freely which makes a point-to-point contact with the enemy more likely.

At all times it is important to apply skin camouflage, along with our green uniforms, helps with our camouflage capability.

I along with M-79 man, Larry Shields, secondary radio man, Jim King, and Thomas Ringler are all out on our first patrol. Dick Vance, Tony Cosgro as well as Darrell Schokman and Steve Laktash, are seasoned and have their hands full trying to make sure that we are all operating properly. As the patrol continues, we find trails and some old fighting holes, but make no sightings of the enemy.

At night, Steve Laktash, our primary radio man sets up on-calls (artillery fire mission) which are four grid coordinates, north, south, east and west, (coded-Packer, Saint, Giants, Ram) about 400 meters from where we are to sleep for the night. This is called our “Harbor Site,” (location that we sleep in) coded-Green Door. We will also set out a circle of claymore mines about forty feet from our position. These are

used as a formidable line of defense in the event we get attacked at night. Throughout the night, each man will stay on watch for one hour and then be relieved by another. We are each told that if we hear anything we should immediately and quietly wake up Dick, Cos or Steve.

While on radio watch at night, our radio relay at the rear will call each team the relay works with, every 30 minutes. When called, teams are asked if they are alpha sierra, which means all secure. If so, the team member on watch will be asked to key the handset two times. If the rear gets two keys they will reply, “Roger Marble Champ, we copy two keys and an alpha sierra,” give the time and go on to the next team that is being monitored out in the field. No one speaks into the radio or to each other, we just use the radio handset to communicate during the night.

Just before light, we will start to retrieve the Claymore mines and prepare to move out of the harbor site. After moving a short distance still within the artillery on call range, we will try to find a spot that is safe and have our morning meal. I don’t know about other teams but there was no early-morning cooking in Marble Champ. Dick always said, “cooking will get you killed”. Meals were therefore eaten cold.

As we settle into our designated area, I look around to make sure everything looks safe. As I eat, I look over at the other team members and realize that they are regular guys just like me, from all over the United States. Now in enemy territory I realize I’m an 18-year-old Arky and don’t know shit. Even though I have gone through the best training, when you’re out here in enemy territory and a newcomer, you don’t know shit.

As the days go by, we have checked out our recon zone and have found well used trails but no sign of the enemy personal. We are moving back to C-2 where the team will catch a rough-rider back to our home base, Dong Ha. On the 13th of December, 1967, we arrived back from where we left at outpost C-2.

Once in the rear at Dong Ha, we will be debriefed and then it's on to the duties in the company area. Between patrols at our base camp, we reinforce the perimeter by filling sandbags, putting in barbed wire, digging trenches, and doing other chores that are necessary to defend the base including perimeter guard.

Our living quarters, called hooches, are what in the Nam are referred to as "Home Sweet Home". Hooches are 40 feet long and 20 feet wide, have screen walls for ventilation, and have a tin roof housing eight men. The outer walls are reinforced with sandbags in case of incoming arty rounds or rockets. There's not much privacy, but it's all we have and it keeps the rain off.

The time is nearing for our next patrol; soon a warning order will come.

SECOND PATROL: DECEMBER 17, 1967

It sure came fast. It's the day we knew would come, warning-order day. Warning order means we have a mission. We're departing on the 18th of December and will return on the 22nd of December, 1967.

The team's mission will be to cover the assigned recon zone looking for any enemy or signs of enemy use of the area. We are to set up observation points and call-in supporting arms on any enemy sighted. The team is to plot all well-used trails and, if the opportunity arises,

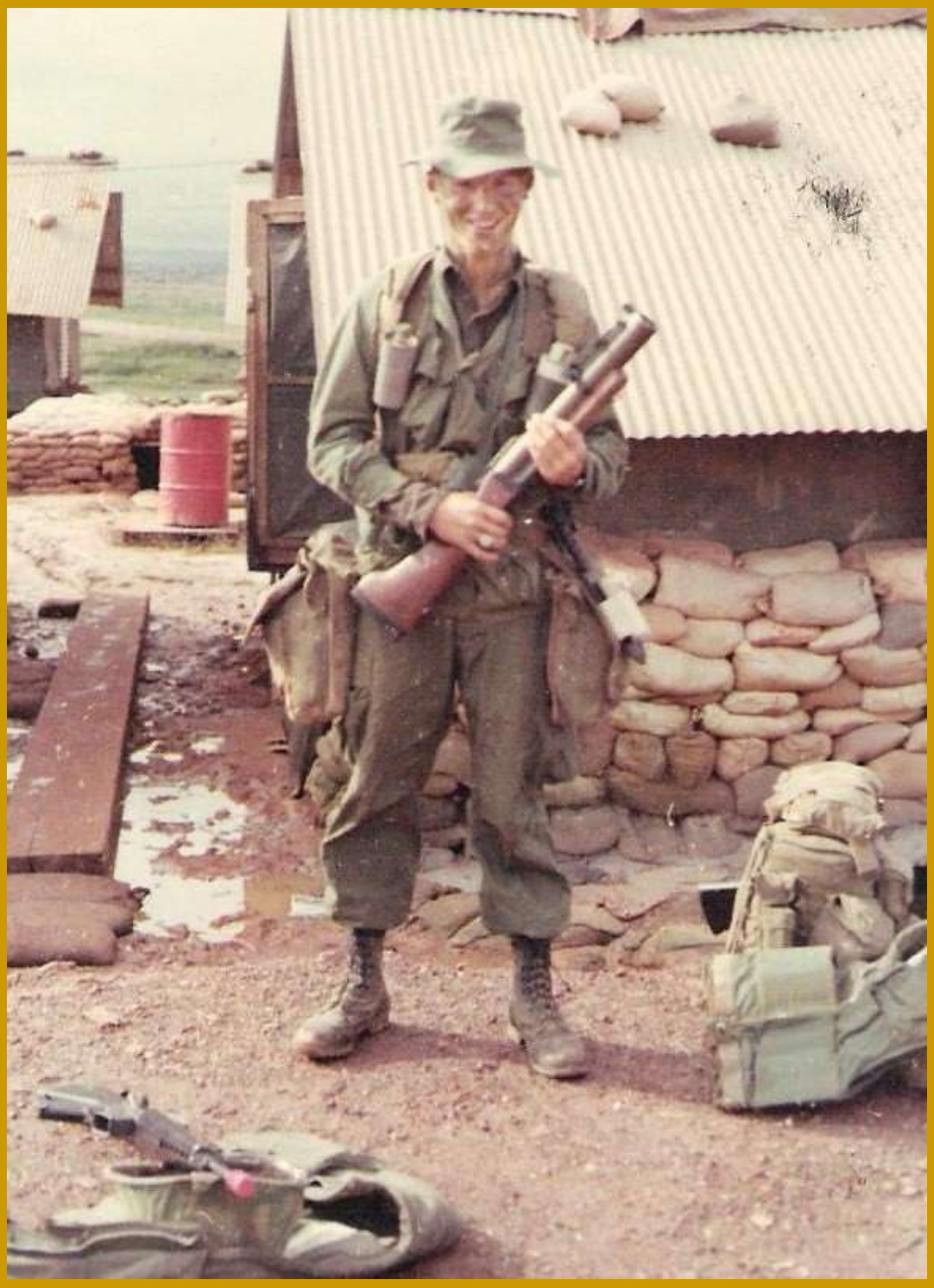
make every effort to take a prisoner. This mission will again take place close to the DMZ and the team will be trucked to C-2. Upon arrival we will be walking out to the recon zone.





Dong Ha Vietnam December 18, 1967 “Second Mission”

Rear: Steve Laktash, Center: Bob Patterson, Front: James Smith



Second Mission December 1967

? Shields

M-79 Man on this mission



Darrell Schokman, Tail End Charlie for 3Charlie1

On the 18th we're on the trucks proceeding to Charlie-2. While moving down highway #9, I am able to take in a lot of the sights of this foreign land. The Vietnamese are busy working in the rice paddies; and as we move down the road, they stop working to observe our passing. By the way the Vietnamese look at us, we sense hostility.



In passing we see the local Vietnamese working in the rice paddies. Farmer’s by day who knows what at night.



Second Mission, December 18, 1967

L to R: Larry Shields, Dick Vance, Steve Laktash, James Smith

Rough-ride to Charlie-2, an outpost close to the DMZ

We have arrived at C-2 and within the hour are moving to our assigned recon zone. Once away from the small outpost arriving at the recon zone, we're finding trails that are heavily used with several footprints in the soft muddy areas that indicated several individuals moving in the area of our recon zone. This area has been cleared of any civilian population and the footprints indicated this could only be enemy activity.

DECEMBER 20, 1967

I have been getting a taste of running point today. There was a lot to learn on this job and Tony Cosgro is teaching me all the important aspects of the job first. As I take the lead and move through the bush, Cos instructs me in the finer points of the job.

It's 1000 hours and our team is moving toward a small hill located in the upper corner of our recon zone. Dick Vance feels this hill will make an ideal observation point, (coded-eyeball) in our recon zone. Cos retakes the point position, and we move toward the crest of the hill. Once close to the top Cos and I stop on the military crest. Cos is telling me by pointing to the north that we are very close to the Ben Hai River and North Vietnam. Kneeling there, the realization struck me that thousands of American supporting troops were behind us and we were literally alone at the doorstep of North Vietnam. As I look back for the team, we are motioned to move back down the hill to where Dick Vance and the rest of the team are. Once we had returned, Shields, the M-79 man, said he saw a man (enemy coded hippy) with a weapon. We crouch down as Dick and Cos look the area over. It is decided we'll move up the hill, assess the situation and if possible, attempt to see if we can take a prisoner.

As we move toward the top of hill 94, we are spread out, I try to get between Cos and Dick but there isn't enough room. Other team mates covering the right side, are Steve Laktash, Shields, Jim King, Thomas Ringler and Darrell Schokman. I then run to the left around a bomb crater which puts me at higher ground than the rest of the team. As I come around the crater, I realize we are in a world of shit. I can see in front of me 15 to 20 North Vietnamese ready to open fire on the team.

I aim my rifle toward the NVA in the fighting holes and fire. I hit the third man in the shoulder and neck area and the fourth in line in the head area. Being only 10 feet away I can see the bullets ripping through their flesh.

I also see the enemy firing on the team with heavy automatic fire. I know people are getting hit from the screams of agony. I take fire about 15 feet from the left, return fire, hitting another enemy soldier, after which I fall backwards into a large bomb crater. As I slide toward the bottom of the crater, I immediately regain my balance and start moving towards the rim of the crater to return fire. I can see a hail of ChiCom grenades flying through the air toward the team. I remember thinking, "This is it, were all going to die today." With the massive number of explosions below my position, there were more screams, and a continuous amount of firing. Looking out of the crater I see a North Vietnamese soldier throwing ChiCom's grenades. I raise my rifle, aim, and CLICK. My M-16 rifle fails to fire! I quickly check my ammo and see that I still have rounds so I aimed again and, CLICK. Nothing happens.

As I look out of the bomb crater, I see Cosgro wounded, and see Dick Vance running up the hill through a barrage of heavy small arms fire and ChiCom grenades trying to get to him. Once Cos is retrieved the team still taking heavy automatic AK-47 fire and ChiCom grenades, and is forced to pull back from the heavy contact.

Bullets were everywhere and grenades were like apples falling out of a tree on a very windy day. I am trying to return fire on the enemy position which is only 15 to 20 feet away but my rifle extractor has malfunctioned. I am only able to fire one round at a time and have to

use my rifle cleaning rod to get the empty shell out of the chamber so I can load another round.

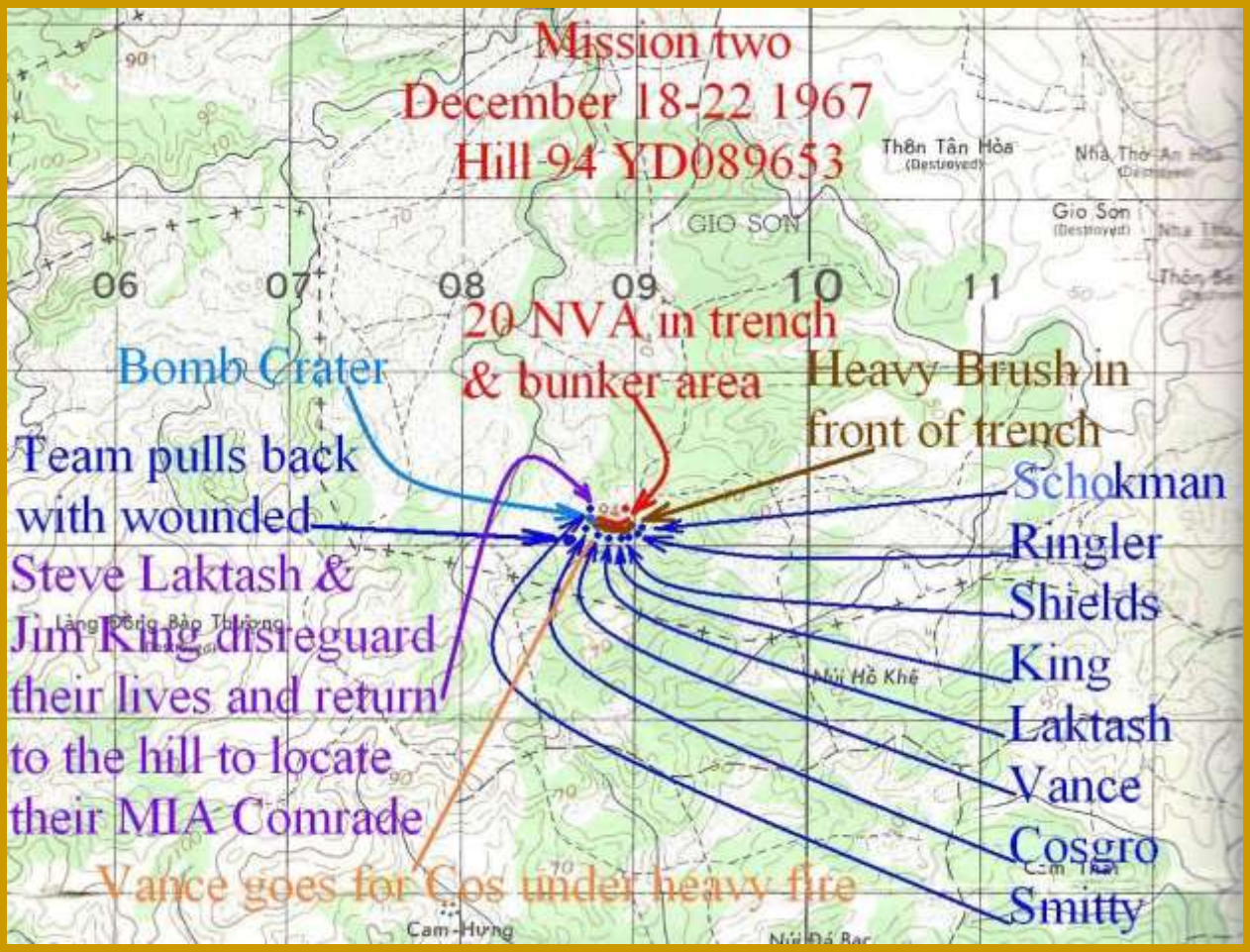
With the NVA close, I am pinned down in the bomb crater with nowhere to go. I am out of my mind with the fear of being wounded, killed or worse taken prisoner. As more ChiCom grenades are thrown at my direction, some land very close but luckily, I am not wounded. With the rifle's one round capability being inadequate for the situation, I quickly ready my grenades including the white phosphorus and teargas grenade. As I look out of the crater, I can see a North Vietnamese soldier less than 20 feet away in the bush. I pull the pin on an M-26 grenade and throw it. It hit him in the side of the head and goes off. I hear screams and the NVA retaliate with another barrage of grenades. Now realizing that I am separated from my team, I know my only chance of survival is to try to make a break for it even if it means placing myself in the line of enemy fire. Otherwise, being outnumbered, it is just a matter of time before they overtake me.

I take the remainder of my fragmentation grenades and CS gas grenade and straighten the pins on them. My heart is beating like a bass drum. I hear movement and I know the NVA are closing in on me. In my mind I am praying, Jesus help me. As the horror sets in my mind, I start shaking uncontrollably with fear and resign myself to the fact that soon I may die. Somehow, I manage to regain my mind as I lay on my back, rifle on my chest looking up, ready, waiting, wondering what in the hell am I going to do. I hear more movement as an NVA pried over the rim of the crater. As soon as the NVA spots me, I manage to fire my one round which fortunately for me hits its target. Insane with fear, I know his comrades will be clearing the rim of the crater any second and I frantically toss all my grenades in the direction of the enemy and

scramble out the opposite end of the crater back in the direction to where I think the team is. On my way down the hill, I come face to face with Steve Laktash our primary radio man and Jim King.

Knowing the number of enemy on that hill, these guys had disregarded their own safety and had come back for me like Dick had done for Cos.

Once reunited with the team and putting some distance between us and the location of the enemy contact, Steve Laktash, our radio operator is in the process of getting an emergency medivac extract for Cos and the team. Steve also requests fixed-wing support. Soon the fixed-wing and gunships arrive and start their strafing runs on the enemy position. Meanwhile, we scramble onto the extract CH-46 chopper. Once on board the birds, (coded-Blue bird) we are on our way to Delta Med Dong Ha to have Cosgrove's wounds taken care of. After he is dropped off, the team is taken back to the recon area for debriefing.



During the debriefing, I told the debriefing officer of patrol leader Dick Vance's heroism under enemy fire and I stated that he should receive the Medal of Honor for his actions.

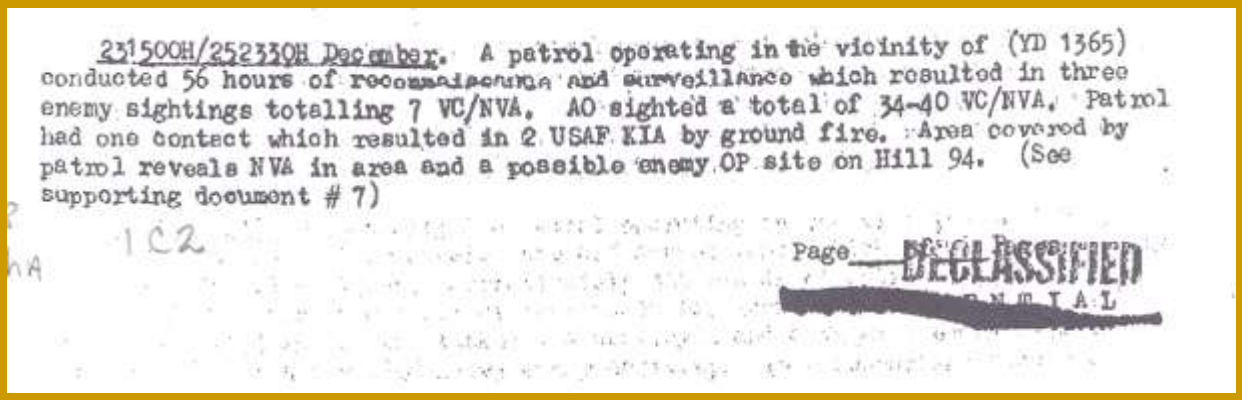
We are told that Cosgro had been hit in the wrist, as well as shrapnel in the chest. Cos, it appeared, would be out of the Nam for good. We also noticed that Cos had taken one round in his cartridge belt hitting one of the grenades on his belt without setting off the grenade. The blasting cap on the M-26 that was hit by enemy fire was exposed but fortunately the round did not damage it. Cos, had beaten all odds against him and we knew we would miss him but at the same time were happy that he was going back home. Losing Cos, with the expertise he had developed over his many prior patrols is a definite loss

for team Marble Champ. We will miss him not only as a professional but as a good buddy.

After the debriefing and our return to the hooch, we are overcome both physically and emotionally over what we had just experienced. For me being in Vietnam less than 30 days, having a furious contact while being separated from my team has been one hell of a horrible experience. It also brings to light just how much we depend on one another for survival.

They almost got me, and the time alone on Hill 94, the topographic designation of the location where the enemy contact occurred, has made me view life from a whole different perspective. As I lay in my rack, (bed) the reality starts to sink in that I have taken the lives of at least five human beings and that my teammates and I almost lost our lives. Suddenly I have a sick feeling inside of me. It is quiet. I'll try to sleep now.

On December 23, 1967 one of our neighboring teams 1Charlie2 was assigned to the same location of our last mission. The following is the report of that mission.



231500H/252330H December. A patrol operating in the vicinity of (YD 1365) conducted 56 hours of reconnaissance and surveillance which resulted in three enemy sightings totalling 7 VC/NVA. AO sighted a total of 34-40 VC/NVA. Patrol had one contact which resulted in 2 USAF KIA by ground fire. Area covered by patrol reveals NVA in area and a possible enemy OP site on Hill 94. (See supporting document # 7)

1C2

Page [redacted] DECLASSIFIED

PAGE TWO ØQIA 1250 C O N F I D E N T I A L
BT
C O N D I D E N T I A L
ATTN: AC OF S G-2
DEBRIEF OF RECON PATROL: IC2, THIRD RECON BN "C" COMPANY
OPERATION ORDER: 573-67 (LT. MATOCHA)
A. MAP SHEET: 1:50,000, AMS SERIES L-7014, SHEET: 6342 I
(1) DEBRIEFER: APT. D. O'DELL, 260200H DECEMBER 1967
1. SIZE, COMPOSITION, AND EQUIPMENT:

A. COMPOSITION: (1) OFFICER, (7) ENLISTED.
B. SPECIAL ATTACHMENTSZ: NONE
C. COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT: (2) AN/RPC 25'S.
D. OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT: (1) 7X50'S
E. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: (4) CLAYMORE MINES, (4) WP RIFLE GRENADES, (4) WP HAND GRENADES, (8) GAS MASKS, (8) CS GRENADES (5) BLOCKS OF C-4
F. SPECIAL WEAPONS: (1) M-79 WITH 77 ROUNDS, (1) M-14
2. MISSION: CONDUCT RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE IN ASSIGNED ZONE TO DETERMINE ENEMY ACTIVITY. ENGAGE THE ENEMY WITH SUPPORTING ARMS. MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CAPTURE A PRISONER PLOT HLZ'S FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS. PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION
2526C 1Z DEC 67 - 11 S-2 [redacted] 93,000

PAGE THREE ØQIA 160 C O N F I D E N T I A L
TO TRAILS AND THEIR FREQUENCY OF USE IN YOUR RZ. ASCERTAIN IF THE AREA IS BEING USED BY THE ENEMY AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE. PATROL WILL NOT BE EXTRACTED UNTIL RZ IS SUFFICIENTLY COVERED.
3. TIME OF DEPARTURE/RETURN; 231500H (YD 104655) [illegible]
25[illegible]H (YD 053670) HELO. CONFIDENTIAL
4. ROUTE: INSERT PT NORTHWEST TO EXTRACT PT.
5. OBSERVATION OF ENEMY AND TERRAIN:
A. SYNOPSIS: 96 HOURS OF RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE RESULTED IN THREE ENEMY SIGHTEDE IS TOTALLING (7) VC/NVA. AO SIGHTED A TOTAL OF 34-40 VC/NVA. PATROL HAD ONE CONTACT WHICH RESULTED IN (2) USAF KIA BY GROUND FIRE. [illegible] COVERED BY PATROL REVEALS NVA IN AREA AND A POSSIBLE ENEMY ON SITE OF HILL 94.
B. ENEMY:
(1) 2[illegible]30H (YD 096553) [illegible] SAW (1) NVA 300 METERS FROM PATROL COULDNOT OBSERVE WEAPONE OR EQUIPMENT ON HILL 94. NO ACTION TAKEN.
(2) 2316[illegible]H YD 096653) PATROL OBSERVED (2) NVA AT THESE COORDINATES. ENEMY WERE 300 METERS AWAY FROM PATROL: PATROL OBSERVED GREEN UTILITIES AND A PAIR OF 7X50' S. CARTRIDGE BELTS.

[illegible]

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE FOUR ØQ1A 1260 C O N F I D E N T I A L
PATROL COULD NOT OBSERVE WEAPONS. NVA WERE STANDING ON TOP OF HILL. NVA MOVED OFF HILL TO SOUTH.
(3) 251630H (YD Ø92653) PATROL SAW 4 NVA 3ØØ METERS AWAY WITH GREEN UTILITIES, CARTRIDGE BELTS, BUSH COERS, LARGE PACKS WITH BUSHES TIED ON THEM, (1) AK-47, AND (1) THOMPSON SUBMACHINE GUN. NVA MOVED OFF HILL TO THE NORTH TOWARD THE PATROL BUT ABOUT 15 METERS AFTER LEAVING HILLTOP NVA DISSAPEARED BEHIND SOME BUSHES. PATROL FEELS THEY ENTERED BUNKER COMPLEX. AO (AMERICAN BEAUTY CHARLIE) CAME ON STATION AT THIS TIME. AO OBSERVED BUNKERS (2) ON HILL AND (4) NVA AT (YD Ø85655).
(4) 251700H (YD Ø92653) PATROL WAS PREPARING TO MOVE OFF HILL WHEN THEY SAW (4) NVA, GREEN UTILITIES, CARTRIDGE BELTS AND WEAPONS (TYPE UNKNOWN) 7ØØ METERS SOUTHWEST OF THEM. THEY APPEARED TO BE OBSERVING PATROL. PATROL RELAYED THIS TO AO AND AO INFORMED PATROL THAT NVA WERE MOVING NE TOWARD PATROLS POSITION. AO ADVISED PATROL TO STAY WHERE THEY WERE AND TO START FIRE MISSION. WHILE PATROL WAS PREPARING FIRE MISSION AO REPORTED (4) NVA WERE AT (YD Ø89653) APPROXIMATELY 75 METERS FROM PATROL. AO ADVISED PATROL THAT NVA WOULD DUCK DOWN WHEN

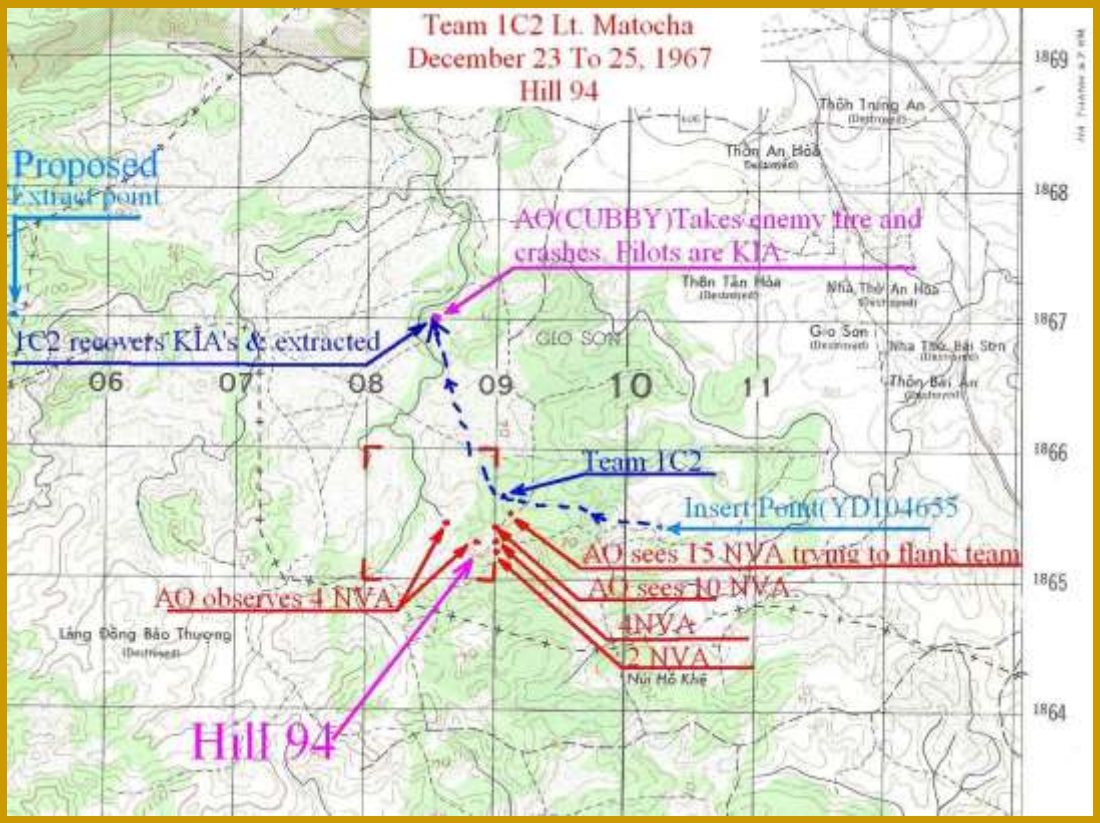
PAGE FIVE ØQ1A 1250 C O N F I D E N T I A L CONFIDENTIAL
HE PASSED OVER THEN AND THEN CONTINUE MOVING TOWARD PATROL.
(5) 251730H (YD Ø92653) AO ADVISED PATROL OF 1Ø NVA MOVING NORTH TOWARD PATROL, APPROXIMATELY 1ØØ METERS FROM PATROL. AO ADVISED PATROL TO LEAVE HILL AND MOVE NORTH AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. AO SAID HE WOULD HANDLE FIRE MISSION. AS PATROL LEFT THEY COULD HEAR MOVEMENT 1ØØ METERS SOUTH OF THEM AND 75 METERS WEST OF THEM. PATROL OPENED FIRE ON THESE PLACES, WITH THREE MAGAZINES OF M-16, (54 ROUNDS), (1) GRENADE, AND 1Ø M-79, ROUNDS. RECIEVED NO RETURN FIRE. AT 1800H PATROL MOVED NORTH APPROXIMATELY 4ØØ METERS TO (YD Ø91655) AND TOOK UP POSITION IN BOMB CARATER. AS PATROL REACHED THIS POINT AO BEGAN OPERECTION OF FIRE MISSION ON ENENY. ARTILLERY MISSION LASTED FOR APPROXIMATELY 2Ø MINUIES. AT 1830H AO SAW 1Ø-15 NVA AT (YD Ø93654) ATTEMPTING TO GET ON EAST FLANK OF PATROL : NVA WERE APPROXIMATELY 2ØØ METERS FROM PATROL. AO ADVISED PATROL HE WOULD TRY TO GET FIXED WING FOR STRIKES. AT 1840H AO ADVISED PATROL THEY WERE BEING SURROUNDED BY 1Ø-15 NVA AND TO MOVE NORTH AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. FIXED WING WERE ON STATION AT THIS TIME AND AS PATROL STARTED TO MOVE OUT THEY BEGAN RUNS. PATROL, AO AND JETS BEGAN RECIEVING SA/AWF. PATROL RECIEVED APPROXIMATELY (4) ROUNDS.

PAGE SIX ØQ1A 1260 C O N F I D E N T I A L
ENEMY WAS APPROXIMATELY 150 METERS SOUTH EAST OF PATROL.
AT 1910H PATROL MOVED TO (YD 092667) AND TOOK UP DZFENSIVE
POSITION. FIXED WING WAS STILL BEING PLACED AT THIS TIME.
EACH TIME AREA WAS LIT BY NAPALM STRIKES AO REPORTED 1-2 NVA
MOVING NORTH APPROXIMATELY 150 METERS EAST OF PATROLS POSITION.
AO REPORTED THIS ON THREE TO FOUR SEPERATE NAPALM RUNS. 2000
FIXED WING WENT OFF STATION. 2030H SPOOKY 13 ARRIVED ON STATION
AT THIS TIME, AND BEGAN TO FIRE IN 360 DEGREE CIRCLE AROUND
PATROLS POSITION. SPOOKY FIRED FOR APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES.
AT 2100M SPOOKY ADVISED PATROL OF MOVEMENT 200 METERS EAST OF
PATROL. FIRED IN AREA. AMERICAN BEAUTY CHARLIE WAS
RELIEVED BY AMERICAN BEAUTY SIERRA AT 2130. AB CHARLIE ADVISED
PATROL HE WOULD REFUEL AND RETURN WITH TWO MORE FLIGHTS OF
FIXED WING. PATROL RECIEVED NEGATIVE SAF WHILE IN THIS POSITION
AT (YD 092667). 2150H (1) FLIGHT OF FIXED WING CAME ON
STATION AND MADE RUNS ON (YD 095655). ALL WERE NAPALM RUNS.
FIXED WING REPORTED TAKING SAF ON EACH PASS ALL NIGHT. AB
CHARLIE WAS DIRECTING FIXED WING AND SPOOKY 14 AT THIS TIME.
CONFIDENTIAL
CUBBY CAME ON STATION, ASKED PATROL TO DIRECT HIM IN, PLANE WAS
FLYING EAST TO NORTH, HAD NAVAGAION LIGHTS ON SO PATROL COULD

PAGE SEVEN ØQ1A 1260 C O N F I D E N T I A L
SEE HIM. PLANE BROKE THROUGH CLOUDS COVER AT THIS TIME.
AMERICAN BEAUTY CHARLIE DIRECTED PATROL TO GET AIRCRAFT OUT OF
AREA, THAT HE WAS RECIEVING HEAVY VOLUME OF GROUND FIRE. AT
THIS TIME PLANE CUBBY BANKED AND BEGAN TO LOSE ALTITUDE RAPIDLY.
PLANE CRASHED AT (YD Ø85670) APPROXIMATELY 700 METERS NORTH-
WEST OF PATROL. PATROL INMEDIATELY MOVED OUT TOWARD PLANE IN
ATTEMPT TO RESCUE ANY SURVIVERS. AO HAD NOT REPORTED
ANY NVA IN THE AREA DURING NIGHT. PATROL REQUESTED FLWRE SHIP
TO LIGHT AREA AS THE MOVED OUT. PATROL REACHED PLANE AND
SEARCHED FOR BODIES. PILOT AND AO WERE DEAD WHEN PATROL FOUND
THEM. PATROL TOOK LOG BOOK, MAP AND WEAPONS FROM WRECK ALONG
WITH BODIES. PATROL HEARD NO GUNFIRE DURING MOVEMENT TO PLANE.
PATROL REQUESTED EXTRACTION. CHOPERS DID NOT RECIEVE GROUND
FIRE WHEN THEY LANDED OR TOOK OFF.
C. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS, CANOPY 6-12 FEET HIGH, SOME
PARTS OF RZ ARE BARE DUE TO INTENSE BOMBING. COMMUNICATION
FAIR, GOOD ON HIGH GROUND, POOR TO NONE IN DRAWS. NATURAL
WATER SOURCES SPARCE. RATE OF MOVEMENT 300-350 METERS PER
HOUR.
D. OTHER INFORMATION.XXAO
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE EIGHT ØQ1A 12ØØ C O N F I D E N T I A L
(1) 241800H (YD 102660) PATROL FOUND 254 LB BOMB, PATROL WAS ADVISED NOT TO ATTEMPT TO DESTROY AS THEY HAD NO TIME FUSE FOR C-4. AREA IS FAIRLY CLEAR WITH NO CRATERS.
6. RESULTS OF ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENEMY:
(1) ENEMY: NONE
(2) FRIENDLY: (2) USAF KIA, AO AND PILOT OF CUBBY.
(3) CAPTURED EQUIPMENT: NONE.
7. CONDITION OF PATROL: GOOD, MORALE GOOD.
8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS;
RECOMMENDATIONS:
(1) FUTURE PATROL STAY CLOSE TO EXTRACTION LZ'S AT ALL TIMES.
CONCLUSIONS:
(1) AREA COVERED BY PATROL REVEALS NVA IN AREA IN FORCE, A POSSIBLE ENEMY OP ON HILL 94. ENEMY HAS BUNKER COMPLEXES ON HILL 94.
(2) PATROL LEADER FEELS ENEMY USED HILL 94 AS AN OP TO OBSERVE FRIENDLY MOVEMENT IN AREA.
9. HLZ'S: (YD 085670) SITE WILL ACCOMODATE (1) CH-46. SITE IS FLAT AREA BETWEEN TWO HILLS. APPROACH OBSTACLES: STUMPS AROUND ZONE, WOOD TO EAST. BEST APPROACH NORTH TO SOUTH.
10. DEBRIEFER COMMENTS:
(1) CONCUR WITH PATROL LEADERS RECOMMEDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS.
(2) TQP REQUEST HAS BEEN SUBMITTED FOR HILL 94 AT (YD 090653).
GP-4
BT
NOTE PAGE EIGHT CONTAINS TWENTY-FOUR LINES

CONFIDENTIAL



Note: The Air Force aircraft, Air Observers, “Forward Air Controllers” from the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, Da Nang, call sign, “Cubby” was who flew support for team 1Charlie2. Once in the contact area and over the team, Cubby, turned on his navigation lights, and landing lights to help locate Lt. Matcoha’s team in order to aid the team by calling in fixed-wing, Spooky, and Gun-ships. Unfortunately, the aircraft was sighted in on by intense enemy ground fire taking aircraft 0-2A 67-21390 down killing both pilot and AO.

Killed in action, Christmas Day, December 25, 1967
Major Jerry A. Sellers, Pilot, who received the Air Force Cross, Posthumously

Captain Richard W. Budka, Artillery Observer received the Purple Heart Posthumously

DECEMBER 25, 1967

It’s Christmas and everyone in the rear is off today. It doesn’t seem like Christmas.

I still have Hill 94 on my mind. I know it’s over and I’m alive but others are dead and Cos was wounded. I’d like to be home right now. Just to sit and talk with my mother. I can hear the rain hitting the roof of the hooch, it’s not heavy, just a rhythm that makes the mind wander. Maybe the rhythm of the rain will help me to dream my way home.

Marble Champ has two new team members. Their names are John Romero and Aaron “Al” Moore. Al, from L.A. California, has gone through Recondo training and will be an asset to team Marble Champ. John is from Crowley, Louisiana. Both new members are welcomed to

Marble Champ and within a short time in the bush will learn the ropes of recon patrolling in the jungles of Vietnam.

With Dick Vance as patrol leader, Steve Laktash will take the assistant patrol leader's job as well as primary radio operator. With these guys training our team we all will have good teachers.



Aaron Moore 1968



John Romero Dong Ha Vietnam 1968

M-79 Man 3Charlie1

THIRD PATROL: DECEMBER 27, 1967

With Christmas over and a few days rest in between patrols for all team members, once again it is time for another warning order. This mission will take place in the Hi Lang Forest. You might say it's as far into enemy territory that you would ever want to venture. The area we

will be reconning is expected to have an enemy supply route running through it and a suspected enemy base camp rest area. Our mission is to cover our assigned recon zone and report on enemy activity.

We are to depart on the 28th of December, 1967 returning on the 2nd of January, 1968.

On the 28th, as we prepare to depart to the assigned recon zone, at the last minute, our transportation was changed to CH-34 helicopters.



CH-34 Helicopter

This will be my first insert by chopper. Before our departure, Dick makes sure each person understands the instructions on how to disembark from the helicopter and set up a defensive 360-degree perimeter. At the company area we go over all the immediate action drills thereby ensuring each member of the patrol is prepared for

whatever contingency we may face on the actual mission. Once on board the bird and over the insert zone, I can see the area is dense thick jungle and surely holds many hiding places for the enemy. With only one landing zone in our assigned area, it is prepped by F-4 Phantom jets, (coded Hawk) and Huey gunships. With the gun ships at treetop level, we get the thumbs up from the crew chief and are inbound to the landing zone. We must keep a constant watch in and around the zone for enemy muzzle flashes. Once in the zone, it looks good, and we are off the bird and in a 360. On this patrol I will be in charge of the point position. Prior to our departure, Dick had given me the direction of our travel and now I await his order to move out. As the chopper pulls out of the LZ, the order is given to move out. Within a few steps the team is engulfed by three layered canopy dense jungle making it dark, as if morning had turned to dusk in seconds. The team moves through the jungle and I feel confident with Dick being patrol leader. With this patrol, my first as point man throughout the entire mission, my mind is totally consumed with the job. I go over everything that Cos had told me. Along with leading the patrol through the assigned recon zone, I must keep a watchful eye out for booby trap trip wires which could be anything from a string to a vine. I'm also looking for a possible chance of an ambush or just enemy patrols moving through the area. My target is a human being and I know now, once the enemy is sighted, the contact may be as close as five to twenty feet in this type of terrain. I will only have a second to aim fire and hit my target. As the first day is coming to a close, it's time to find a harbor site for the night.

Once Dick Vance and Steve Laktash have decided on a location that would be to our best advantage, we stop, observe the area and wait

until almost dark before moving in. Once Claymores are put in place, artillery on-calls set up, and the radio watch assigned by Steve to each man, we are in for the night. As the night progresses the rain starts at about midnight.

In Vietnam the monsoons are a rainy season. At times it may start raining and continue nonstop for days on end. High in the jungle mountain's it gets cold enough to see your breath. Besides being scared to death, one has to deal with being constantly wet and cold. Not to mention sleeping on the ground in the water. It's a long way till the 2nd of January, and we are in here for the duration. Day after day, night after night, our mission continues, and so does the rain. To say the least, Marble Champ will not be going to any New Year's party.

Our mission has uncovered several well-used trails, some fighting holes, but no direct sighting of the enemy. I must say, while in observation sites looking over the area, the natural scenery is beautiful yet the jungle holds many dangers and hardships. There's a constant assault by insects and there is always the danger of coming in contact with a poisonous viper. Tigers have fattened up on the corpses of both enemy and friendly casualties and have a taste for human flesh. It's hard to believe that in such primitive beauty, there is a war raging.

With our recon zone completely covered, tomorrow we will make our way to the extract point where the team will be taken out by chopper. As I complete my turn on radio watch, it is time to wake up the rest of the team, pull in the claymores and move out to the extract point. After being wet for days, moving in the jungle is a relief as it keeps the body warm. Steve Laktash our radio man and assistant patrol leader has now made communications with the extract birds and

gunships. They will be at our position within minutes as we move to the landing zone. With the gunships now over-head, the 46's are in sight. As they descend into the LZ, gunships are doing a little prep work with 7.62 machine guns around the zone to be on the safe side. An F-4 (Phantom jet) is also firing rockets. As some of the F-4 rockets impact meters from the team, we hear screams just before making it up the ramp into the CH-46. We are on the bird, it's over, and we have covered the recon zone and now are on our way back to Dong Ha. On the extract, the enemy must have been moving toward the team and must have been in close enough proximity to get hit by the rockets of the F-4. Evidently the North Vietnamese did not have time to organize an assault while the extraction was taking place and were spotted by the F-4. Once in the rear the team will report to debrief.

With the mission over and now back at the Charlie company base camp area, it's a day of rest and drying out from our six-day soggy patrol. The following day we are all assigned various never ending base camp duties such as, filling sandbags, reinforcing bunkers, stringing up barbed wire, burning latrine shit with diesel fuel and standing guard duty. These jobs, along with mess duty and helping clean weapons at the company armory are ongoing.



Third platoon, teams 3C1, 3C2, and 3C3 work together to complete bunker work. When enemy incoming starts, the effort was not for naught.

Along with these duties, each recon Marine must at all times keep every item of his own personal gear in a constant state of readiness. There is also time allotted for the training of each member of the team. Dick Vance would go over info helping in the study of our areas of operation with the aid of area maps and compass techniques. Steve Laktash would also go over the correct use of the radio and patrol procedures. Without this constant training, our chances of returning

back to the world alive are slim. There is no room for error in a combat zone. One mistake will cost not only your life, but the lives of your teammates.

Marble Champ has the honor of four days of guard duty. Just below our company area is the perimeter which we are assigned to guard. It is a long trench line with a guard tower in the center that looks toward Dong Ha City. This area must be manned at all times due to local Viet Cong and NVA in and around the area. Compared to being out in Indian country, base camp guard duty is a breeze.

Marble Champ has received a warning order for a new mission. This mission is considered routine. We are to cover the assigned recon zone, plotting any well-used trails, freshly used fighting holes and all enemy activities in the area. We are to call in supporting arms on enemy sighted and, if possible, take a prisoner. This mission is to take place outside the Charlie-2 outpost, close to the DMZ. This area is not new to the team and we know what to expect. The team was briefed about the area by Dick Vance and Steve Laktash as having many sightings of the enemy with constant activity. The area is infested with NVA. They are not a weak people, but expert jungle fighters. I have learned that fact in the short time I have been here. This mission will run from the 8th of January to the 12th of January, 1968.

FOURTH PATROL: JANUARY 8-12, 1968

On the 18th of January, 1968, at 0745 hours, Marble Champ departs on trucks to C-2. Upon our arrival the team is to move directly to the assigned recon zone after the coordination with the Marine engineers at the base. This coordination is necessary because the perimeter of this outpost is mined and the team has to be shown the safe path

through the mine field. Also, information concerning the patrol area and possible needed support is discussed.

As the team departs the base, once again a new mission has started. Now entering our assigned recon zone, the team moves through the area with little or no sound. Every team member intensively scans the terrain for danger. The team cautiously moves in the bush prepared for an attack at any second. This area is considered a free fire zone. There are no friendlies in the area therefore anyone sighted is considered the enemy and is dealt with accordingly.

The terrain consists of low rolling hills with some low-lying areas that are long time abandoned rice paddies. The foliage is predominantly low but has some areas of thick brush and small hills that make for good observation sites. We will use these to observe the area and conduct the mission.

With the education that Tony Cosgro bestowed on me before his premature departure, I find myself using his expertise while I move in the recon zone. With three or four small hills in the recon zone that appear to look good for observation sites, I request the patrol leader to set up fire missions on these locations before the team moves to that position. I sure don't want to get myself into another situation like we were in, in December, on Hill 94. There is no doubt in my mind that I am dealing with some of the world's toughest jungle fighters and I must keep myself on their level and make no mistakes.

A very well-used trail has been found and the team is able to observe it from three good locations within the recon zone. This will provide us with a good observation of the trail and give the team the advantage of

not staying in one particular location. All three sites appear to have good concealment without compromising our observation site.

Day after day the team has observed the trail and recon zone having made no sighting of the enemy. As the team checks out the area to the southwest, we can see Hill 94. Steve Laktash has asked if anyone had heard of any grunt unit checking out the hill. Since no one had heard anything so we decided to call in an artillery barrage and see if we could get any secondary explosions. Steve called in a fire mission to the designated artillery battery, and when they asked for the target description, Steve told them it was a suspected ammo dump. They approved the mission, firing the first round. It was right on target so Steve had them fire for effect. When those rounds landed, there were a number of secondary explosions. Steve relayed this information to the artillery battery and asked for another salvo. We continued to do this until there weren't any more secondary explosions. With smoke billowing from the hill top it really pumped us up. To see that hill top explode gave us great satisfaction. All in all, it was very gratifying to finish the job ourselves. Payback is a bitch!

Tomorrow is the last day of the mission before our return to C-2. Our last night's harbor site is within meters of the well-used trail and the team has been awakened on one occasion. One of the team members heard what was thought to be movement on the trail. All team members were awakened and put on "full alert", listening to confirm the location of the movement. As it turned out, we were unable to hear the sound again. As the dawn comes, the team is ready to move out of the area. Close inspection of the trail indicates that movement did in fact occur late in the night. With this in mind, the team is even more on

alert in case the enemy is close by. As the patrol moves toward the C-2 outpost there are no enemy sightings made.

Upon our return to C-2, rough-rider trucks were awaiting our arrival to transport the team back to the company area. On our return to the company-area, we were debriefed on the events of the mission. With a day of rest, the team members take full advantage of the time off. We have been told more guard duty is in the near future.

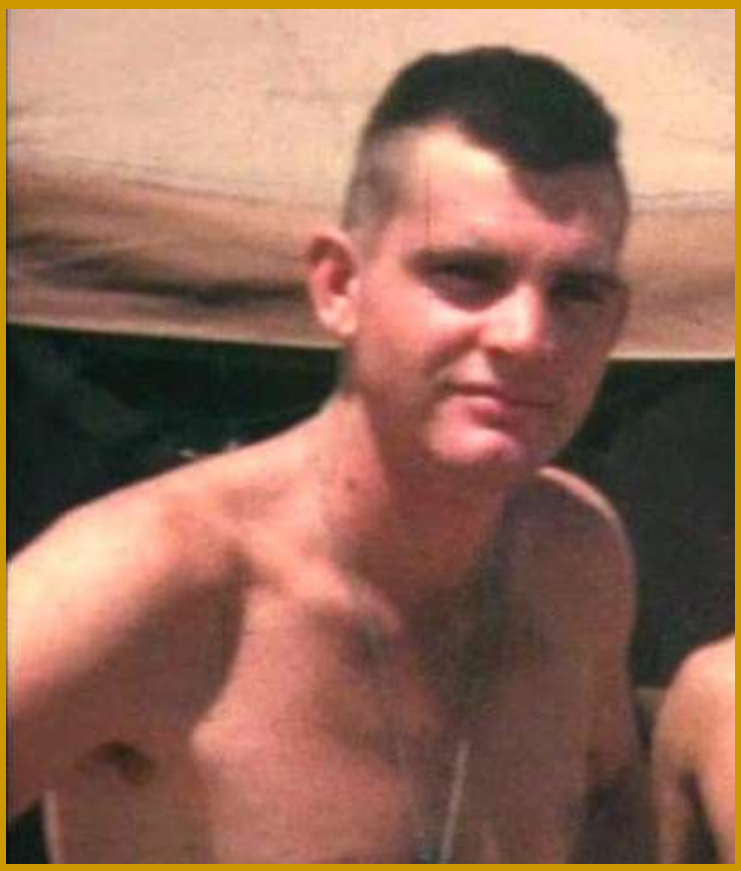
Guard duty isn't bad, it's just kind of hard to sleep during the day and stay up all night. Even though each person takes the job very seriously and does it well, I feel anytime someone screws off on the job, Charlie (the enemy) is always there to catch you. To those non-recon Marines stationed at Dong Ha who might be on constant guard duty, that is their front line. But to us, who walk around in Charlie's backyard, guard duty is routine base camp duty. I know the time will go fast and we'll be on another patrol soon so in a way I enjoy the short break. There is no easy going anywhere, in the rear or the bush. In the rear incoming from the enemy could and does happen at any time.



Enemy incoming destroys hooch and comm. Jeep in recon company area. Dong Ha 1968

Most of the men make good with the time they have off by playing cards, mostly spades and hearts, some do a lot of letter writing. I do my share. The letters that tell all is well, go to my mother while the real story goes to my older brother Mike. Generally, it's hard to put into words what the job of a Recon Marine is to those back home. Maybe once I get home, I can explain it.

Marble Champ, after the loss of Cosgro, has run all its missions with seven men. Upon our return from the team's last patrol, Marble Champ is now reinforced with a new man. His name is Mike Green and he's from Las Vegas, Nevada.



Mike Green

I know what it's like to be the "Boot" or "NIC" (new in country) in the Nam so everyone is trying to make him feel welcome. Some of the old-timers say a boot in the Nam was unlucky, I say bullshit everyone was the new guy in the beginning. Mike is very much needed in the team and I am sure he will be an important asset after a short time of on-the-job-training in the bush.



Donald Boswell

Dong Ha Vietnam 1968

With Donald Boswell out of the bush, the team needs new members. After Cos was wounded, Steve Laktash had taken over the assistant patrol leader's job carrying the radio as well. George Boks, who is a radio operator, will be joining team Marble Champ as well. He will take Steve's position as primary radio man. George without a doubt has his shit together. He has been going out on recon patrols since August of 1967 when he was assigned to Charlie Company. He will be a major asset holding this position within the team.



George Boks

With the month moving on, the team is blessed with yet another team member. His name is Dale Watchorn from Ponca, Nebraska. The most important thing is, he is a Navy Corpsman and very badly needed. Navy Corpsman had been rare in our team and on most missions a team member not in the medical field was assigned this position. Darrell Schokman will relinquish the job to Dale. Our next mission will be soon and we may need Dale's expertise.



Dale (Doc) Watchorn

The team has a warning order. It's a mission out of Camp Carroll. Camp Carroll is located just off Highway #9 about half way between Cam Lo, six thousand meters to the east and the Rock Pile seven thousand meters to the west at grid box YD0655. The base lies on a plateau south of the highway about two thousand meters.

Our mission will be a regular recon mission. We are to set up observation points and try to determine the enemy activity and its use of the area. We are to plot all well-used trails and call in supporting arms on enemy targets. If possible, capture a prisoner. This mission will run from January 16 to January 20, 1968.

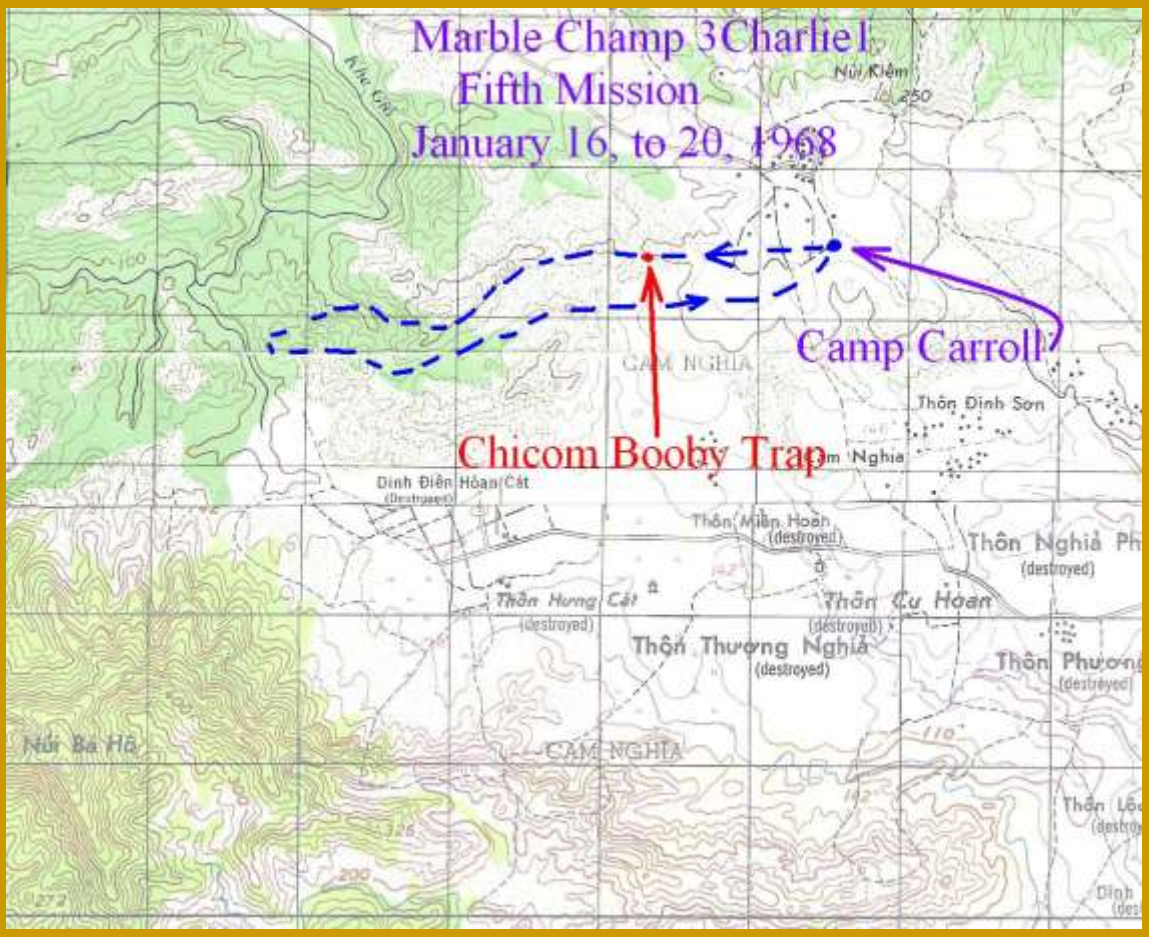


Camp JJ Carroll (upper left corner)



Aerial of Camp JJ Carroll

Camp JJ Carroll is named for Navy Cross recipient: Captain James J. Carroll, Commanding officer, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, killed by friendly tank fire on October 5, 1966 during Operation Prairie.



FIFTH PATROL: JANUARY 16 TO 20, 1968

Marble Champ will depart on the 15th of January by rough-rider to Camp Carroll. Upon the arrival of the team, our mission will be coordinated with the base before departure the following day. We will then walk to our assigned recon zone about two thousand meters west of the base.

With part of the day off, our main objective was to find the mess hall and a place to sleep for the night other than the ground. It didn't take long to overcome both minor tasks. A hooch with cots, food in our

bellies we were set for the night. Our hooch is close to the COC and the team has put in a piss call (wakeup call) for 0400 hours. This will allow the team to leave the base under the cover of darkness and give us a full day to reach our assigned recon zone. It's a long walk from the gate of Camp JJ Carroll to the edge of the jungle. The extra night on base has given the team an opportunity to replenish any item that may be needed for the mission. As for now it's crash early, (sleep) one never knows what tomorrow holds.

At 0400 hours, the team is up. With all our gear on and the base aware of our departure, Marble Champ is now escorted through the base's defensive mined perimeter. After the escort, we still have to cover an area of low foliage from the base to the jungle. When leaving the base, it is twilight, but there is that uneasy feeling that before we reach the jungle we may be spotted. I had found a small narrow trail and followed it a short distance. I felt this may cut down on the time in the open and make it possible to reach the jungle sooner. The distances between team members are kept at a longer span as a safety precaution so if the team got hit, the enemy couldn't concentrate their fire on all of us at once. Once we reach the thickness of the jungle and have cover, we will tighten up the distance between each team member as we proceed in single file.

I can hear old Cos in the back of my head, "GET OFF THE DAMN TRAILS," and as I look back at the team, I see a clenched fist. A booby trap has been found by the second point, Al Moore and the patrol leader. Son-of-a-bitch! I can't believe I didn't get someone killed. It was a ChiCom grenade rigged up in some brush with a trip wire made out of a piece of vine. Man, I could have tripped it off myself or if I didn't, one of the other guys could have. I told myself I better get my shit together

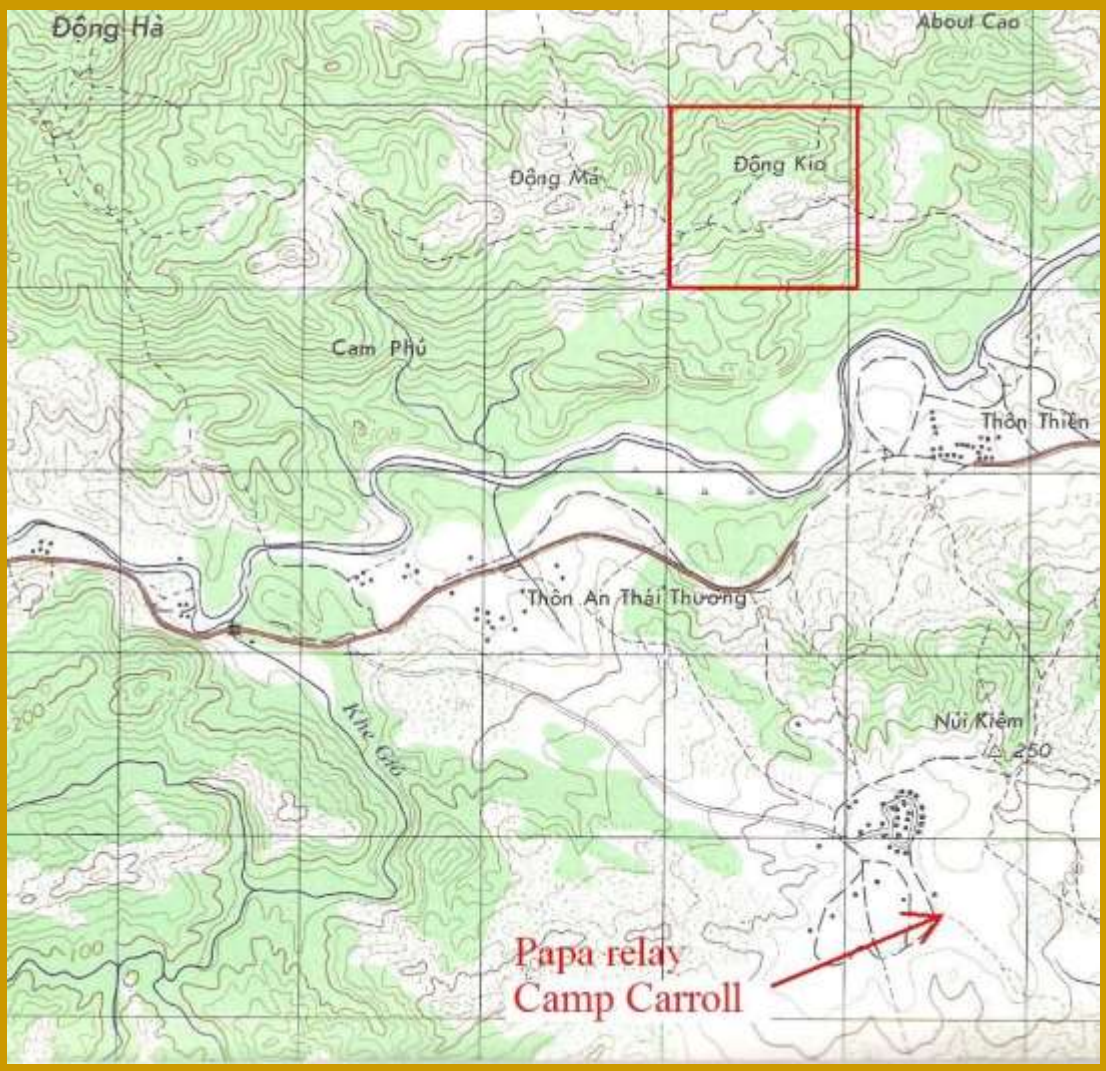
or I'll get us all killed. Okay, it happened, get off the trails, keep my eyes open and watch my flanks. There is no room to screw up or next time someone will die. I was lucky this time, the stake that held one end of the wire pulled out of the soaking wet ground but didn't go off. All team members are made aware of the booby trap and have now passed it safely.

I have moved away from the trail. With my eyes now scanning the area very closely, our rate of movement is slower. As we make our way to thick jungle, I have secured the entrance point. I look back at the team as they move to my position. I keep my eye on each member's flanks in case there may be a need to give him cover fire. Once all team members have entered the location, the area is checked out further and a 360-degree perimeter is set up. We then take a 10-minute break. Once our position is confirmed on the map, we move in the direction of our recon zone.

Still in the very early hours of the morning, the team has located an OP site (Observation site) and each team member is assigned an area to observe, alternating on radio watch. Radio monitoring is very important and communications must be kept up 24 hours a day while in the bush.

With other teams in adjoining recon areas, Marble Champ has picked up an emergency transmission on the radio of another team just making enemy contact. The team's call sign is Bus Stop 1Charlie1, and the team is in contact with a large enemy force. Members of team Bus Stop are well known within Charlie Company. The team consisted of Sergeant Robert Chaney Patrol Leader, George Landi, Michael Pharr, Wayne Duffy, "Doc" Darrell Lint, Robert Southwick known as the Buzzard, Danny Prichett, along with my good friend Delbert Frazier

known as Red. Team Bus Stop is located northeast of Marble Champ across the Song Cam Lo River on Dong Kio Mountain overlooking Camp Carroll.



Bus Stop 1Charlie1 is taken under heavy enemy fire on Dong Kio Mountain.

The contact is bad and with every key of the handset it is possible to hear heavy automatic gunfire. As we monitor the situation, we hear Bus Stop is now requesting a fire mission and in seconds the 8-inch guns of Camp Carroll are delivering rounds on target. As the first rounds impact, Bus Stop comes back with “Drop 200 meters, fire for effect.”

Within a few minutes the team is now advising the rear they have one WIA (wounded in action coded-tired) and are still taking heavy enemy fire. Still in continuous contact, the enemy move closer as Bus Stop informs the rear that they are surrounded. With the enemy closing in on the team, Bus Stop informs the rear they are taking heavy automatic AK-47 and machine gun fire on their position. There is a short break in the radio transmission as Bus Stop comes back with, “Be advised we have one, I say one KIA (killed in action) (coded Ugly) and one WIA.” An arty adjustment is made by Bus Stop to bring the supporting artillery much closer to the team halting the enemy from overrunning their position. As the artillery screams out of Camp Carroll in support of Bus Stop, the bombardment can be heard.

Later we would find out that George Landi was hit first in the leg with enemy fire and as “Doc” Darrell Lint, the team’s Corpsman, attempted to aid Landi, he took five rounds in the chest resulting in his death.

The team had artillery now at danger close range, virtually landing on their own position as Bus Stop requested air support and a reaction force (Coded Gang Buster). A reaction force is recon teams or infantry units that were between patrols and on alert to assist a recon team or unit overwhelmed by enemy forces.

The enemy was now only feet from the team as Bus Stop reports they are taking ChiCom grenades around their position. As a ChiCom landed within the team’s position it exploded between Delbert Frazier, Sgt. Robert Chaney and Michael Pharr, wounding Sergeant Chaney and Michael Pharr. The team now had two more WIA’s. Delbert Frazier, along with surviving teammates recovered from the ChiCom’s

concussion and continued to repel the enemy force. As enemy assaults continued on the team, M-26 grenades were thrown in order to stop the enemy. Once the reaction force was dropped in close to the action, the reinforcing Marines made their way to the fierce fighting a few hundred meters away. As Bus Stop continued to repel the enemy assaults, the NVA killed were so close that their dead bodies were lying within the team's perimeter. As we monitored the radio frequency Bus Stop was transmitting on, everyone prayed that the reaction force would reach the team before they were completely wiped out.

As the reaction force fought their way to the team's position, they also incurred wounded but finally managed to reach Bus Stop. Once a landing zone was secured choppers could then come in and remove the dead and wounded.



Photo Contributed by Delbert Frazier

Team Bus Stop 1Charlie1

Sgt. Robert Chaney, Robert “The Buzzard” Robert Southwick, Wayne Duffy, Delbert Frazier, Danny Prichett, Mike Parr,” Doc” Darrell Lint, (knelling) George Landi

The following is the report of that mission.


Bus Stop 1Charlie 1
January 16, 1968
60
59
58
57
56
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
Đông Hà
About Cao
Khe Xa
Contact Point
Proposed route
Đồng Mà
Đồng Kio
Proposed extract
Cam Phú
Insert point
Thôn Thiên Xuân
Thôn An Thái Thượng
Camp Carroll & PaPa Relay
Núi Kiêm

CONFIDENTIAL
ATTN: AC OF S G-2
DEBRIEF OF RECON PATROL: 101, THIRD RECON BN "C" COMPANY FOLLOWS:
OPERATION ORDER: 29-68 (SGT. CHANEY)
A. MAP SHEET: 1:50,000, AMS SERIES L-7014 SHEET: 6342 I
(1) DEBRIEFER: CPT. G.W. O'DELL: 16/01/68
1. SIZE, COMPOSITION, AND EQUIPMENT:
A. COMPOSITION: (7) ENLISTED, (1) USN
B. SPECIAL ATTACHMENTS: NONE
C. COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT: (2) AN/PRC 25'S
D. OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT: (1) 7X50
E. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: (4) CLAYMORE MINES, (4) WP RIFLE GRENADES, (3) WP HAND GRENADES, (8) GAS MASKS, (8) CS GRENADES,
F. SPECIAL WEAPONS: (1) M-79 WITH 67 HE, 3 CS, AND 10 CANISTER ROUNDS., (2) LAWS.
2. MISSION: CONDUCT RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE IN ASSIGNED ZONE TO DETERMINE ENEMY ACTIVITY. ENGAGE THE ENEMY WITH SUPPORTING ARMS. MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CAPTURE A PRISONER. PLOT HLZ'S FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS. PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO TRAILS AND THEIR FREQUENCY OF USE IN YOUR RZ. ASCERTAIN IF THE AREA IS BEING USED BY THE ENEMY AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE. PATROL WILL NOT BE EXTRACTED UNTIL RZ IS SUFFICIENTLY COVERED.
3. TIME OF DEPARTURE/RETURN: 131200H (YD 063577) WALK/ 161330H (YD 062585) HELO

DEC

CONFIDENT

4. ROUTE: INSERT PT. NORTHWEST TO (YD 040598), NORTH TO (YD 040599), SOUTHEAST TO EXTRACT PT.
5. OBSERVATION OF ENEMY AND TERRAIN:
A. SYNOPSIS: 73 HOURS OF RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE RESULTED IN ONE CONTACT WITH 20-25 NVA. THE CONTACT RESULTED IN (1) USN KIA, (4) USMC WIA, AND (7) NVA KIA (C). A REACTION FORCE WAS LAUNCHED FROM CAMP CARROLL AND JOINED TEAM TO HELP COVER WITHDRAWAL.
B. ENEMY:
(1) 160730H (YD 057597) PATROL WAS PREPARING TO LEAVE HARBOR SITE WHEN THEY HEARD MOVEMENT APPROXIMATELY 50 METERS AWAY COMING TOWARD PATROLS POSITION PATROL LISTENED, MOVEMENT CEASED, ONE MEMBER OF PATROL ROSE TO KNEES TO PUT ON GEAR, ONE SHOT WAS FIRED BY VC/NVA WOUNDING MAN IN LEG, (1) USMC WIA. PATROL RETURNED FIRE AND RECEIVED DEFENSE SA/AWF FROM ENEMY. PATROL AT THIS TIME RECEIVED THE SECOND WIA. ONE NVA TRIPPED W F HAND GRENADE BOOBY TRAP, RAN TOWARD PATROL AND WAS KILLED BY SAF. NVA WORE GREEN UTILITY TROUSERS AND SHIRT, HELMET AND ONE SKS RIFLE. PATROL RECEIVED INCOMING GRENADES AND S USTAINED THIRD WIA. PATROL THREW CS GAS BUT NVA PUR ON GAS MASKS AND IT HAD NO APPARENT EFFECT ON ENEMY WHO CONTINUED TO ADVANCE UP HILL AND GOT TO WITHIN 30 METERS OF PATROL. CORPSMAN WITH PATROL WAS ATTEMPTING TO TREAT WIA AND RECIEVED A FIVE ROUND BURST IN CHEST AND BACK, RESULTING IN ONE USN KIA. PATROL HAD FIR MISSION

RESULTING IN ONE USN KIA. PATROL HAD FIR MISSION GOING AT THIS TIME AND CALLED FOR GUNSHIPS AND AO. GUNSHIPS CAME ON STATION AND WERE RECIEVING HEAVY VOLUME OF AWF DURING THEIR RUNS. PATROL AND ENEMY CONTINUED TO EXCHANGE SAF AND GRENADES. REACTION FORCE WAS LAUNCHED FROM CAMP CARROLL AND MADE ITS WAY TO PATROLS LOCATION. REACTION FORCE RECIEVED FIRE AND SUSTAINED (1) USMC WIA. PATROL AND REACTION FORCE WITHDREW TO BASE OF RIDGELINE AND WERE MEDO LIFTED OUT.
C. TERRAIN: HIGH HILLS, ELEPHANT GRASS 4 AND ONE HALF FOOT HIGH TO SEVEN FEET HIGH, THICK UNDERGROWTH SPARCE CANOPY. COMMUNICATION VERY POOR ON NORTH SIDE OF DONG MA OTHERWISE GOOD. NATURAL WATER SOURCES PLENTIFUL. RATE OF MOVEMENT AT PATROL LEADERS DISCRETION.

D. OTHER INFORMATION: NONE
6. RESULTS OF ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENEMY:
A. ENEMY: (6) NVA KIA (C).
B. FRIENDLY: (4) USMC WIA, (1) USN KIA.
C. CAPTURED/EQUIPMENT: GAS MASK, (1) RADIO, (4) CHI COM GRENADES, (1) FIRST AID KIT, (1) SKS RIFLE, (1) HELMET, VARIOUS DOCUMENTS.
7. CONDITION OF PATROL: GOOD, MORALE GOOD.
8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
RECOMMENDATIONS:
(1) FUTURE PATROLS WATCH TRAILS FOR MOVEMENT.
CONCLUSIONS:
(1) PATROL MADE CONTACT WITH 20-25 NVA, POSSIBLY MOVING TOWARD CAM LO.

DE
CONFIDEN

DECLASSIFIED

9. HLZ'S: (YD 045585) SITE WILL ACCOMODATE (3) CH-46'S. SITE IS HILLTOP WITH ONE FOOT HIGH ELEPHANT GRASS. BEST APPROACH 360 DEGREES.

(2) (YD 030583) SITE WILL ACCOMODATE (3) UH-34'S. SITE IS HILLTOP WITH ONE FOOT HIGH GRASS. BEST APPROACH 360 DEGREES.

10. DEBRIEFER COMMENTS: NONE

CP-4
IT



Delbert Frazier

Team Bus Stop 1C1 Dong Ha 1968

I know Death has little mercy, but on this occasion, at least some lives were spared however the memory of this encounter will persist in our minds. We are not spared the grief and horror of this tragedy.

As darkness falls on team Marble Champ, we will move 400 meters to what appears to be a good vantage point for the team as well as a good concealed harbor site. Making sure we have not been followed, and with just minutes of daylight left, we move into the harbor site. After setting out claymores, we are in the first night's site. Once artillery on-calls are set up and radio watch established, we call it a day.

As the night passes without incident, first light will soon be on us. Just before light, the team is ready to take in Claymores and prepare to move out of the harbor site. Still within the on-calls of our last night's harbor site, Marble Champ stops for chow. With the area now secure, each man will alternate eating while other team members keep a close watch of the area. Dick Vance, our patrol leader makes sure that each man faces each other, so it is possible to not only watch each team members' back but the facial expressions of your teammate. When able to observe the facial expressions, words will not be needed to inform a team member something is wrong. There is little to no talking, and if there is any, it is only done by the radio man and patrol leader and only in whispers. Words within a recon team are never above a whisper. Mostly used in the bush are hand and arm signals. The reason that 90 percent of the communication is done with hand and arm signals is it eliminates the extra unneeded talk that may only get the team in trouble.

With the morning chow over, the team is now Alpha Sierra (all secure) and moving within the recon zone to inspect the area for any enemy presence. Only a small part of the recon zone has been covered so far and two well-used trails have been discovered. So far, we have not sighted any enemy. Now into the afternoon we have found another secure observation point. Shortly after settling into the observation

point, Marble Champ receives a transmission that a large force of infantry Marines has just entered our recon zone and will be making a sweep of the area. We are told to discontinue patrolling and proceed back to the outskirts of Camp Carroll.

It is late in the day on January 17, 1968 and with our radio operator George Boks in constant contact with the friendlies, Marble Champ is now moving out of the area back to the base of Camp Carroll. Once out of the jungle, it's a long walk in the open to the base. Notification is made that we are coming in so not as to make the defenders of the base think that we are NVA. Once at the base, we are told that helicopters will be taking us back to Dong Ha for a debriefing. This was a short patrol but nevertheless one more for the team and my diary.

With the return of the team to the company area, Marble Champ was debriefed and told to replenish our supplies. Marble Champ is assigned another mission that will start on January 19th. This mission will take place in the Hai Lang Forest, west of Quang Tri combat base.

We are to be put in with another team from 3rd Force Recon, Coral Bush 2-2.



Team Coral Bush 2-2

Team Members of Coral Bush; L to R

John Clyde Anderson, Pointman, (Eugene (Crash) Best, Team leader David Moragne, Steve Fahlstrom, Warren Blount radio man,

Robert Donohue Platoon Sgt, John Kaualu and Michael (Mike) Clayton were also on mission, not shown in photo.

Both teams will be dropped off by a vehicle convoy and then will proceed to a location where we will split up and run separate missions. Due to the fact that plant foliage in this area is predominantly low it does not afford much cover. Helicopter insertion of the teams is ruled out because they would be obviously visible and would alert the enemy

immediately. The enemy knows that armed convoys are somewhat of a regular occurrence but they might not notice the two teams slipping off into the low brush. Both teams are alerted at the briefing that the area has high enemy activity and we also are told that the enemy has been using a warning system of three shots to inform its units of any U.S. ground troop entry into the area. The team's insert will occur late in the day and hopefully will go undetected by the enemy. This mission is designated to run from January 19, to January 22, 1968. For now, we pack our gear.



Left to Right: Mike Green, Dick Vance, James Smith, John Romero

SIXTH PATROL: JANUARY 19 TO 22, 1968

It's January 19, 1968, and the day is going fast. With all the team members making last minute checks of their gear, Marble Champ will soon be on the trucks with Coral Bush a Force Recon team and the

mission will be underway. It is time. Both teams have eight men each… Both are loaded into the trucks and we are now moving to our insert point.

The time is 1500 hours. It is late, but the late insert may make our mission possible. Now off the trucks, I take the point and start moving in to the bush.

The area in which Marble Champ and the Force team had to cross to get to our recon zone is low rolling hills with areas of tree-lines and small scrub brush about three feet high. In this type of area, 16 men must keep spread out for safety as they walk in a single file. While moving, my eyes are, as always, scanning the area for any types of possible ambush sites, booby traps and in this case, any civilians. This area has not been completely cleared of civilians. As I proceed, I reluctantly anticipate the three warning shots we were briefed about. Now a good distance from Highway #9, I catch a glimpse of an individual in the bush. Raising my left hand in a clenched fist signals all in the rear to freeze and get down for cover. Dick Vance moves to my position is informed of the situation. Having been spotted, we all get a very uneasy feeling but we know that we must move on and continue with the mission.

George Boks, the team's radio man, has informed the rear echelon of the sighting and that we are at this time all secure and proceeding to our recon zone. Both teams are still together at this time.

A few short minutes later, what we hoped we wouldn't hear, rang out. It was three shots, and they were fairly close by. Both teams picked up the pace and proceeded to find a secure area.

The time now is 1630 hours and we have stopped at a secure area. We will take this time to OP the surrounding area making sure we are not followed. George has set up artillery on-calls around our position for our safety. In order for our transmissions to be kept from being deciphered by the enemy, George must code all grid coordinates by using what are called shackle sheets. Each is number coded and assigned to our teams before the missions are underway. George as well as other radio men on patrol always carries a back-up just in case the code is somehow compromised. These codes were a necessity because North Vietnamese army units regularly monitored U. S. military radio frequencies.

Shortly after we settled in, we observed several groups of suspected NVA around our position but they quickly moved out of sight before we could call in a fire mission on them.

The teams originally were supposed to split up but due to the circumstances the decision has been made to stay together through the first night separating tomorrow at early dawn moving to our designated recon zones.

Dick Vance, Steve Laktash, and patrol leader David Moragne, the Force team patrol leader, along with George, Marble Champ's radio man decide that the teams must move out one more time before total darkness sets in to pick a harbor site because our present position had obviously been observed by the North Vietnamese spotted earlier. After moving a distance and finding a new harbor site, George sets up new artillery on-calls for this location. At approximately 1900 hours we start hearing movement around our position. After hearing movement coming from the north, Marble Champ and the Coral Bush are ready for

anything to happen. At about 1920 hours a member of the Force team moves back from his position to inform a team leader of enemy activity.

In an instant, from what seemed like everywhere, our teams are taken under fire. From George comes the familiar call, “CONTACT, CONTACT, MARBLE CHAMP TAKING HEAVY SMALLS ARMS FIRE.” Now as the contact suddenly intensifies both teams are taking fire from the north, west and south. A team member from the Coral Bush is first to be hit. Members of the Force team, sighting the enemy first, open fire with their M-60 machine gun, as does Dick Vance with his M-60. Now taking fire from the east as well, the fire fight is in full scale. With heavy small arms fire cracking over the heads of both teams like bullwhips, Marble Champ and the Coral Bush 2-2 are fiercely returning fire to repel what is appearing to be a full enemy assault.

George is adjusting the artillery on calls as the enemy starts to close on the teams. At first, he requests “DROP 200 FIRE FOR EFFECT.”

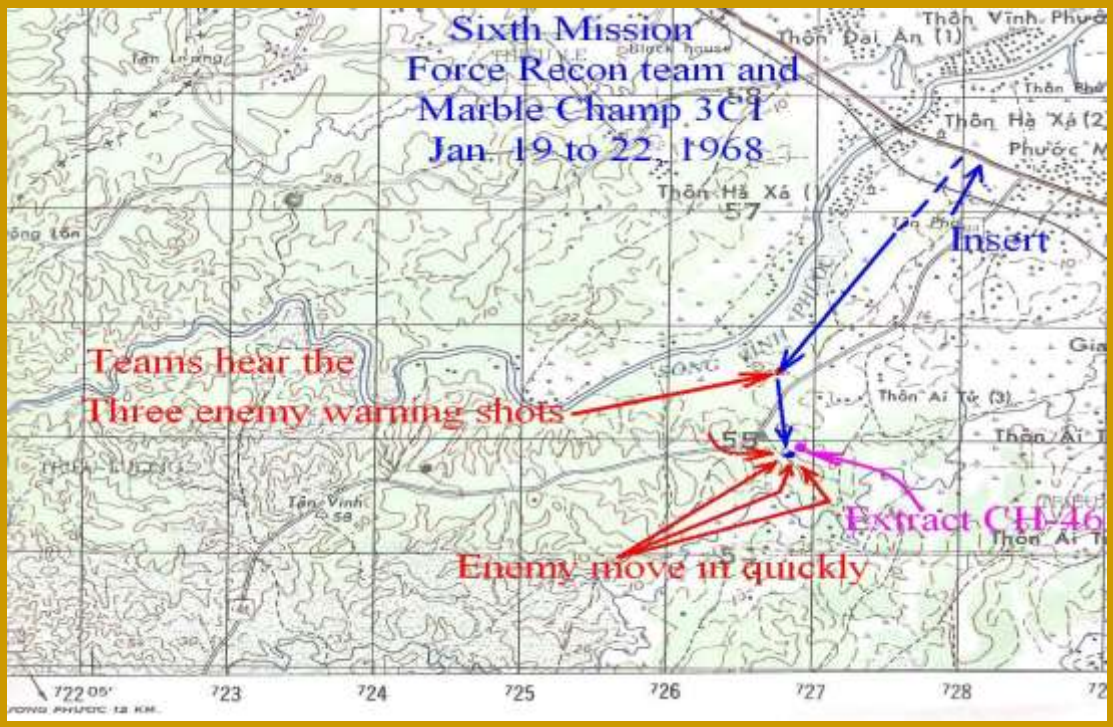
Then as the enemy starts to encircle the team and begin to move in closer, George keeps adjusting the artillery until the 155mm artillery shells (volleys of rounds fired at a time) are slamming in to within 60 meters or less of the team’s perimeter. With the enemy now trying to move even closer to the team’s position, grenades are now being tossed back and forth between the teams and the enemy. George is hit in the face and neck by some grenade fragments but continues on the radio. The artillery impacts are so close that the earth shakes and our bodies tremble from the impacts while the shrapnel whistles above our heads. The enemy knows that it must at all cost, move as close to the recon teams as fast as possible because Marine supporting arms become just as deadly for the Marines as they are for the enemy.

2130 Hours: While the patrol leaders are directing the Marines fire, George is now maintaining contact with air support and relaying accurate tactical information. With the enemy increasing their ferocity of attack, George requests assistance and soon Puff the Magic Dragon comes on station. Puff is a reconditioned Air Force cargo plane AC-47 which is equipped with multi gatling-style miniguns. Each minigun is capable of firing 6,000 rounds per minute. With just one burst it could cover an area the size of a football field and put a round every square foot in just seconds.

The team is told when the aircraft is on station to get as close as possible in a small 360-degree perimeter. One person puts a strobe light on the end of his rifle, holding it in the air. No one fires their weapon this way the aircraft knows you are within the small area at the strobe light; any other muzzle flashes are the enemy. As the 155's rounds continue to impact around our position at danger close range, helicopter gunships and CH-46 extract birds standby but stay clear of the artillery support. Meanwhile Puff is also a flare ship and is dropping flares which are turning night time into practically daylight. George has made contact with the aircraft and Dick Vance puts the strobe light on the end of his rifle and while lying down holds his rifle up with the light on. The arty has stopped and so have the illumination flares – there is a short period of eerie silence. Then the word comes from Puff, "KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN, WE'RE COMING IN." The strobe light is now flashing. I can feel the hand of death as it swept over the face of the earth. From out of the sky comes a roaring of fire. The tracers of Puff's miniguns creates an image of a great red laser beam coming from the sky and the sound it created was as awesome as the roar of some enormous beast.

2400 hours: With Puff now finished with its mission, the helicopter gunships start making strafing runs firing machine guns and rockets. With impacts danger close, George continues to direct all the air activity and is told that the extract choppers will land 50 meters to our rear in a designated location to pick us up and we were to scramble to that location. Word has quickly spread to all team members as to what will be occurring.

I can see a CH-46 moving fast and low over our heads. SHIT! Even with gunships hovering above the teams suppressing enemy fire, I won't be surprised if we all aren't shot making the dash to the chopper. We are now moving as fast as possible with our wounded in the dark. We make it to the bird. Once in, I take up a position with others at the rear of the chopper to lay down covering fire as the gunships put out as much fire as possible to cover the last few team members boarding the bird. Trying to return fire and help the wounded on the bird is difficult but we all have made it. Now on board the CH-46 pulls out of the hot landing zone (coded third base) under enemy fire. While medical treatment is being administered to the wounded team members, the bird is en route to Bravo Med where medical teams are awaiting our arrival. Once the wounded are dropped off, the remaining team members are taken back to Dong Ha recon area for debrief.



JANUARY 21, 1968

Once safely in the rear, our rifle and personal 782 gear is cleaned, we get a real shower, then it's some time off as we wait for a new mission.

The days are filled with working parties, the nights with taking it easy, playing cards and letters home. There are times, sitting in the hooch, if you close your eyes, you can almost take yourself home. It may only be for a few seconds, but it takes you away from the insanity you are living in.

The closing of this month has left Charlie Company with the loss of seven of the finest recon Marines anyone would ever have the pleasure of knowing.

It seems that one of our neighboring teams, call sign, Little Gull 2Charlie1, was assigned a mission in the Rock Pile area and was ambushed (coded dry gulch) by approximately one company of North Vietnamese regulars while on patrol at a location called Mutters Ridge, hill 484, Nul Cay Tre 96/61 grid box north of the Rock Pile base. Five men were killed, Patrol Leader Thomas Retschulte, Lawrence Bisonett, James Siron, Thomas Moody, and Merle Eicher. Two recon marines escaped, Sgt. Norwood, and PFC Griffin escaping and evading the enemy, but one Vietnamese scout, Nguyen Dinh Loc, the recon team was working with was taken prisoner.

The scouts were commonly known as Kit-Carson scouts, and were sometimes former North Vietnamese army soldiers or Viet Cong that had defected long ago to our side and had gone through extensive screening, indoctrination and training.

The two Marines that had escaped and evaded the enemy were spotted by an air observer and were picked up by a helicopter on the 20th. They were taken back to a nearby Marine fire-base called the Rock Pile, later being returned to Dong Ha recon area.

After four days had passed, the Vietnamese scout showed up at the Rock Pile with his version of what had happened. The scout said that the team had entered an ambush while he was running point and the team had been hit by what he thought was a company of North Vietnamese army regulars. The scout stated that he had been overpowered and taken prisoner. He said that five team members were killed in the initial contact and only after he was taken prisoner, did he learn that the last two members of the team were able to escape the ambush. He said that while captured, his wrists were secured with rope

and he was beaten. He stated that all his personal possessions were taken and that he was repeatedly beaten, questioned and asked to reveal information about Marine units. The scout said he did not reveal any compromising information and that after loosening his binding ropes, he managed to kill the North Vietnamese soldier that was assigned to guard him and was able to get away.

The two surviving Marines of the team, Sgt. Norwood and PFC Griffin who had managed to escape and evade the enemy for two days were deemed to be psychologically unable to continue in a combat role and were returned to the United States.

When the Kit Carson scout returned to Dong Ha, I along with others did not believe his story and did not trust him. He did not appear to have any wounds to make us believe that he had in fact been beaten as he said he was. Some of us believed he had purposely led that team into an ambush. I guess we'll never know the full truth. With the members of the team killed still not located, other teams are being assigned missions in and around the area in hopes of finding and returning our dead comrades. The loss of these men has brought sadness to all within the ranks of Charlie Company.



2Charlie1

Services will be held for our comrades at the chapel close by.



Thomas Retschulte

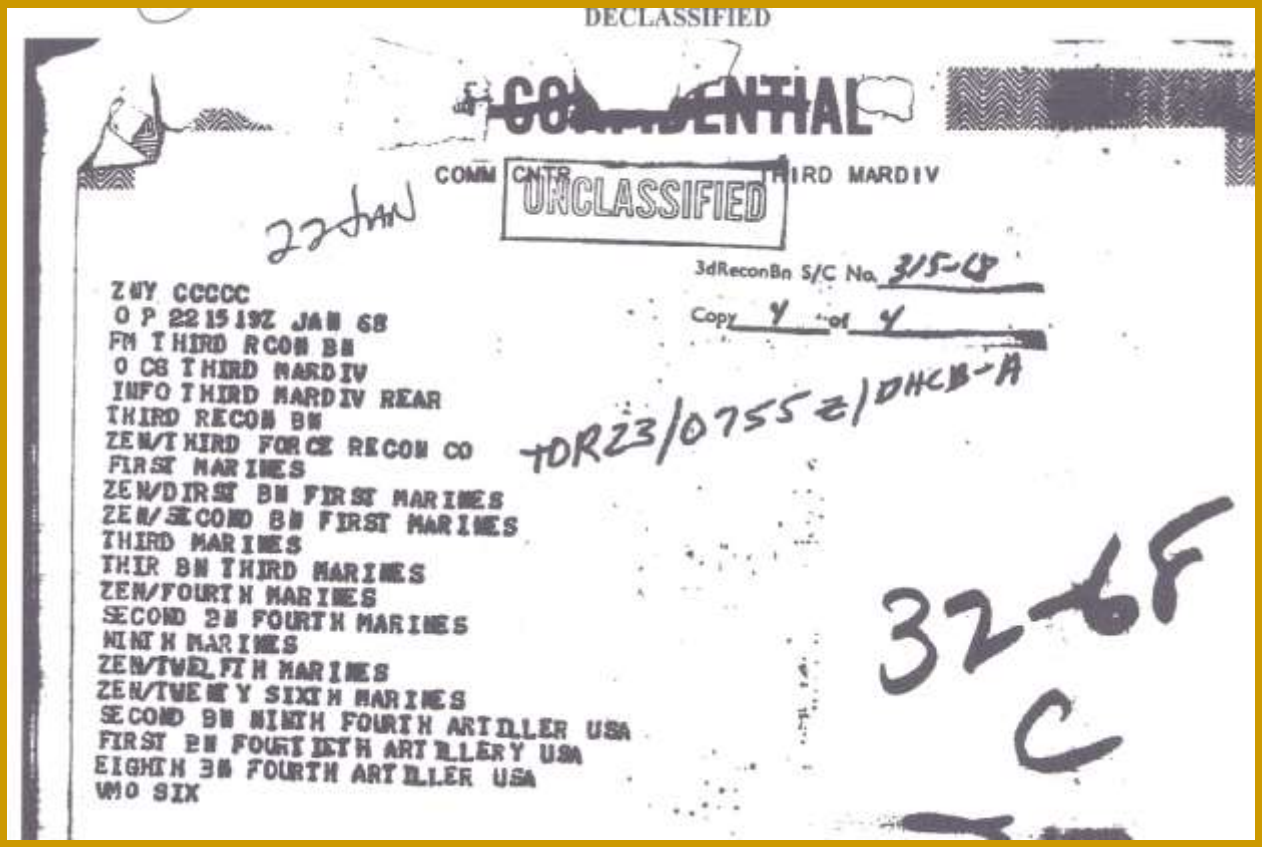
patrol leader of team “Little Gull”

Last photo taken of Thomas before going on the Mutters Ridge mission.

Photo taken by

Gerald “Jerry” Reaver, Recon rep. PAPA relay Camp Carroll 1968.

The following is the report of that mission:



DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

COMM CNTR THIRD MARDIV

22 JAN

UNCLASSIFIED

3dReconBn S/C No. 315-68

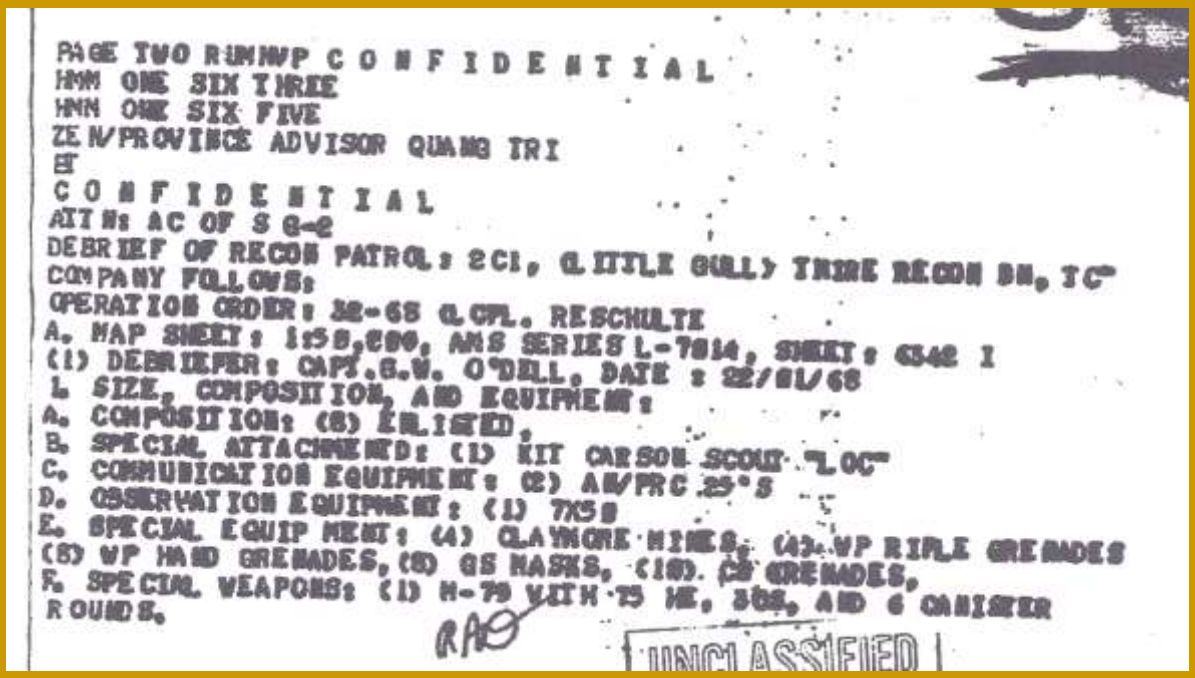
Copy 4 of 4

ZNY CCCCC
O P 221519Z JAN 68
FM THIRD RCON BN
O CG THIRD MARDIV
INFO THIRD MARDIV REAR
THIRD RECON BN
ZEN/THIRD FORCE RECON CO
FIRST MARINES
ZEN/DIRST BN FIRST MARINES
ZEN/SECOND BN FIRST MARINES
THIRD MARINES
THIR BN THIRD MARINES
ZEN/FOURTH MARINES
SECOND 2N FOURTH MARINES
NINTH MARINES
ZEN/TWELFTH MARINES
ZEN/TWENTY SIXTH MARINES
SECOND BN NINTH FOURTH ARTILLER USA
FIRST 2N FOURTIETH ARTILLERY USA
EIGHTH 3N FOURTH ARTILLER USA
WHO SIX

TOR 23/0755Z/DHCB-A

3268

C



PAGE TWO RUMNVP C O N F I D E N T I A L
HMM ONE SIX THREE
HMM ONE SIX FIVE
ZEN/PROVINCE ADVISOR QUANG TRI
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L
ATTN: AC OF S G-2
DEBRIEF OF RECON PATROL: 2CI, CLITTLE GULL> THIRD RECON BN, 1C
COMPANY FOLLOWS:
OPERATION ORDER: 32-68 CPL. RESCHULTE
A. MAP SHEET: 1:50,000, AMS SERIES L-7014, SHEET: 6542 I
(1) DEBRIEFER: CAPT. G.W. O'DELL, DATE: 22/01/68
1. SIZE, COMPOSITION, AND EQUIPMENT:
A. COMPOSITION: (8) ENLISTED,
B. SPECIAL ATTACHMENTS: (1) KIT CARSON SCOUT "LOC"
C. COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT: (2) AN/PRC 25'S
D. OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT: (1) 7X50
E. SPECIAL EQUIP MENT: (4) CLAYMORE MINES, (12) WP RIFLE GRENADES
(8) WP HAND GRENADES, (8) GS MASKS, (10) CS GRENADES,
F. SPECIAL WEAPONS: (1) M-79 WITH 75 HE, 30S, AND 6 CANISTER
ROUNDS.

RAO

UNCLASSIFIED

COMM CNTR THIRD MARDIV

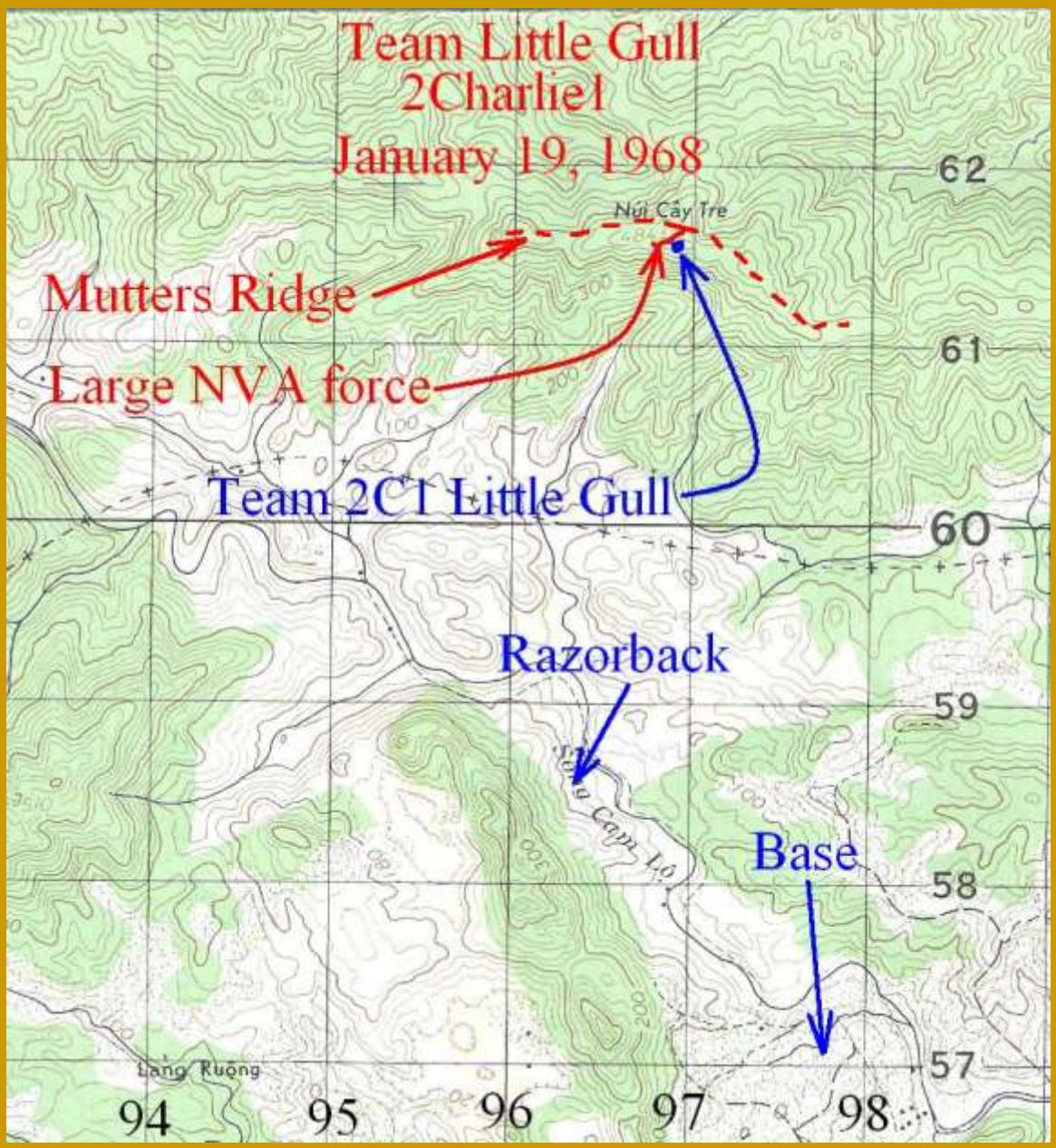
PAGE THREE RUMVP C O N F I D E N T I A L
2. MISSION: CONDUCT RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE IN ASSIGNED ZONE TO DETERMINE ENEMY ACTIVITY. ENGAGE THE ENEMY WITH SUPPORTING ARMS. MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CAPTURE A PRISONER. PLOT HLZ'S FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS. PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO TRAILS AND THERI FREUENCY OF USE IN YOUR RZ. ASCERTAIN IF THE AREA IS BEING USED BY THE ENEMY AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE. PATROL WILL NOT BE EXTRACTED UNTIL RZ IS SUFFICIENTLY COVERED.
3. TIME OF DEPARTURE/RETURN: 151145H (XD 987559) WALK/2814HRS (XD 989592) HELO
4. ROUTE: INSERT PT NORTH TO EXTRACT PT.
5. OBSERVATION OF ENEMY AND ERRAIN:
A. SYNOPSIS: PATROL WAS ABBUSHED BY ESTIMATED 36 VC/NVA. RESULTS WERE (6) USMC KIA(1) WIA. TWO MEN EVADED AND WERE PICKED UP BY HELICOPTER. PATROL ALSO HAD (1) KIA CARSON WIA. Subsequently returned after escaping from NVA WAB See after apt.
B. ENEMY:
(1) 1915 16H (XD 969616) PATROL WAS MOVING THROUGH 6-8 FOOT HIGH ELEPHANT GRASS ON HILL 484 WHEN THEY WERE HIT BY ESTIMATED 36 VC/NVA APPROXIMATELY 20 METERS AWAY. PATROL RECEIVED A HEAVY VOLUME OF M-79, GRENADES AND AW FIRE AND SUSTAINED 4 USMC KIA IN THIS INITIAL BURST. THE PATROL RETURNED FIRE WITH M-16 AND

PAGE FOUR RUMVP C O N F I D E N T I A L
GRENADES. THE POINT AND KIT CARSON SCOUT WERE NOT HIT IN THE INITIAL BURST AND THE POINT SHOUTED THAT THEY WERE RETURNING TO THE REMAINDER OF THE PATROL. THE PATROL HEARD A LONG BURST OF AWF, AND COULDN'T RECEIVE ANY ANSWER WHEN THEY CALLED OUT. (2) USMC KIA). THE ALTERNATE RADIO MAN WAS WIA AND HAD CRAWLED BACK TO THE REMAINING TWO MEN. HE ATTENTED TO RETURN TO HIS RADIO APPROXIMATELY 20 METERS AWAY. LAST TWO MEN HEARD HIM TRYING TO TALK ON RADIO WHEN A LONG BURST OF AWF WAS FIRED, VOICE CEASED. LAST TWO MEN(1) WIA STAYED IN POSITION APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES FIRING SMALL ARMS THEN BEGAN TO MOVE SOUTHWARD THE ROCKPILE. THE ACCOUNTED FOR (5) VC/NVA KIA(C) DURING THE TIME THEY WERE AT THE AMBUSH SITE. STATED THEY ENEMY WERE DRESSED IN BLACK PJ'S, AND ARMED WITH A-47'S. THEY ALSO STATED THAT GRENADES RECIEVED WERE NOT CHI COMS BUT OF US VARIETY. AIR AO ON STATION BUT HES COULD'T SIGNAL HIM, THEY'D THROWN RED SMOKE EARLIER IN ATTEMPT BUT DIDN'T FEEL THEY SUCCEEDED. WHILE THEY WERE MOVING BVC/NVA ATTEMPTED TO CUT THEM OFF BUT THEY MANAGED TO EVADE THEM. THEY CONTINUEDTO MOVE AND SIGNAL AN AO ON THE MORNING OF THE 28TH. HELICOPTER PICKED UP HES.
C. TERRAIN: STEEP MOUNTAINS, ELEPHANT GRASS 4-8 FEET HIGH.

PAGE FIVE RUMVP C O N F I D E N T I A L
COMMUNICATION GOOD. NATURAL WATER SOURCES GOOD. RATE OF MOVEMENT 200-250 METERS PER HOUR. PATROL ALSO HAD A KIT CARSON SCOUT ATTACHED TO PATROL WHO AT TIME OF CONTACT WAS A WIA.
-4

UNCLASSIFIED

Map of Little Gull mission



Viet Scout Flees From NVA Captors

PHU BAI — A 3rd Marine Division Kit Carson scout, who was overpowered when 200 North Vietnamese attacked the recon patrol he was attached to, staged a movie-style escape and then walked for three nights and two days to friendly lines.

Slim, 24-year-old, Nguyen Dinh Loc, who had been a scout with the 3rd Reconnaissance Bn., for less than two months, was part of an eight-man team operating between the Rockpile and the demilitarized zone.

On the fourth day of the patrol as the team was hacking its way through dense undergrowth, a well-concealed enemy force, estimated by Dinh at 200 North Vietnamese, ambushed the unit.

Five Marines were killed, two others escaped and were rescued. As Dinh exchanged fire with enemy snipers on a ridge above him, other NVA jumped him from the rear, overpowered him and secured his wrists with rope.

"They took all my papers. They also took all the money I was carrying," Dinh said ruefully.

The NVA beat him, questioned him about Marine units and then left him on the ground, his hands tied, and a guard watching over him.

For the next several hours Dinh, who had been blindfolded since his capture, worked to free his hands by rubbing the coarse rope fibers together and fraying them.

Seven hours after his capture he worked loose and said he strangled the guard with the same rope.

After he had unsuccessfully tried to locate other members of his patrol, Dinh began to make his way back to Marine positions near the Rockpile.

For three nights and two days Dinh trudged back without food and the only water available was from streams or occasional paddies. Several times, Dinh said, he lost his way.

Eventually, Dinh spotted Marine positions and walked into them waving a white flag above his head.

This article was taken out of one of the newspapers we read in the Nam. Could of been one out of several coming in and out of the unit. It is of team Little Gull 2C1 in January 1968 on hill 484, known as Mutters Ridge.

At times while in the rear, other teams drop in to say hello. They may be just checking up on us, or might want to know what went down on our last patrol, if we had a contact, or just shoot the bull. The unit is small so almost everyone has met at one time or another.



Delbert Frazier Team Bus Stop 1C1



George Boks, ID, Donald Boswell, ID,



Chester Mollett Dong Ha 1968

Chester was killed on February 7, 1970 serving with 3rd Force Recon.

Charlie Company based at Dong Ha with 3rd Force Company is a small unit of Marines, yet a small part of our larger battalion that has been assigned this area of operation. We performed tasks which in other branches of the service would only be delegated to specialized elite units. Many of our recon members have had extensive training such as scuba, jump school and Recondo School. Others have been assigned to recon because of the need for this type of operations and the necessary military occupations that are applicable to these tasks.

There are usually three platoons per company and each platoon has three recon teams. Teams have no more than eight members and all run long-range patrols. Our missions occasionally include radio relays in which the patrol sets in a defendable position and relays messages for other teams that are at a much more distant location. This is due to the fact that the PRC-25 radios we carried only had a limited range and the radio relay doubles that range so teams can penetrate much deeper into enemy territory.

Every team goes to the bush and covers territory in our area of operation. During this intense period of conflict all teams at one time or another make contact with the enemy resulting in Marines killed, missing in action or wounded. The casualty rates are high and we operate in areas that mostly have high concentrations of well-trained North Vietnamese Army regular soldiers. These NVA soldiers are equipped, aside from air power, just as well as we are.

These long-range patrols are called stingray patrols, where we seek out, find and destroy the enemy using supporting arms, were as the key-hole missions, are of four- or five-men teams and are for observation of the enemy forces.

The time in the rear has been a nice break, but as the day unfolds, so does a warning order.

A mission has been assigned to Marble Champ that some call a walk in the park. In Vietnam, there is nowhere that I call a walk in the park. Our mission will be in what is known as the Backyard. It's not a place to my liking due to the type of terrain. The area has low shrubs one to three feet tall and low rolling hills with thick area of tree lines. When in an area like this, the team will be forced to spread out a much as 10 meters or more between team members. If the separation is not done, the detection of the team would be no problem and a chance of an ambush will most likely happen. There is little concealment in the area, not only for the team, but for the enemy as well.

Steve Laktash will be patrol leader on this mission with Dick Vance as APL working with Steve.

Marble Champ's mission is to set up observation sites and cover our assigned recon zone. We are to plot all well-used trails, check out wooded areas for bunker complexes and call-in supporting arms on any enemy targets. If possible, take a prisoner. With the Song Vinh Phuov river running through the center of the team's recon zone, there will be most certain a river crossing. The mission will run from January 25th to 29th.

SEVENTH PATROL: JANUARY 25-29

It is late on the 24th and the team is packed and ready to depart early in the morning. With the last-minute check of equipment done, all team members turn in early for a good night's rest.

Its early morning on the 25th and the team is up and preparing to board the rough-rider convoy which will take Marble Champ to a place called Checkpoint 28. It is located at Yankee Delta 185566 in what is referred to as the Back Yard only twenty-five hundred meters south of highway #9 and 5,000 meters from Dong Ha to the northeast. Once at this location the team will boot (move) to the assigned area.

0820 hours: Marble Champ has now arrived at Checkpoint 28. As the rough-rider makes our insert and departs the area, I take the point and move in the direction of the recon zone. It is easy movement within the bush and there are few problems in covering the area. With the great distance between each team member, at times I feel almost alone.

When moving in this type of area, it is most important to not only check out what is in front of you but your flanks and rear too. This is important in case problems at the rear of the patrol take place, or someone within the column makes a sighting. With the distance between each team member, the only source of communication is with hand and arm signals. From time to time, Steve Laktash, team patrol leader may hold up his fist, meaning freeze. He may simulate breaking a stick, which meant he wanted me to check out my immediate area and secure it for a break. Once this was done, I would observe the terrain within my immediate area while at the same time observing the approach of the team to my position. Considering our distance from me to the tail-end Charlie, is some 100 meters, it would take a few minutes for all the team members to reach my location. Once all team members were at the break site, Steve would establish our exact location by utilizing the topographic map and compass. George Boks, our primary radio man is in constant communication with the rear and, with no

more than a whisper, reports the location of the team's position and informs the rear of our situation.

As the patrol leader, Steve Laktash, and APL Dick Vance, refer to the topographic map, they observe the terrain and decide on the best possible OP for the team. A good defendable position has been found which gives the team a good view of the Song Vinh Phuoc River. We will set up on-calls around the position and move 600 meters to this OP site and observe the river for enemy activity, attempting to locate a suitable crossing point. Now at the site, a 360-degree perimeter is set up. George and Dick, having a good location on our position and having plotted fire missions around the site prior to our arrival are set at 200 meters. With the observation of the recon zone and river now in progress, there is no sighting of any enemy in the area. Since it is now the height of the monsoon season, the river is high and the best fording site appears to be at what on the map is referred to as Muc Duc Road YD 206546. This appears to be a major trail that crosses over this river and survival usually depends on staying off major trails. The enemy is as thick as flies in this area. You might not see them, but they are there. I have a very uneasy feeling about crossing at this location and hope we can find another location to cross at. The rest of the day is consumed with the observing of the river and our recon zone. Now late in the day an area for a harbor site is decided on which will give the team good concealment. As the day closes it is late dusk as we move to the nights harbor site. George sets up the on-calls for the harbor site prior to us getting there because to do it later means he has to cover himself with a poncho, using a flashlight which increases the chance of some light coming through and being seen by the enemy. As the team moves to the harbor site we are also covered by the on-calls set up in case of

enemy contact. Steve and Dick have already scheduled night radio watch assignments and instructed team members to put out Claymore mines as soon as we reach the site. As the team moves into the site just minutes before total darkness, Claymores are placed in the most effective positions. Now in the nights harbor site, Marble Champ is Alpha Sierra.

As the night passes without incident, Marble Champ moves out of the harbor site still in early morning darkness in order to give us the advantage of stealth. Now out of the harbor site, the team moves a short distance while still staying within our on-call range and stop for chow.

During the chow break, I examine the river with my 7X50 binoculars with hopes of finding another crossing possibility other than Muc Doc Road.

Chow is over and the team is now boot to the river. As I move closer, I get this bad feeling, call it intuition. Where there is water you can almost always find Charlie. Now very close to the river, my eyes are at a strain to find anything that may be out of order. George has set up a fire mission just in case we get hit while crossing the river. Now 30 meters from the river, I had to expose myself just to get to the water. I could hear this voice in the back of my head: it was Cosgro, saying, “Now Smitty, if you’re moving across an area or a place that doesn’t look good to you, look to the left and right real fast, and raise your rifle like you’re going to open fire. Do whatever you can think of to make the enemy think you’ve spotted them. If you’re wrong, well, you just scared the shit out of anyone behind you. If you’re right, you’ll probably save

everyone's ass in the team, but your chances will be S, double O, L". (Shit out of luck)

When you're right, you'll find yourself in the killing zone and will have to get out the best way you can."

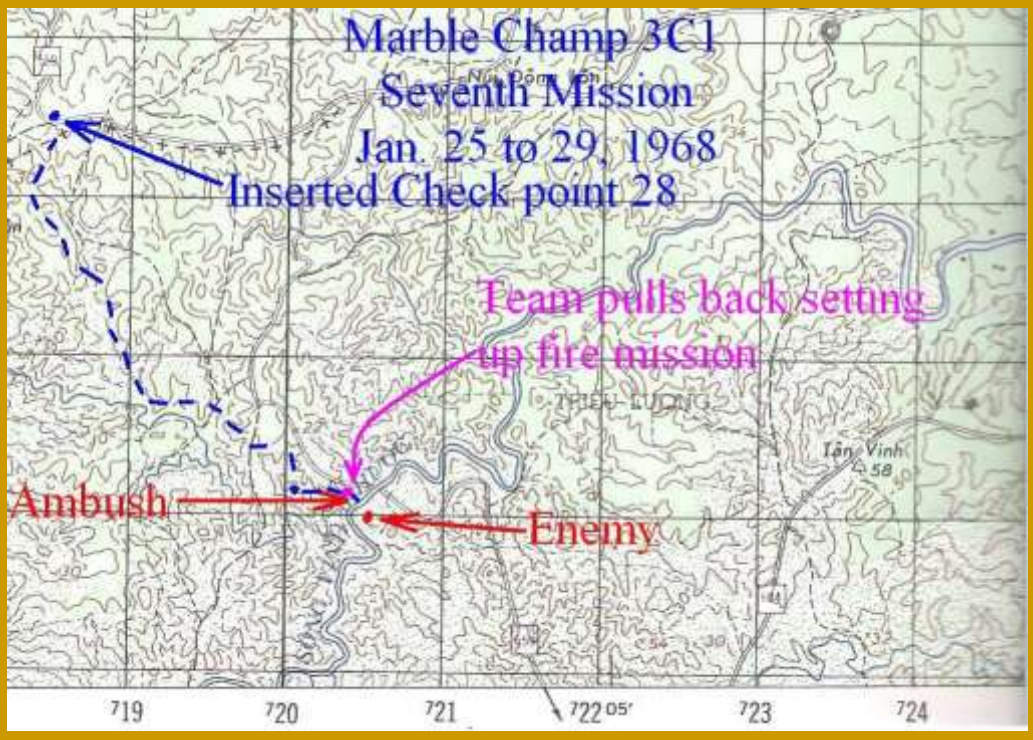
I'm thinking, what the hell, better to find out now than halfway across the river. As I step into the open, I take six or seven steps, drop to a crouching position raising my rifle as if I see or hear something to the left, then to the right. SON-OF-A BITCH! I am taking heavy AK-47 fire. As I return fire, on full-automatic, the enemy fire intensifies all around me. Bullets are cracking over my head like a bullwhip. I am trying to move to the rear but fall to the ground. Still taking enemy fire, I reload, firing another magazine to my right. With every attempt to get up I fall, but manage to make it into the bush. Once in some concealment, I feel that I am out of the immediate killing zone and I am not an open target. I crawl a few feet and stop. My damn heart is beating so hard I can't hear shit.

I see the team rushing in to give me assistance and they also are taking heavy small arms fire. As we all regroup, we cover each other and retreat while returning fire. Finally, we get to what appears to be a defendable position. Steve tells George to proceed with the artillery fire mission whose coordinates had been preplanned earlier. Contact was made at grid YD 206542. Within a short time, the arty responds with a barrage of shells.

We now find out that Doc, Dale Watchorn, the team corpsman, and John Romero, our M-79 man have been hit by bullet fragments. They are minor WIA's but Doc takes care of the medical work with the help of Darrell Schokman, the tail-end Charlie. George meanwhile requests

an OV-10 Air Observer to come on station to help us see where the enemy is located. As we wait for the Air Observer, George throws down his M-16 in disgust and says, “THE SON-OF-A-BITCH-JAMMED ON ME when I needed it the most.” (The M-16 was notorious for jamming and the military contractors later made some modifications which remedied the problem. Unfortunately, many Marines were found dead slumped over their rifles which had been taken apart in an effort to get them to work).

Soon an Air Observer (OV-10) and fixed-wing fighter jets arrived on the scene. George took out a LAW (light anti-tank disposable rocket launcher) and fired it at the location where we believe the enemy was. The round landed short of the intended target and George communicates this to the OV-10 pilot and informs him of the adjustment to be made. The OV-10 pilot relays this to the jets that start dropping their bombs on the enemy position.



Above map: Song Vinh Phuoc River that 3Charlie1 attempted to cross near Muc Duc road. While crossing the team took two minor WIA's but continued mission. Below: Aerial view of ambush location.



After the air strikes are completed, Marble Champ has been given orders to continue the mission. Doc Watchorn and John felt that their wounds were minor and refused to be medevac'd out. With the enemy still close by, the two men feel it may jeopardize not only the team's safety but also the aircraft's safety if they are taken out. With their wounds patched up, Marble Champ continues the recon mission but is informed by the rear echelon not to attempt another river crossing. With two more days left in the zone, Marble Champ will continue to gather intelligence information but keep a very low profile.

It was later on that day I figured out why I had such a hard time staying on my feet during the ambush. I had three bullet holes in my pack. I lost two canteens of water and something that was very dear to me, a can of peaches that I planned on having with some pound cake just this very evening. This should tell anyone just what kind of low-down maggots we were dealing with.

Since this area has limited concealment for us, we decided to stay in the thickest cover. To make contact with the enemy in any area, take two minor WIA's and then continue a mission in that same area that has as much cover as the fuzz on a wool blanket doesn't do much for me. With the possibility of the gooks down at the river giving us a party tonight, it looks like a little hide-and-seek may be in order – much more hide than seek on our part. Nevertheless, the members of Marble Champ are all experts out here and anything that might come up we will handle as a team.

The last two days passed without incident. There were no further contacts or sightings made. On the 29th of January, Marble Champ booted to Check Point 28. We were picked up by a rough-rider convoy

and transported back to Dong Ha base camp for a debriefing. Once in the rear, WIA's were taken care of by Doc Watchorn.



Smitty and John Romero hold up Dale Watchorn with wounded foot.

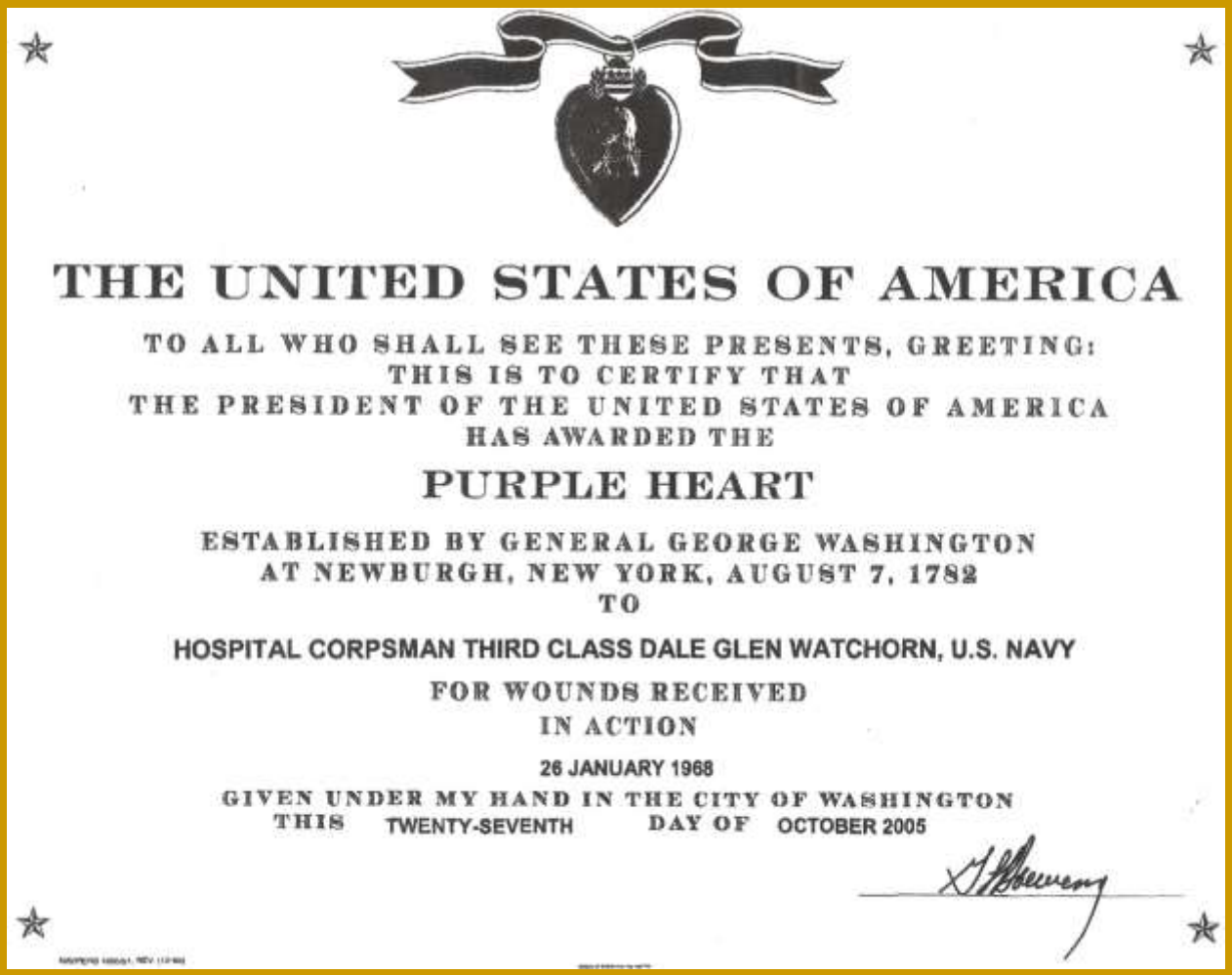
During my tours of Vietnam while a member of 3rd Recon Bn. 3rd Marine Division, wounds happened on most missions during a combat enemy contact. Most minor wounds were not even reported. From small metal bullet fragments to shrapnel from bombs and grenades, team members within the battalion were hit on many occasions during battle. I

personally had never met a Combat Recon Marine during my tours that had not been wounded in some manner and failed to report it.

Note: Many years had passed after the ambush.

During the ambush at Muc Duc road, there were wounded within the team refusing to be extracted. John Romero and Doc Dale Watchorn felt it would endanger the team's safety and continued the mission. Years later after an X-Ray was taken of Dale's leg, a bullet was discovered still lodged in his leg. After 37 years and 8 months the Purple Heart Medal was awarded to Navy Corpsman Third Class Dale Glen Watchorn for wounds received in Action by enemy fire during the ambush on January 26, 1968.

James Smith



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
HAS AWARDED THE

PURPLE HEART

ESTABLISHED BY GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON
AT NEWBURGH, NEW YORK, AUGUST 7, 1782
TO

HOSPITAL CORPSMAN THIRD CLASS DALE GLEN WATCHORN, U.S. NAVY

FOR WOUNDS RECEIVED
IN ACTION

26 JANUARY 1968

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON
THIS TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY OF OCTOBER 2005

EIGHTH PATROL: FEBRUARY 5TH TO 10TH

While back at Dong Ha we work like mules in the hot tropical sun filling sandbags and constantly reinforcing our defensive perimeter. We also have to scramble occasionally into trenches and bunkers when barrages of enemy rockets and arty slam into the base. This is due to the fact that the Tet Offensive had started while on our last mission. Not to mention the NVA had artillery in North Vietnam that could reach our position and often did.

Before we know it, the working parties are at an end and we have another warning order. This mission will be southwest of the Rock Pile. The terrain is ass-kicking in this area and the mountainous jungle is so thick that at high noon it's like dusk. Landing zones for extracts in case of a contact are practically nonexistent. We are told that the enemy concentration in this area is extremely heavy and booby traps are in places that would amaze anyone, even a Recon Marine.



Left to Right rear: George Boks, "Doc" Dale Watchorn, John Romero, Steve Laktash, Donald Boswell, James Smith. Front: Mike Green, Dick Vance.

Marble Champ's mission will be to assess enemy strength and movement in the area. We are to plot all well-used trails and set up observation points. If the enemy is spotted while in our assigned area, we are to call in supporting arms. If the possibility arises, take an enemy prisoner. Our mission will be a five-day mission and the team will boot to the recon zone, walking out from the Rock Pile fire base.

As the team sits on the pad (landing zone) at Dong Ha's recon company area, CH-46 helicopters make their approach to land. Once the team has boarded the birds, the crew chief and door gunners check their equipment and we are airborne. Once in the air, one can't help looking around the interior of the chopper. Most of the guts of the craft are visible throughout the hull. At the front of the bird are the pilots of course separated by a wall between them and the cargo area. Located at the front of the cargo area are the gunners. Each has a mounted 50-caliber machine gun on both the left and right sides of the aircraft.

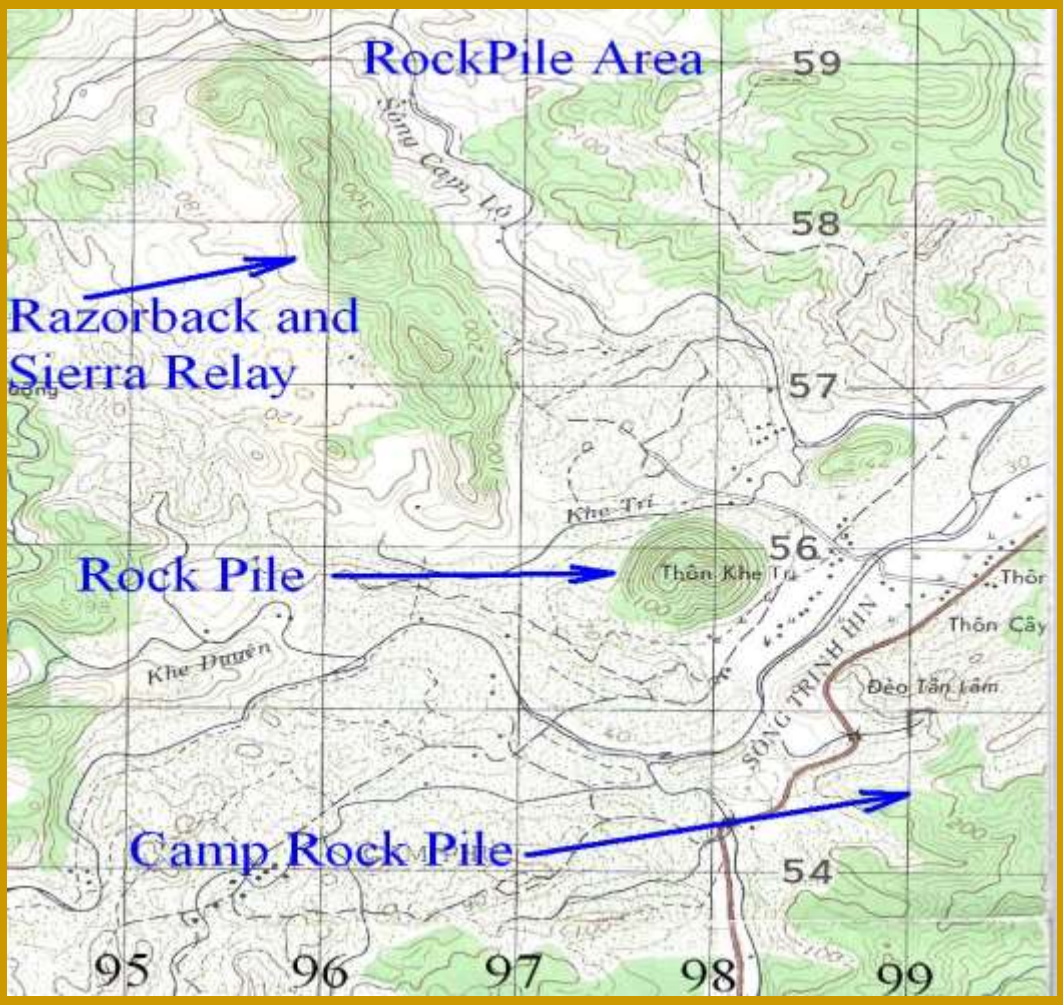


These weapons are the only protection the craft has and gunners are on constant watch for the enemy. The crew chief is in charge and passes all information to our patrol leader in the event of any change in the team's drop-off point. The pilots and crews of the CH-46s and the Huey gunships play a very important role in this war. Without the crews and pilots of these aircraft, our job in Vietnam would be impossible. When the shit hits the fan, they are our angels that come in and take us out of hellish firefights.

Now en-route to the Rock Pile, the crew chief has informed Marble Champ that an emergency has arisen and the team will be dropped at Camp JJ Carroll. It seems a company of infantry Marines close to the area of our recon zone are in heavy enemy contact with many wounded and killed. All available aircraft are needed in their aid. Within moments

we have landed at Camp Carroll and have exited the bird. As the choppers lifted off, a thumbs up is given, meaning “Good luck and keep your heads down” to the crews as they pull up and out of sight. With a place to stage our gear, Marble Champ awaits new transportation to the Rock Pile.

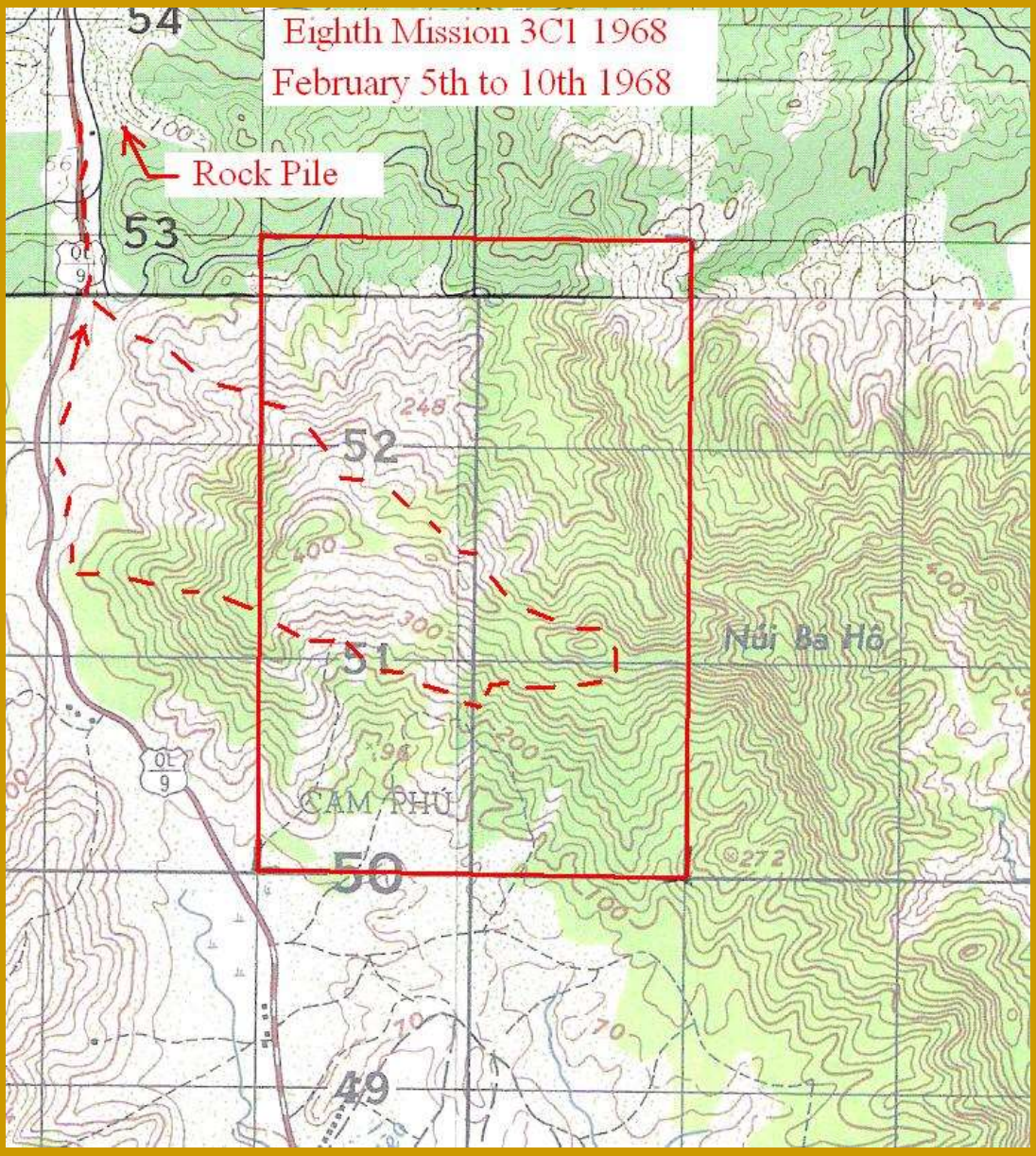
As dawn comes, so does the information about our transportation. A bird is on its way to pick us up and transport the team. Once at the Rock Pile, notification is made to the base personnel that Marble Champ will be walking out of the base toward our assigned recon zone.





Rock Pile Base

Once away from the base it's quiet, as if we were the only people on the face of the earth and lost in a land that time had forgotten. Even with the moments of silence the jungle takes hold of you. Occasionally, we are startled by its wildlife. This area has rock apes, tigers, wild boar and all sorts of other exotic animals. Running point, I am well aware, in this thick jungle that a contact could happen at any time and due to its thickness, an enemy might not be seen until he is five to ten feet in front of me. Therefore, being as quiet as possible is essential for our survival.



Due to the rough terrain, the team stops often for a break. It is tough going working our way through this thick jungle. Dick Vance and Steve Laktash work up the team's position while George relays information on the team's location to the rear support. All other members of the team observe their assigned areas for any enemy activity. While on these short breaks, the leeches somehow sense a human's presence

and balancing themselves on one end, then the other, they squirm towards us. They seem to come out of everywhere, from the jungle floor as well as the vegetation. We have to constantly re-apply deet (insect repellent) otherwise; the leeches and mosquitoes would bleed us dry. We tape our trousers as tight as possible around our ankles so as to make their access more difficult. Even so, leeches do get through your clothes sucking your blood until they are the size of a golf ball bloated full of blood. At night while in our harbor site, even with deet, leeches as well as various other insects and snakes may crawl on you as well as over you at any time. Our bed is the ground and in deep jungle the night is so dark you cannot even see your hand in front of your face, let alone the intruder passing over you through the night's site.

After a few days of moving over the recon zone, some signs of enemy activity have been found. With very few good OP sites due to the thickness of the jungle, movement within the assigned area has showed no sightings of the enemy. Maybe that large engagement with the infantry Marines earlier has diverted the enemy from this area even though we have found trails to indicate that there is heavy enemy activity. With only one more night in the zone, the team will harbor site 100 feet from a trail. George has set up a fire mission on the trail in case the night reveals enemy movement through the area.

On that last night, a team member, on his designated watch, observed some lights on the trail and the team was all woken up. Dick, Steve and George confer and decide to call in an artillery fire mission. George requests one round and as the round impacts, he makes an adjustment then requests a fire for effect. After a dozen 175's land in their intended location, the impact at 200 meters is quite earth shaking.

When morning comes, all eyes and ears are on alert for anything out of the ordinary. The team moves out of the harbor site and we try to be as quiet as humanly possible. After a brief investigation of the area where we think we saw the lights, the team finds no blood stains to indicate enemy wounded and no signs of the enemy.

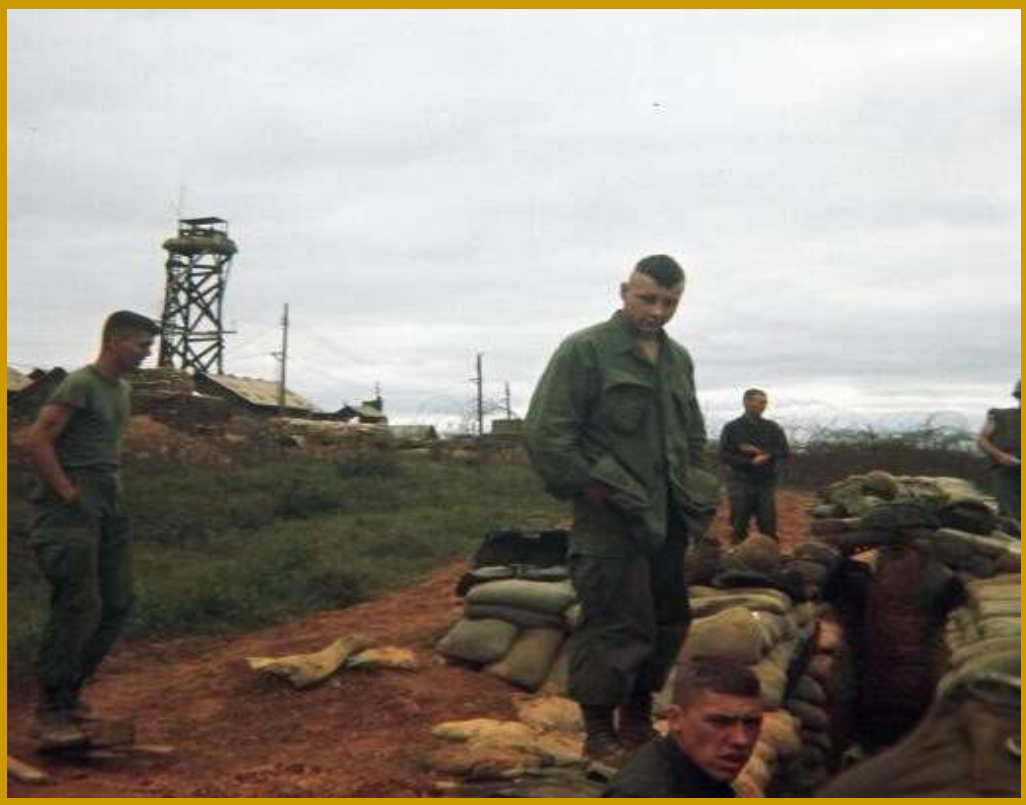
Marble Champ is now boot to the Rock Pile where the team will be met by CH-46 helicopters to return us to Dong Ha recon area for a debriefing.

Upon our return to the company area, it is a day of clean-up and rest then on to the joyful duties of filling sandbags, reinforcing bunkers, burning shitters and standing perimeter guard duty. With some brief intermittent time off in the rear, it gives me a chance to think about home. It's days like today that makes me dream of the old hangout. I can almost see and smell one of those juicy hamburgers and a-large chocolate malt.

With 10 months to go in country, I need to get that stuff off my mind.

Today it is bunker work in the company area.



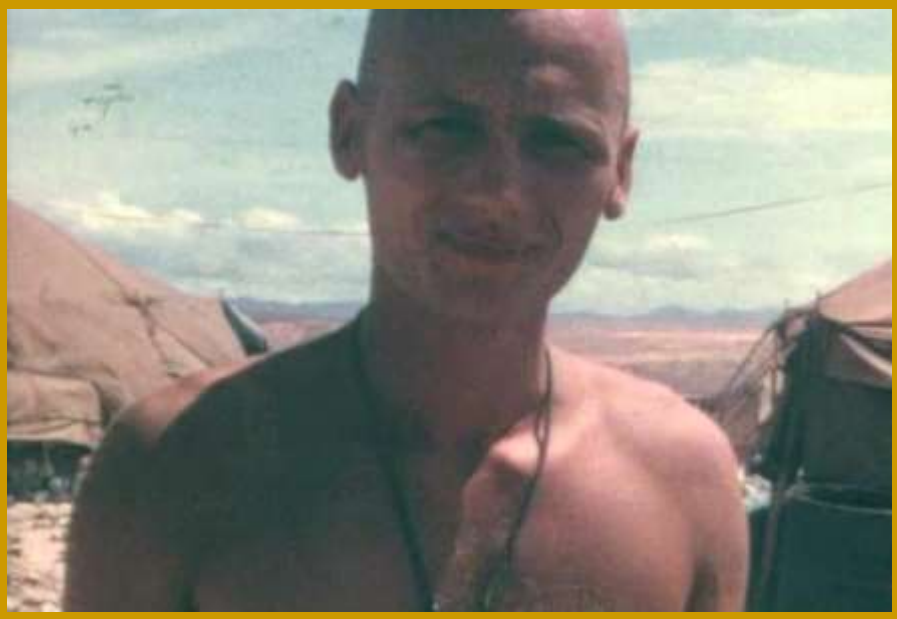


From Left: Steve Matheson, Dick Vance, Jack Kinson. Rear: Wayne Thompson

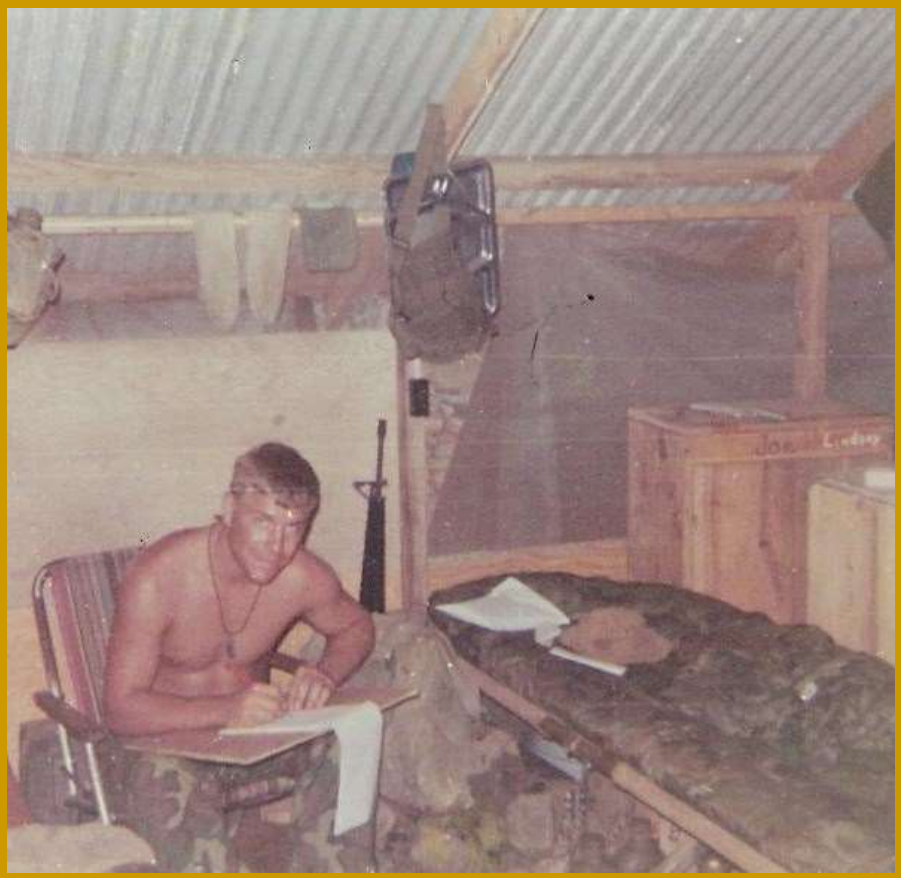


Rear: Wayne Thompson. Front: Mike Green, Steve Laktash, Dale Watchorn, Darrell Schokman

During the time in the rear Marble Champ receives new team members. Wayne Thompson is from Corpus Christi, Texas. Wayne will be taking the second point position on our next mission. Also new to the team is Jerry Beasley. Jerry is from Jackson Street in Casley, Illinois and both are a welcome addition to the team. Jerry will take secondary radio. Both team mates will be an asset to the team and missions in enemy territory.



Wayne Thompson



Jerry Beasley

In the past few months, we see more of our fellow Marines getting killed and wounded. At times we go out on patrol with revenge sizzling in our souls.

It's February 12th, and Marble Champ has received a warning order. The mission will be south of Camp Carroll. This patrol will be in an area between Camp Carroll, Ca Lu and the Vandergrift base. The area is far from a walk in the park. From the Rock Pile to Ca Lu there are thousands of NVA throughout the area. These troops are not afraid to fight and are very well equipped. Marble Champ's mission will be to set up OP's (Observation Post) to observe enemy in the area. Our team will be assigned six grid squares which we will move through in search of the enemy. Marble Champ will be inserted by CH-46 into the recon zone for our mission. The area in which the mission will take place has a few landing zones and the jungle is quite thick in this area. This mission will start on February 13th and end on February 18th.

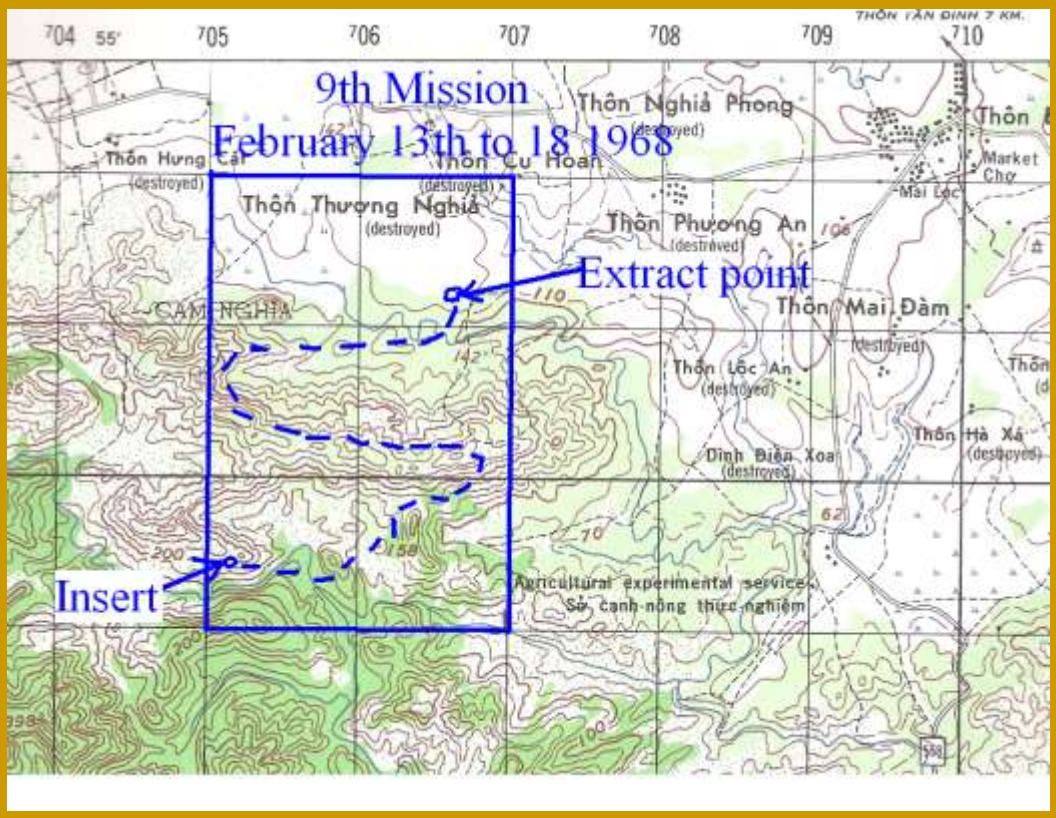
NINTH PATROL: FEBRUARY 13TH TO 18TH

It's the morning of the 13th and Marble Champ now awaits the arrival of the CH-46 helicopters which will insert the team into the assigned recon zone. As the team awaits the choppers, camouflage grease paint is applied to all members of the team. A last-minute check of our gear and we are ready. I can hear in the distance the sound of rotors popping in the air. I know we will be boarding the choppers in a matter of moments.

Now on the bird, the tension of team members is heightened as the chopper lifts into the sky and proceeds to take us to the recon zone. As

with any chopper insert, there is always the chance the LZ could be hot (enemy in the landing zone). Now nearing the LZ, we circle and make some false insertions to confuse any enemy that might be in the area. Meanwhile, jets are prepping the intended landing zone with 500-pound snake-eye bombs. We have a thumb's up from the crew chief and are inbound to land. Helicopter gunships are also on station strafing the area and covering our insertion. All team members are now standing up and ready to disembark as the bird swoops down into the landing zone. Members of the team have their eyes on the LZ below while the 46 descends into the landing zone. With the door gunners and team members scanning the zone for any enemy muzzle flashes, we are seconds away from touchdown. Once landed in the zone things appear to look good. We have taken no enemy fire and as the crew chief drops the rear door, we quickly scramble out of the chopper and form a 360-degree defensive perimeter. I quickly check my compass for orientation and with a signal from the patrol leader start to move out into the direction of our designated recon zone. The choppers then quickly leave the area and all is quiet. After moving only a short distance from the landing zone, Marble Champ has found definite signs of recent enemy presence in the area. While in this area the team has chosen some good locations for observation points. We will recon the area further in hopes of making an enemy sighting.

While the team moves through the jungle, George keeps in constant contact with our radio relay, supplying them with information of the area and precise location of the team. Realizing that this area has a heavy enemy concentration we move quietly but cautiously through the jungle. Each team member is attentively scanning his surroundings for any sign of the enemy as they walk behind me as quietly as possible.



I feel confident as we move through the thick jungle. If we do get hit by the enemy we are in an area where we will have excellent artillery support both from the Rock Pile and Camp Carroll. Supporting artillery is Marine 8-inch guns and Army (2/94th) 175 guns. Both of these artillery fire bases are very active in this area and are constantly firing in the support of recon and infantry units. Marine and Army artillery units are also constantly dueling with North Vietnamese artillery on the other side of the DMZ. Our support artillery can be counted on to deliver prompt and devastating support. Artillery and air support in this area is essential for the team's survival because intelligence reports indicate that there is a division of enemy operating in the area.

It is now the 17th and we have seen numerous signs of the enemy but have not had any direct sightings so far. At early dawn we move out and find a good OP site. After a full day of observation, we are unable

to spot any enemy. Most times this is because the enemy knows that they can be spotted during the day so they go underground and come out at night to conduct their missions and movements. With the day closing, we will soon move into a night's harbor site. Tomorrow should be Marble Champ's last day in the recon zone.

After careful selection we find an appropriate harbor site and the team moves out to that position. When we arrive, we only have a few minutes left to set up Claymore mines and do other necessary chores before total darkness sets in.

It is very late into the night when Wayne Thompson awakens the team. He states he has heard movement very close to the team's location. He whispers that he saw lights and there is a very strong possibility that the enemy are very close to the team. Each team member is advised by the patrol leader not to fire their weapon. The reason for this is that the enemy may only be passing through the area and might move right past the team. But, if we engage the enemy, considering that there is such a high concentration of enemy in this area, we might not be able to hold our ground. The lights continue passing close by the team but we wait until they pass before we call in the artillery fire mission. It was not known if the team was able to inflict any kills on the enemy moving through the area. A recon of the area will be done in the morning on the way to the landing zone where the team will be extracted.

As the morning comes the team members all attempt to be as quiet as possible just in case the enemy is still in close proximity. It appears that the enemy has moved in the same direction that the team has to move in, in order to be extracted therefore we are all extremely on

alert while moving. We hope that the enemy has not stopped in an area that will be directly in the path that we have to take. With every step I am prepared for a contact with the enemy force. Each step is very carefully calculated for I know the enemy may have set booby traps for us. Just 300 meters to the landing zone and it's another mission down. Even so I tell myself, easy, watch your flanks, check the trees, do not miss anything, today is a nice day, too nice a day to die. I am so tense that my steps are toe to heel in an effort not to trip a wire or vine thereby triggering a booby trap. I am reminded of an earlier patrol where I did miss a booby trap and it could have cost us dearly. We have made it to the landing zone without incident and are in the process of reconning the zone's perimeter before the team's extract gets underway. This is to make sure the enemy is not close by and an ambush has not been set for us and the extract helicopter. Hitting a team at this vulnerable time also gives the enemy an excellent chance of shooting down a chopper. George is in communication with the choppers and has informed them of the location of the team and that we are ready to be extracted. They reply that they will be inbound within minutes. I finally hear the popping of the gunship rotors and within seconds they are overhead at tree top level. After being alone in enemy territory for five days, the sight of gunships and CH-46 extract choppers is indeed a wonderful sight. The crews of these crafts put their lives on the line day after day and have the highest respect of every combat recon and grunt Marine in Vietnam. Many times, they have to maneuver through a hail of enemy fire just to rescue a few men. God bless each and every one of them for their dedication and self-sacrifice.

George gets the word that the extract chopper will be making its approach and passes the word to the patrol leader to get the team ready to scramble on board when the time comes. The CH-46 pilot skillfully maneuvers the twin rotor CH-46 into the small jungle encircled landing zone and we quickly board. As the chopper ascends to a safe altitude, I see the smiles of relief on the faces of my team members knowing that we're on our way back to Dong Ha base camp for debriefing.



Dale Watchorn

Corpsman for team 3Charlie1



John Romero and James Smith

with smiles and another finished mission.

On February 18, the day we return we report for debriefing. Once the debriefing is over, the team is informed about our neighboring team, “Box Score”. The team was in a bad enemy contact near the DMZ, and team members were killed. With more information about the Box Score to come, the team returns to our hooch to get somewhat of a rest. We clean our combat gear, ourselves and can’t wait to get as much sleep as possible before starting working parties the following day.

As the day progresses, more news is going around the company area about Force Recon team Box Score that was hit hard while on patrol. We receive word that our neighboring Force Recon team “Box Score 2-1” hit the shit close to the DMZ just out of C-2. There were Team members killed and wounded, one-man Danny Slocum is MIA (missing in action). There was a chopper lost and their crew killed as well. We are at a great loss.

Team Box Score 2-1 was located northeast of Charlie Two when Lieutenant Graves the patrol leader, while crossing a bombed-out area came upon a bomb crater at grid YD168675. While in the OP site the team noticed a well-used trail on the other side of the river running through the team’s recon zone.

With heavy enemy activity in the area, and the trail appearing to be well used, the team decided to set up an ambush and attempt a prisoner snatch. Just before moving into position for the ambush the patrol heard voices but saw no one. They got down and waited about five minutes listening for approaching voices.

The team decided to move across the river and up on the other side of the bank where they continued on the trail. After crossing they began moving up the trail about ten meters when they came upon another bomb crater where they set up a 360 as a base of operations.

Once in the crater the team again heard the noises of people moving around them. From this position the rear security, PFC Nations saw five enemy moving along a ridgeline all carrying AK-47 rifles heavy packs moving straight toward the team. Honeycutt said he had spotted six as they made the Lieutenant aware of the situation.

Considering the team has enemy approaching from one side and voices on the other the Lieutenant felt the team had no choice except to ambush the six-approaching enemy. As the Lieutenant, Slocum, Lopez, Nations, Honeycutt, and Robert Thomson moved up on the ridgeline along the trail, the NVA continued moving down the trail toward the team's location. As the enemy approached, they were only five meters away, when the recon marines opened fire.

Emrick and Doc Thompson were on the reverse side keeping watch, providing cover in the direction were they first heard voices coming from.

After the initial fire stopped the team looked to see if any of the enemy we're still moving, but saw and heard nothing. Then Danny Slocum stood up to get in a better position for cover fire into the ambush site and was hit twice with small arms fire, felling backwards. Returning fire from the team silenced the enemy. With one minor WIA in the team he was taken care of by the Doc Thompson. The lieutenant, with team mates, moved to the ambush site and find seven enemy in the killing zone are dead and the trail in a mass of blood.

Taking scattered enemy fire, the team returns fire moving back to the small hill from which they sprung the ambush as the Lieutenant calls a medivac for CPL Slocum.

Having problems with radio communications, indicating enemy jamming, the team is forced to change frequencies reestablishing radio contact with the support and the rear. As the team attempts to reassemble, they are taken under automatic rifle fire while moving out of the area. Slocum and Doc Thompson both opened-fire silencing the enemy making it possible for the team to continue up and out of the area to a more defendable position. Forming a 360 in a bomb crater, the area became fairly quiet.

With a medivac, and gunship support on the way the team had requested fixed-wing air support as well. Once air support was on station air strikes were in progress as the team made every attempt to hold the enemy at bay. Airstrikes somewhat hold the enemy back as they continue to advance on the team. With gunships attempting to suppress the enemy, a CH-46 lands to extract the team but is forced to pull out of the zone taking heavy enemy fire. With enemy fire intensifying around the team the Lieutenant was hit in the thigh. but Doc Thompson moves to the Lieutenants aid to care for his wound. While the Doc is dressing the Lieutenants wound, Robert Thomson is hit and the Doc moves to his aid letting Honeycutt finished dressing the Lieutenants wound. Doc is making every effort to take care of Thomson's wounds but he is hit bad and passes out on the battle field.

Then he hears Lopez yell, "Doc! Emrick's hit and I think he's dying. Doc yells to Nations to make every attempt to aid Steven Emrick until he can reach him. As team mates remove his radio, Doc continues to make every effort to take care of his wounds. As the enemy continued to probe the team, airstrikes were coming in bombing the general area.

The Lieutenant knew the team had to move to the south side of the knoll to a more defendable position and extraction zone to be taken out. And the team had to move now. As the team moved out, Doc Thompson and Honeycutt pulled R.B. Thomson and Nations and Lopez pulled Emrick to the top of the hill for extraction. Once in the extraction zone the team waits as gun runs are made around the team to attempt to suppress heavy enemy fire. After an hour of close air support bombing from a section of F-8's and six Huey gunships had prepped the zone an attempt of a Seaworthy CH-46 made an inbound to extract the team but was forced to pull out of the zone under heavy enemy fire.

As an CH-34 orbited at 1000 feet, the CH46 pilot asked if he could attempt the pickup. "High Boy 2-1" from HMM-163, flown by Captain David F. Underwood knew fully well what the situation was and knew he would take heavy enemy fire once in the landing zone. As the Captain forms a plan; a Huey gunship would lead him down the ridge line into the zone, and when the Huey broke hard left, it would indicate the location of the team.

Once Captain Underwood started his approach down the ridge he very quickly came under heavy fire on the inbound. There hidden in the grass under intense fire, he spotted the team. The zone, on a low grassy ridge was surrounded by creeks and heavy undergrowth on all sides and paralleled by higher ridges where the NVA were entrenched which was a perilous position in direct line of fire from the opposing ridge less than 100 meters away. Nevertheless "High Boy 2-1", Captain Underwood sets his 34 into the zone under heavy enemy fire to extract Box Score and wounded. Once in the zone the aircraft was under intense fire from all sides. Yet he keeps the aircraft on the ground for three long minutes; enemy fire was coming through the cockpit,

through the side windows, shattering the glass, impacting in and around the cockpit. With the door gunner Corporal Mortimer returning fire the Captain could see the team dragging their wounded to the bird, stopping periodically to return the fire which continued to bear down on them.

Ignoring normal procedure with H-34's to take only half a team as one aircraft load, Captain Underwood, now low on fuel, decided not to endanger two aircraft to possible disaster and instructed his crew to put all of the team aboard his aircraft.

Waiting for the team to load, the crew attempted to suppress enemy fire, the bird was taking fire through the side windows, sending shattered glass through the cockpit into the pilots' faces. Another round passed behind his head and hit the divider between him and his co-pilot. The fuselage continued to be hit repeatedly, and the fuel cells and engine took several hits as the fuel was streaming from the aircraft, endangering the bird to potential fire and possible explosion.

Once the team reaches the bird, Honeycutt and Lopez helped Nations get Emrick on the bird because he was very heavy and they were required to pull him maybe 25 feet from where he was hit. After Emrick, they pulled in Thomson followed by Nations and Lopez and the Doc. Once on board, Doc Thompson continued to work on Thomson.

With the CH34 still taking heavy enemy fire, five of the seven team members are on the bird. Two team members, Danny Slocum at the rear of the bird and Lieutenant Graves near the front of the bird remain on the ground giving cover fire against advancing enemy. Once Honeycutt boarded the aircraft, the Lieutenant realized the bird was

taking too much enemy fire, refused to board waving the bird out of the zone.

As the bird lifts to the sky under heavy enemy fire PFC James Honeycutt and PFC Lopez jump from the bird not wanting to leave their team mate alone. Honeycutt manages to make it off the bird but Lopez was grabbed from behind by the crew chief and was pulled back into the bird only to be hit with an enemy round entering his leg traveling up and ricocheting off his pelvic bone and puncturing his abdominal area.

It was only after the CH-34 had departed the hot LZ did Captain Underwood find out there were three members of the team still in the zone. Now out of the kill zone, Captain Underwood makes every attempt to keep his bird in the air and return to Delta Med with the wounded on board. The bird was hit bad, taking hundreds of enemy rounds, but the Captain miraculously makes it to Delta Med with the wounded. Even eye witnesses, after seeing the CH-34 once at the med station are overwhelm at the destruction the bird took as it set destroyed and covered in blood.

With Lieutenant Graves, Slocum, and Honeycutt still in the zone there would be another attempt to get them out of the hot LZ. Still in communications with the choppers the remaining team is told to move more to the south side of the hill out of the direct line of enemy fire. As the enemy close on the remaining team several gun runs are made to hold the enemy at bay.

There are three more attempts to get the remaining members of the team out resulting in each attempt the bird taking heavy enemy fire forcing them to pull out of the zone.

On the sixth attempt “High Boy 2-2” wingman of Captain Underwood flown by Captain Carl Bergman and his co-pilot Captain Egan were inbound to the zone led by a UH-1E that would give a “MARK MARK MARK” over the spot of the remaining team members. “High Boy 2-2” locates the team as he sets in the zone under intense enemy fire. The team is at the birds eleven o’clock, about ten to fifteen meters away. Although one team mate made a hand motion at the chopper, they made no effort to reach the bird. At that time “High Boy2-2” came under additional, intense automatic fire, so close and so loud that Captain Bergman assumed at first it was his own crew chief firing on the enemy. Unable to even hear his co-pilot due to the noise they remain in the zone under heavy enemy fire.

It was then the gunner shouted in the interior communications system that the Crew Chief had been hit with enemy fire and was bleeding badly. With the crew chief lying on the floor of the bird, blood covered the cabin deck. As enemy fire intensified on “High Boy 2-2” the bird was forced to lift out of the zone returning to Delta Med to drop off his wounded crew.

At the scene of the action the situation had not changed, except now, there is no more transport aircraft immediately available.

The brave aviators on the scene have no choice but to go inbound using a UH-1E Gunship from VMO-6 “Tomcats”, flown by: Captain Bobby F. “Pappy Galbreath, pilot and First Lieutenant Paul A. Jensen, Co-Pilot as they go inbound to the hot landing zone under fire. Once these brave aviators were in the zone the remaining team members started throwing their packs in the bird. When the Huey came into the zone it hovered about a foot off the ground and the three remaining

team members got on the bird. As the Huey managed to ascend it was barely five feet off the ground when it came under intense enemy ground fire. Rounds came through the rear section of the chopper where the three marines and crew were seated. The Lieutenant was hit again as well as the co-pilot Lieutenant Paul Jensen, as he slumped over. It was then the chopper went spastic rolling over and crashing on its side on the other side of the river about twenty meters from the river bank near a bomb crater.

Slocum found himself on top of a heap of bodies and immediately climbed out of the bird. He noticed one of the pilots on the ground, dazed, but still alive. Fifteen to twenty enemy were approaching the plane and Slocum asked the pilot if he had a pistol. He said no, but that he had a carbine inside the cabin. Slocum climbed back into the helicopter but was unable to locate the weapon. He then climbed out of the bird moving around on the side of the chopper where there was an M-60 machine gun. He had just got his hands on the weapon when the enemy opened fire about five or six meters from the bird. As Slocum leaped from the bird, he landed next to a rocket pod as the enemy threw two grenades, one hitting on one side the second on the other side of him, the detonation is overwhelming but miraculously he survives. Leaving him for dead he manages to escape making a break for the stream.

Once alone at the stream, he could hear the enemy as they started moving around the chopper firing one or two rounds at a time. Slocum knew they were taking out any remaining survivors as he continued evading the enemy down the stream about fifty to seventy-five meters crawling up on the bank. Finding a location of cover and concealment

from the enemy he is somewhat able to regain his senses as he evades the large number of enemy forces in and around the area.

Now away from the enemy, Danny locates a secure location and settles in.

As the night passes, missing in action Danny Slocum moves at first light attempting to move out of the area but finds the area to be covered with enemy forcing him to stay hidden in the early morning hours.

Once the chopper was shot down a reaction force from Bravo one/four, "Company B, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment" was launched consisting of a platoon to attempt a rescue of any survivors. While moving toward the downed helicopter, the platoon encountered enemy fire from three sides and sustained four casualties and one KIA Cpl. William A. Lee. They were forced to withdraw and spent the remainder of the night away from the helicopter.

Early the following morning the remainder of Bravo one/four was helo-lifted in and managed to reach the helicopter, confirming that Lieutenant Graves and PFC Honeycutt as well as pilots and crew were all killed in action leaving Danny Slocum MIA.

Meanwhile, Slocum evading the enemy had made his way to a hill in the immediate area in hopes of linking with the infantry that were in the process of searching for him. Unfortunately, the infantry did spot Slocum but thought he was part of the NVA force and called in a fire mission of five to six rounds on his position. Luckily, he was able to get into one of the fighting holes on the hill and was not hurt.

It was later in that second day during the afternoon an air observer came over and spotted Slocum. He waved his wings circling for about

an hour until the infantry, Bravo 1-4, moved to his location and made the linkup. A medivac came in and picked Slocum up.

Danny Slocum was medevac'd to Cam Ranh Bay Naval Hospital, them back to another hospital within Vietnam.

Of the three wounded Recon Marines brought out of the zone on the first chopper under enemy fire all died. One died on arrival, one died February 17, and Adrian S. Lopez died 18 February.

As a result of the battle against an estimated two companies of NVA there were many awards for gallantry for these brave men and the difficult job of this mission.

Killed in the Force Recon team were: L/CPL Steven E. Emrick, CPL. Robert B. Thomson, PFC. James E. Honeycutt, PFC. Adrian S. Lopez and 2ndLT. Terrence (Terry) C. Graves.





2nd Lt. Terrence (Terry) Graves



***GRAVES, TERRENCE COLLINSON**

Second Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps
3d Force Reconnaissance Company, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, 3d Marine Division (Rein.) FMF
Date of Action: February 16, 1968

Citation:

The Medal of Honor is presented to Terrence Collinson Graves, Second Lieutenant, U.S. Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 16 February 1968, while serving as a platoon commander with the Third Force Reconnaissance Company, Third Reconnaissance Battalion, Third Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in action against enemy forces in Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam. While on a long-range reconnaissance mission, Second Lieutenant Graves' eight-man patrol observed seven enemy soldiers approaching their position. Reacting instantly, he deployed his men and directed their fire on the approaching enemy. After the fire had ceased, he and two patrol members commenced a search of the area, and suddenly came under a heavy volume of hostile small arms and automatic weapons fire from a numerically superior enemy force. When one of his men was hit by the enemy fire, Second Lieutenant Graves moved through the fire-swept area to his radio and, while directing suppressive fire from his men, requested air support and adjusted a heavy volume of artillery and helicopter gunship fire upon the enemy. After attending the wounded, Second Lieutenant Graves, accompanied by another Marine, moved from his relatively safe position to confirm the results of the earlier engagement. Observing that several of the enemy were still alive, he launched a determined assault, eliminating the remaining enemy troops. He then began moving the patrol to a landing zone for extraction, when the unit again came under intense fire which wounded two more Marines and Second Lieutenant Graves. Refusing medical attention, he once more adjusted air strikes and artillery fire upon the enemy while directing the fire of his men. He led his men to a new landing site into which he skillfully guided the incoming aircraft and boarded his men while remaining exposed to the hostile fire. Realizing that one of the wounded had not embarked, he directed the aircraft to depart and, along with another Marine, moved to the side of the casualty. Confronted with a shortage of ammunition, Second Lieutenant Graves utilized supporting arms and directed fire until a second helicopter arrived. At this point, the volume of enemy fire intensified, hitting the helicopter and causing it to crash shortly after liftoff. All aboard were killed. Second Lieutenant Graves' outstanding courage, superb leadership and indomitable fighting spirit throughout the day were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country .

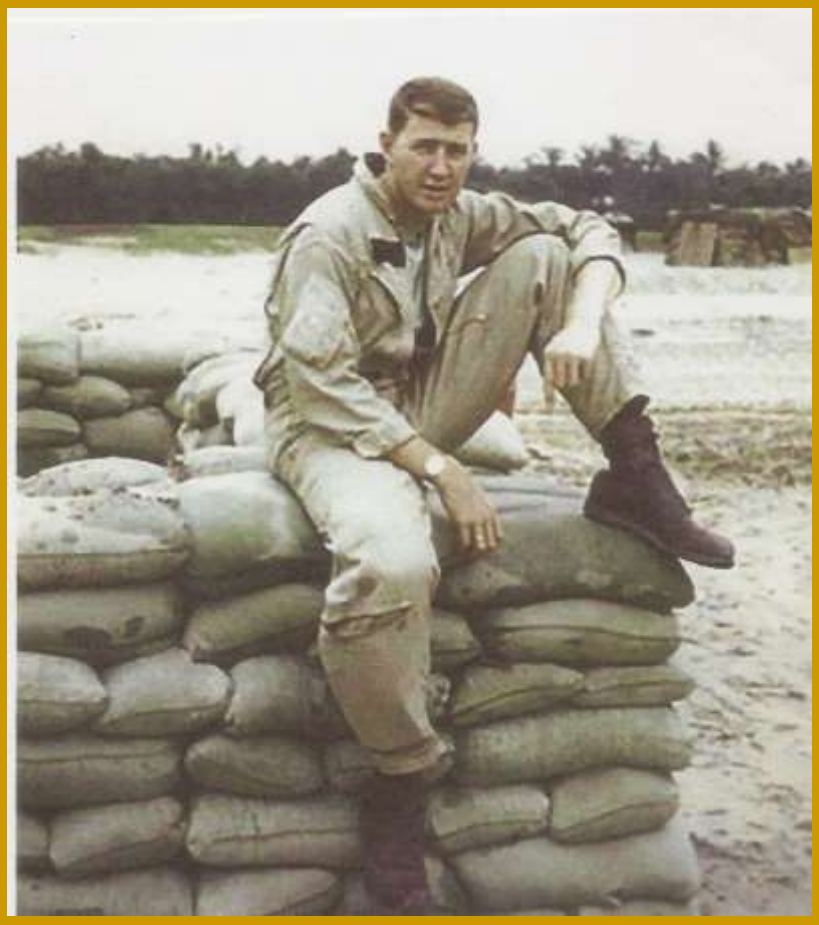
Born: 7/6/1945 at Corpus Christi, Texas
Home Town: New York, New York

Second Lieutenant Terrence C. Graves Medal of Honor Posthumously

PFC James E. Honeycutt received the: Navy Cross Posthumously
Cpl Robert B. Thomson received the: Sliver Star Posthumously
HM3 Stephen R. Thompson received the: Sliver Star
PFC Adrian S. Lopez received the: Sliver Star Posthumously
CPL Danny M. Slocum received the: Sliver Star
PFC Michael Nations received the: Bronze Star
L/Cpl Steven F. Emrick received the : Bronze Star Posthumously

Captain David Franklin Underwood, “High Boy 2-1”

received the Navy Cross for his gallant rescue.



Captain David Underwood



Captain Carl Bergman

Pilot of “High Boy, 2-2” received the Silver Star

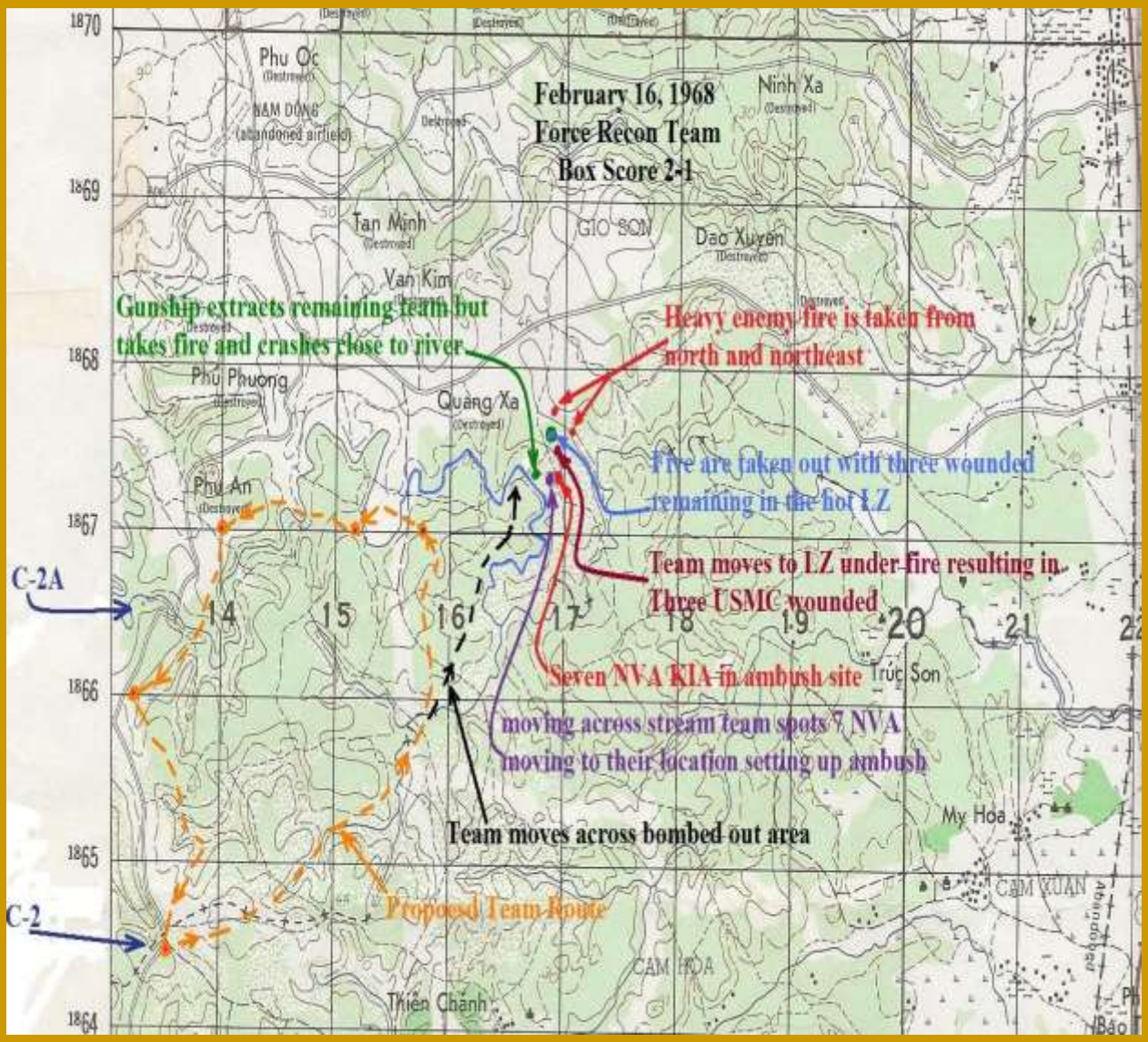
Cpl. William A. Lee, 1st Bn/4th Marines, Killed-in-Action



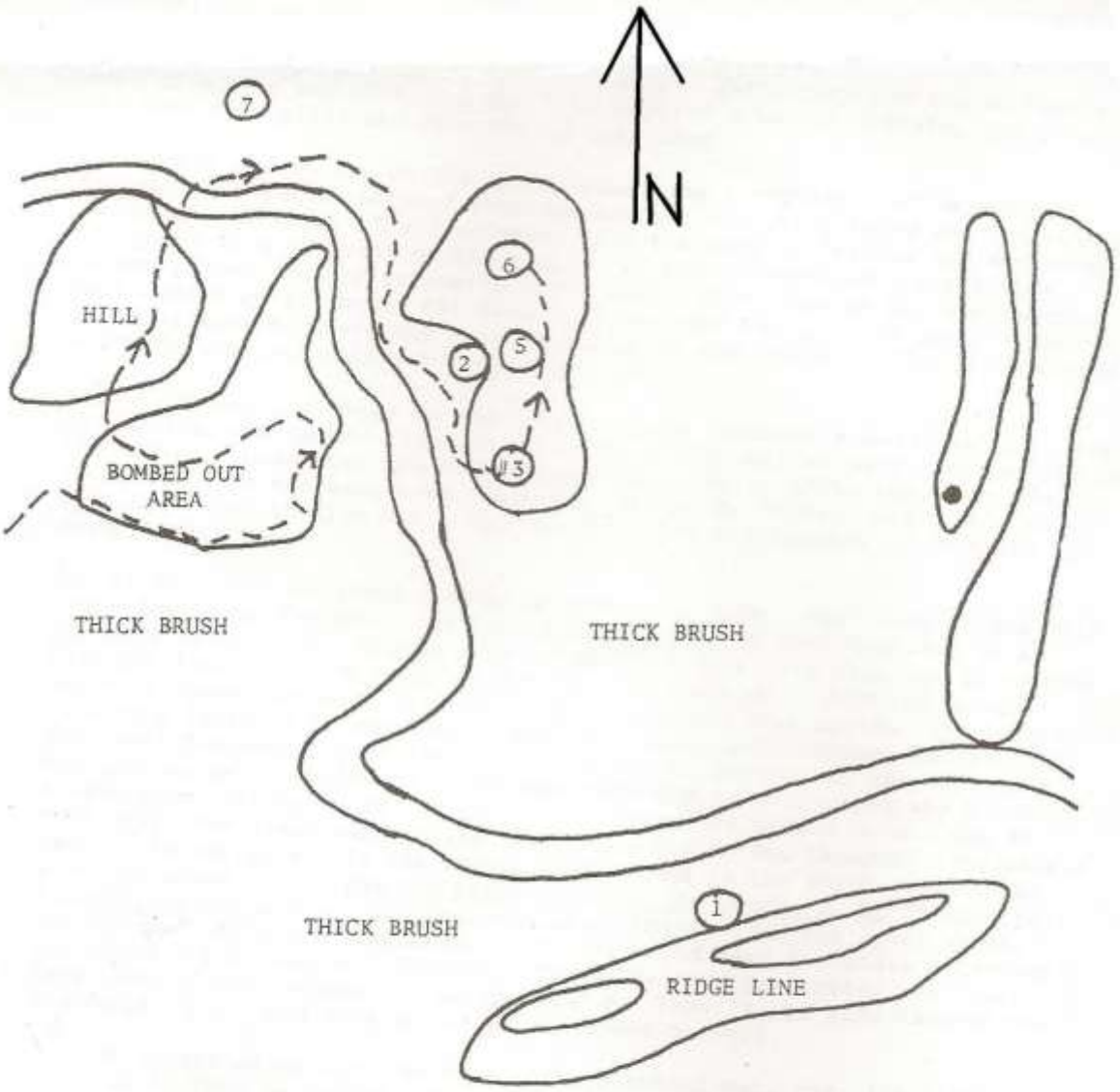
Team Box Score

Of the brave pilots & crew of the UH-1E Gunship from VMO-6 "Tomcats" who made the supreme sacrifice on that last daring attempt to save the remaining team members of "Box Score", all were killed:

Bobby Frank "Pappy" Galbreath, Capt. Pilot, Navy Cross Posthumously
Paul Andrew Jensen, 1st Lt. Co-Pilot Silver Star Posthumously
Harry Warren Schneider, Cpl. Crew Chief Silver Star Posthumously
Jimmy Ellison Tolliver, SSgt. Gunner Silver Star Posthumously



Map of Box Score mission



GRAVES PATROL

1. Patrol spotted movement of seven VC/NVA moving toward their position.
2. Patrol set up ambush resulting in seven NVA KIA and one USMC WIA.
3. Patrol checked out bodies and started to receive intensive SA/AW fire.
4. Patrol received two rounds of mortar from this site. Patrol in bomb crater returned fire with M-79 and silenced mortar.
5. Patrol attempted to move to a suitable LZ but was hit by intensive SA/AW fire resulting in three USMC WIA.
6. Wounded were being loaded aboard helo when enemy opened fire with SA/AW hitting the helo several times wounding one USMC. LT GRAVES waved off the danger and remained one ground with two men of his patrol.
7. Gunship picked up rest of patrol but received intensive SA/AW fire forcing it to crash at this location.

It is now February 27, 1968, and it is great to see another month come to an end. Marble Champ has been in the rear for nine days due to bad weather and the inability of aircraft to insert and give adequate support to the teams if needed.

On February 28, Marble Champ receives a warning order. The patrol will be in the area southeast of the Rock Pile. This area takes our minds back to the mission of team Little Gull who was ambushed back in January to the northwest on Mutters Ridge (Hill 484). Most of the area surrounding the Rock Pile is infested with battalion size elements of the North Vietnamese army. I know this will be a tough area.

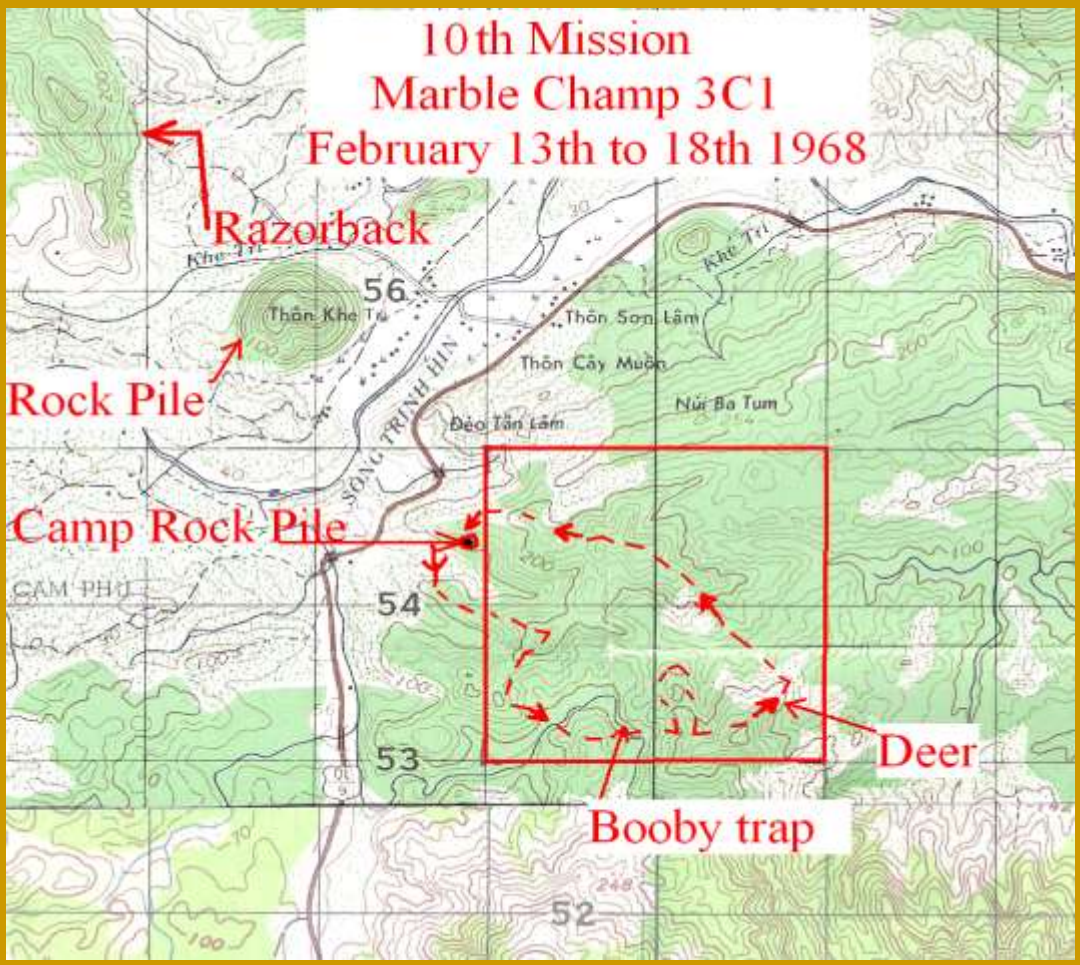
Dick Vance and Darrell Schokman are close to ending their tours, I wish they did not have to go out on this patrol. It will be their last patrol before they get out of here and go back home. They have done their time in the Nam and will be missed by all of us.

Once we return from this mission Steve Laktash and Mike Green will carry on leading team 3Charlie1, Marble Champ. I have watched Steve and know he is a true professional. While in the team Steve has run most positions, from primary radio man to patrol leader, assistant patrol, to M-79 man and tail-end Charlie. I have seen him under enemy fire and can tell you he is the man for the job. I have the same confidence in him as I had in Dick Vance. Mike will make a good assistant patrol leader for he has bush time and understands the operation of our missions. Steve and Mike take nothing for granted and carry out their duties in a professional manner.

The area in which Marble Champ's mission is to take place has thick jungle with very few landing zones. OP sites are somewhat plentiful and will be used by the team in observing the assigned recon zone. A

intelligence briefing of the area informs the team that this area has heavy enemy activity with numerous booby traps. As on all patrols, Dick has made a point to inform each team member of the type of terrain and various escape routes (Azimuths-degree heading) should we get hit and/or separated.

Marble Champ's mission will be to cover the assigned area, plotting all trails and relaying all information of any enemy sighting and activity to the rear. We are also told to take a prisoner, if possible. The mission will be from March 1st to March 5th, 1968. The team will be inserted by CH-46 into the recon zone.





Marble Champ 3 Charlie 1

Rear: L to R) Dale “Doc” Watchorn, Wayne Thompson, Dick Vance
Mike Green, James Smith, Steve Laktash
Kneeling: George Boks, Dennis Boswell, Darrell Schokman

TENTH PATROL: MARCH 1ST TO 5TH 1968

The various team inserts scheduled for today are running smoothly. Marble Champ has boarded the chopper and is airborne. After a brief stop at the Rock Pile, the chopper lifts off and proceeds to take us to our recon zone. As I sit at the rear of the chopper, I have a good view of the terrain below. As the chopper moves along a valley, I can see the Rock Pile disappearing from sight. All of a sudden, the chopper appears to be having mechanical failure and is plummeting towards the jungle floor. I don’t know if we got hit by enemy fire, all I know is that we are dropping out of the sky and bracing ourselves for a crash into the jungle

canopy. As we hold on tight, I start seeing the finer details of the ground below. The chopper has just taken a rapid plunge of a thousand feet, thankfully the pilot was finally able to regain control only seconds before we would crash, escaping death for the team and crew. I guess we were lucky that we had a very experienced pilot or else we would all be dead. We would later find out, after returning to the Rock Pile that the cause of the chopper malfunction had been the result of the chopper taking some enemy hits. Once at the Rock Pile, we are informed that there will be a change of plans and that instead of a helicopter insertion we will instead walk out to our assigned recon zone.

Once outside the base perimeter, we meet a squad of Marine grunts returning from a patrol. I notice one man who has a battle dressing on his head and I stop to ask him if they had gotten into a contact with the enemy. He told me no and said that a rock ape attacked him and caused his injury. I could not help from laughing as we continued to move toward the recon zone. This area, around the Rock Pile has many apes that travel in groups and at times scare the hell out of us as they move through the tree canopy making a racket that sounds as if there is a company of NVA moving in to attack us.

With the Rock Pile fire base now out of sight, we enter the edge of our assigned recon zone. Once in the zone, we stop, listen and observe the area to make sure we have not been followed by the enemy. Feeling confident of not having been followed, Marble Champ moves out and proceeds to move cautiously through the recon zone. Later in the day, we stop again at a good defendable position to rest and eat chow. After filling our bellies and replenishing some energy we wait until dusk and move into a night's harbor site.

The first night within our recon zone passes without incident. At early dawn Marble Champ moves out of the site under the cover of darkness a short distance and finds a secure area. We set up a defensive perimeter and team members take turns having morning chow. There will be no food heated because this area has a high concentration of enemy and the heated food can be smelled by them at quite a distance. Even smoking cigarettes is limited on certain missions due to their smell. One mistake on our part could get the team killed,

After all team members have finished with chow, the team again moves out and proceeds with its recon mission.

While moving down a hill I look back to see Dick with a clenched fist, I freeze as he points to his eye then points to a tree just above me. As I look up, I see a huge old hollow tree with a 155MM artillery shell rigged with grenades to blow if tripped. Again, I have missed a booby trap along with the second point only to be found by Dick. If tripped, this booby trap would probably have taken out the entire team. I am telling myself that if I don't get my shit together, I'll get everyone killed. With all team members informed of the booby trap, it is plotted and noted on the map and we then continue the mission. I now intensify my search, scanning the area leaving nothing overlooked.

Team Marble Champ has continued reconning the zone and found well-used trails but no direct signs of the enemy. With two days left to patrol, I can do without any more booby traps. I feel if I could just get Dick Vance and Darrell Schokman along with the rest of the team home alive, I will be happy.

On the team's fourth day in the area, we move to an OP site to observe a section of our zone. In the OP, all team members scan the

area in hopes of an enemy sighting. It is quiet as a light breeze blows up from the valley below. My area to observe looks across a section of elephant grass to a tree line about 50 yards away. As the light breeze makes the elephant grass sway back and forth, it creates a very relaxing feeling.

In a flash, I am jolted out of my somewhat relaxed state of mind into terror as I spot movement in the tree line. I instinctively point my rifle at the target but cannot make out who it is. Still just within the tree line I follow the movement through the bush as the target finally steps out into the open where I notice it is only a deer grazing peacefully. It is good to see something in this country that doesn't want to kill me. I point it out to the other team members and we watch the animal as it slowly moves out of sight while the team continues their observation of the area.

Tomorrow is the last day in the zone for Marble Champ and the team will finish checking out the area as we move toward the Rock Pile. With the day coming to a close, soon the team will move into the last night's harbor site.

The night is uneventful and at early dawn the team prepares to move out. After a quick stop for some early-morning chow, the team starts moving back to the Rock Pile, checking the area as we cautiously move through it. Many well used trails and other signs of the enemy are located and plotted on this patrol but no direct sightings are made. We return to the Rock Pile without incident. Once back at Dong Ha, we go through our usual debriefing.

Dick Vance and Darrell Schokman have finished their tour in Vietnam. I will miss those guys but they have done their time and soon

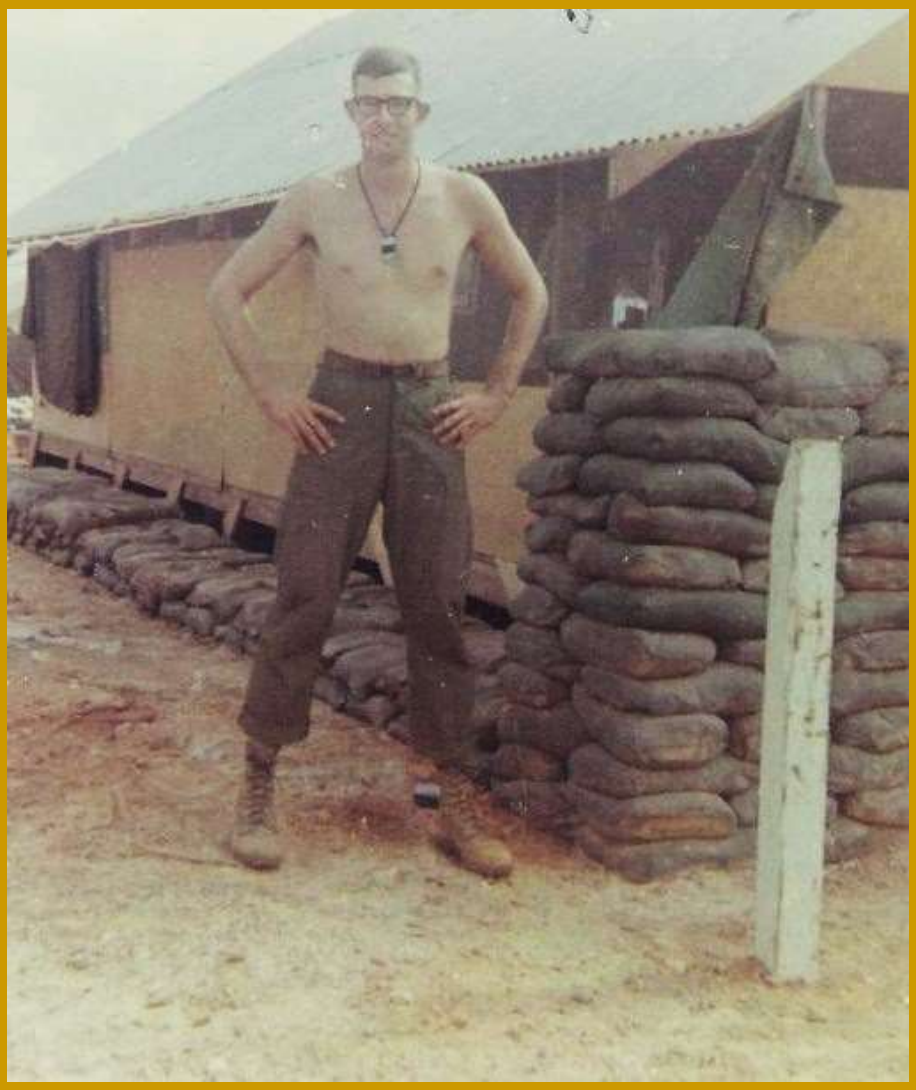
they will be back in the world. I owe my life to Dick Vance more than once and the team will be at a great loss without these two experienced Recon Marines.



Rear: Darrell Schokman, Bennie Manzararares

Front: Dick Vance, Unknown. Smiles mean the tour is over.

The time off in the rear was much needed and we've regained our strength. With the departure of Dick and Darrell, Marble Champ 3Charlie1 receives a new team member. His name is (Randy) Randall Rhoads from Grundy Center, Iowa. Randy will take the secondary radio position on the team's next mission. He is welcomed to the team.



Randy Rhoads



PART TWO

The time in the rear is at a close and as the day unfolds so does a warning order. The mission will be in the Ca Lu area which is fairly close to LZ Stud Vandergrift combat base just off highway #9 and the Song Quang Tri River.

As the team is briefed by Steve Laktash and Mike Green, we are informed of all past enemy sightings and contacts occurring within the area. It appears enemy activity is heavy within this area and we are told there may even be a major enemy weapons depot within the zone.

Ca Lu's terrain is a mountainous region with thick jungle and forests of bamboo. Marble Champ's mission will be to determine the use of the area, setting up observation posts and plotting all trails within the assigned area. If enemy forces are sighted, call in supporting arms. If possible, take a prisoner. The team has worked out escape routes of this area in case of heavy enemy contact, resulting in the team being separated. On this mission Marble Champ will have a guest. Sergeant Richard May, third platoon Sergeant. Sergeant Richard May is not a newcomer to the bush and has made many long-range reconnaissance

patrols with Charlie Company as well as with other units. He knows his job and will be an asset on a mission of this type.



Sgt. Richard May

Marble Champ will be inserted by CH-46 on March 14, 1968. The mission will end on March 18, 1968.

Eleventh Patrol: March 14th to 18th

It is the morning of the 14th, as Marble Champ boards the choppers which will take us to our assigned recon zone. While en-route to the LZ the team sits in silence as the roar of the chopper engines consumes the interior of the craft. In a short time, we will be over the assigned area as we await the thumbs up from the chopper crew chief.



CH-46- We have the utmost confidence in the crews of these helicopters. Without them casualties would have been much worse. 1968

Thumbs up is the sign that we are about to land in the zone and to be on the ready. Insert by chopper usually gives the team a birds-eye view of the terrain below but this often does not have much benefit due to the fact that the jungle is so thick and the enemy can easily hide without being spotted. In many cases, fixed-wing prep the zone with 500-pound bombs and gunships then move in to work the area over with 2.75 MM rockets along with 7.62MM gun fire. On this insert there will be no jets or gunship fire. The bird will attempt an undetected entry of the team. As the crew chief gives the thumbs up, the pilot drops the craft out of the sky to tree-top level as we move down the valley to the insert point. Once at the location, the pilot swings the craft

around and sets down into a small LZ. The team members then quickly disembark and form a defensive 360 perimeter. After a few seconds, Steve gives the thumbs up and we melt into the jungle.

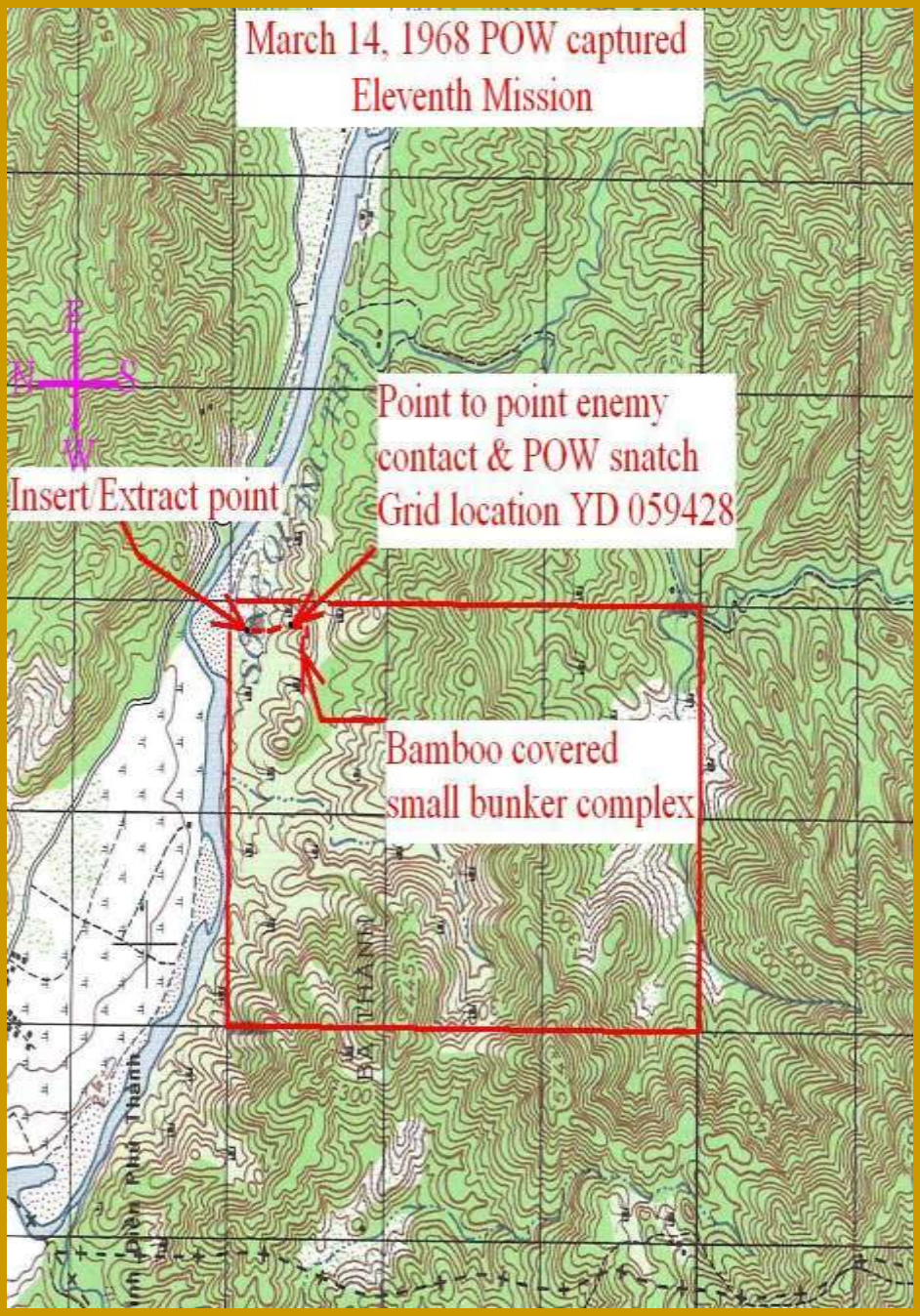
Once inside I move only a few meters and find myself standing in front of a large stream bed about 20 feet wide. I scan the area and signal Sgt May who is running second point and John Romero, the team's M-79 man to cover my crossing. Once on the other side I stop and listen for any signs of the enemy. All appears quiet and I signal to the rest of the team to start crossing over the stream. The jungle now progressively thickens as the triple canopy turns a sunny day into practically dusk. As the team proceeds to cross, I hear a stick crack. I quickly turn to look in that direction and I spot two enemy coming directly at me, the first with a large machete and the second with a rifle. Within a second, they are less than 10 feet from me. With my rifle on full-automatic, I raise my weapon and fire on the second man, possibly making a hit as the blast drops him to the jungle floor. The first man, now at point-blank range, drops to his knees still holding the large machete. I point the muzzle of my rifle at his head, as the knife slides from his hand to the jungle floor. As I turn my head to tell Sgt. May that there could be more enemy, the man moves his hand as if attempting to go for the knife. I look directly at him and without a word being spoken he gets the message that if he goes for that knife, he is history. I kick the knife to the side, grab him and quickly take him back across to the other side of the stream bed where he is bound. I then move back across the stream but am unable to locate the man that I first shot at, only finding signs of blood.

Now returning to the stream, Sgt. Richard May, John Romero and I move a short distance down the stream to check out the area. We find

what appears to be a small enemy camp within a forest of bamboo. Two or three bunkers are found along with a small quantity of rice. The area has been well-used recently from the indication of many foot prints in and around the site.

Once the search is finished, we regroup with the team. While calling for the chopper that dropped us off to return, we inform the chopper and rear that we have one POW (Coded-Draftee) and request an extraction (Coded-Home Run). In minutes the chopper with helicopter supporting gunships, are overhead. The CH-46 makes his approach to pick up the team while the gunships stay low giving suppressing fire around the landing zone. Once the team is taken out with the POW, we return to Dong Ha where we drop of the POW off for interrogation and report for our debriefing session.

Eleventh Mission Map March 14, 1968





Eleventh Mission March 14, 1968

POW

Point to point contact and prisoner captured four klicks southeast of Camp Ca Lu at YD 059428. (One klick= one thousand meters in length)



POW captured four klicks Southeast of Ca Lu, on the Song Quang Tri River. (Grid box YD0542)



Now back in the area it's a day off then on to working parties within the company area. One thing for sure, in the rear there never seems to be any shortage of chores.

With the enemy artillery spotters getting more brazen by moving closer to our base, they increase their chances of being more accurate with their artillery and rockets therefore constant sandbag reinforcement around hooches and bunkers is essential.

MARCH 1968

After eight days in the rear, Marble Champ receives a warning order. The mission will be in an area called the Back Yard, which is an area between Dong Ha, and Quang Tri and the mountains to the west. It is most always referred to as an easy patrol, a skate. Marble Champ knows better. We take nothing for granted when it comes to the bush, including the Back Yard. With Steve Laktash on R&R, Mike Green will lead the team and Wayne Thompson will run assistant patrol leader. The team will also consist of George Boks, primary radio, Jerry Beasley, Al Moore, Dale Watchorn (Corpsman), and John Romero M-79 man. I will take the point position.

As on our last mission, Marble Champ 3Charlie1 will be taking a guest from another team (Team Ringlet 3C2). His name is Jim Young, and he's very experienced in the art of patrolling. Jim will run second point behind me and carry the M-14.

At the team's briefing we are informed there has been a considerable amount of enemy activity in this area and the enemy moves mostly at night. It is thought that the enemy's 27th Independent Battalion has been working in the area.

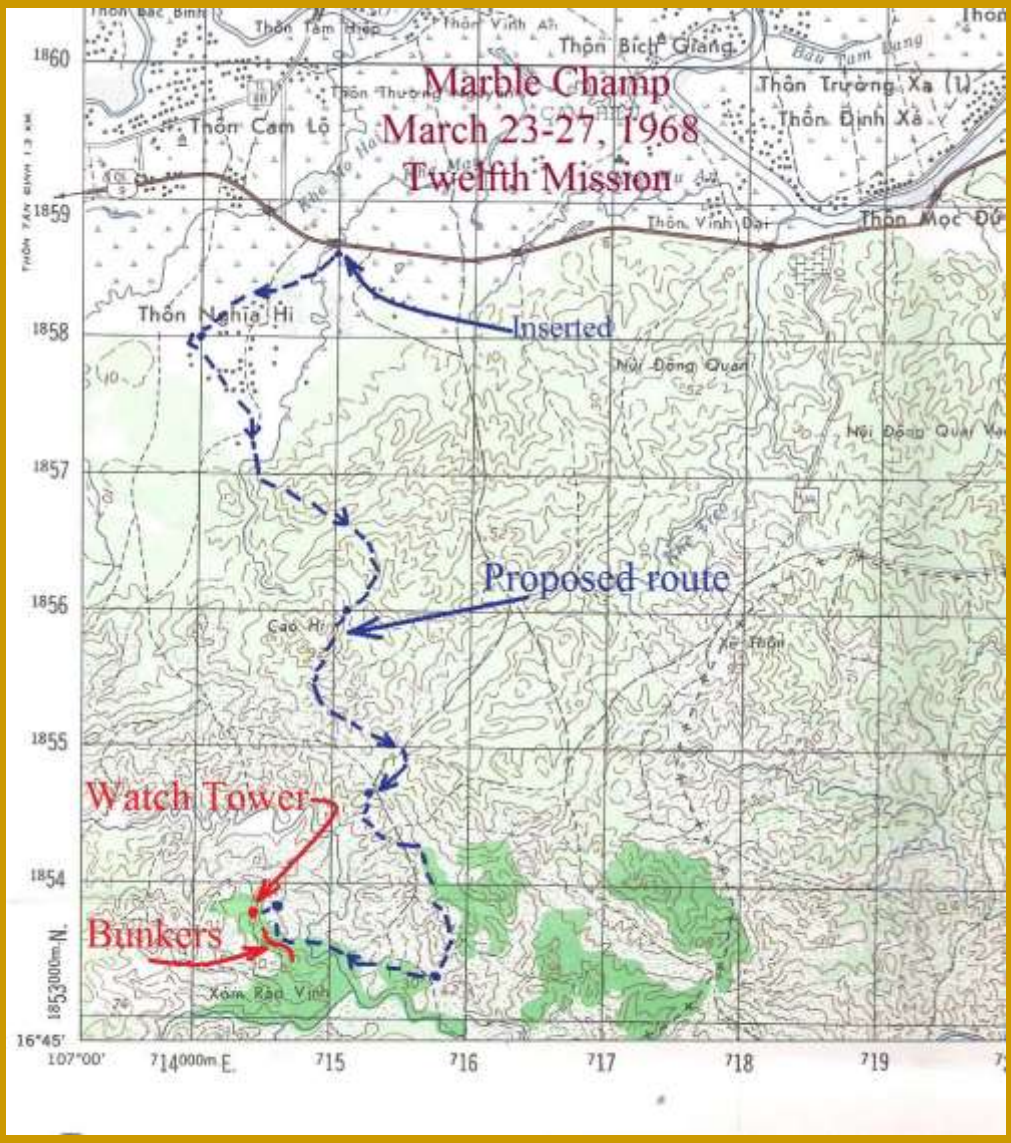
The terrain is low rolling hills and low foliage with sparse areas of thick jungle vegetation. Due to these circumstances, it is highly likely that these areas of thick jungle vegetation are where the enemy has their camps. We are to specifically investigate these areas.

In this type of open area, the team will be forced while walking in single file to stay spread out. This way it makes it more difficult for the enemy to concentrate their fire on the team as a whole. Marble Champ will be taken by rough-rider to a Check Point just off Hwy. #9 where our team will be dropped off and then will proceed to our assigned recon zone. The mission will run from March 23rd to March 27, 1968.

TWELFTH PATROL: MARCH 23 - 27

It is March 23rd as the team boards the rough-rider to our Check Point located at YD150587. On the way I am thinking to myself how much I don't like these Back Yard patrols. The concealment in some parts of this area that we will have to cross is like that of a big empty parking lot. Considering the team has been in this area before, ambushed at a river crossing, we are well aware of the enemy in the area and they're capabilities.

As the truck convoy rolls through our insertion point, we quickly disembark and Mike Green points in the direction we have to travel.



As Marble Champ moves through waist high grass, sometimes taller, we occasionally stop and find an area of vegetation for cover and observe the thick patches of jungle vegetation for any enemy activity. With several areas within the zone now investigated, the day is closing and soon the team will enter the first night's harbor site.

Mike has called a break for evening chow. The team finds a secure concealed area and members take turns eating while others stand guard. From this location Mike and Wayne have spotted an area that looks like it will be the most defendable for the night's site. With on-

calls worked up by George before our entry to the site, at dusk we moved into the harbor site.

The night transpires without incident and Marble Champ prepares to move from the harbor site just before light. With Claymores retrieved, the team moves out under the cover of darkness. After moving some distance, we find a secure area and have our morning chow while still under our last nights on call range which are artillery fire missions set up to protect the team at night. There is absolutely no cooking of our food in this area. Enemy activity is high in this area and the smell of heated food most likely would get the team killed.

After finishing chow, the team prepares to move out as Mike gives me a signal to what direction we should proceed in. There are times, looking back at the team, that I feel somewhat alone. Thirty feet apart is a long way when you look back and see your teammates stretched out over 200 feet to your rear. It almost makes you feel as if you're by yourself even though the team is somewhat close by.

As we approach a rather large area of thick jungle vegetation, I get an uneasy feeling but continue to move on. As I move toward a section of trees I stop, finding a well-used trail leading into the tree line. I have informed all team members they're to stay off the trail since it may be booby trapped as an early-warning device. Now scanning the edge of the tree line with my 7X50 binoculars, I see in front of me, about 20 meters away what appears to look like a watch tower of some sort just inside the trees where the trail enters. I signal for the team to stop and proceed back to confer with the team members as to what course of action we should take. Mike Green and George Boks plot artillery on

calls so that if a fire mission is needed there will be no precious time wasted.

Using the tree line to camouflage my movement, I move closer to the location. Now within feet, I scan the tree line again for any enemy movement, checking out the apparent observation tower. I am thinking maybe I'll make some moves once closer to see if I draw fire like raising my rifle as if someone is there. I figure "what the hell." Now at 30 feet, I come to the ready with my rifle raised scanning the tree line. There is no fire, nothing. I move to the edge of the tree line and step inside. Once inside I have only taken a few steps and see fresh fighting holes in front of me. As I scan the area in search of the enemy, I feel that at any second I will be taken under enemy fire. With team members now entering the tree line, I point out the fresh fighting holes to Mike. With further inspection of the entry point, Jim Young, George and Al Moore find that what I thought to be an observation tower was in fact just that.



Tower located just inside the perimeter of the bunker complex. Rungs (round crosspieces of timbers) are put in place using vines from the area.

As Doc, Dale Watchorn, Jerry Beasley and John Romero check the area they find more signs of enemy use. Mike Green checks the fighting holes. The first hole is booby trapped with an American M-26 grenade.



Fighting holes like this one were placed around the perimeter.

The team is now informed to watch their steps as there may be more booby traps. George Boks and Al Moore have located a tree with a massive number of carvings on it which tells the team someone has spent a considerable amount of time in this area.



Very close to the watch tower are carvings in the trees. The team must inspect the area further.

Wayne Thompson and I continue checking out the area while moving deeper into the jungle. As we proceed, we keep finding more fighting holes and then large bunkers. Returning to the team we tell Mike of the bunkers and George informs the rear of our find. A moment or two later George gets the word from the rear echelon to continue checking this area. As the team prepares to move deeper into the jungle, we begin to move through what appears to be a massive base camp. Our rifles are set on fully automatic and our senses are at full alert. I take off my first two grenades and slide them in my shirt for easy access. I am at the ready and feel that at any second I, along with my teammates will be taken under enemy fire. Moving deeper into the base camp, the

path becomes like a winding road twisting and turning down into the gully. The trail is as hard as a highway and appears to have been traveled by many enemy troops. The odor of smoked clothes and the night camp fire hangs in the air.

As I get to a sharp curve that takes me back to the right, I move only a few meters and catch a glimpse of a man. In a second I lock on to fire. The trail is winding and the team is moving parallel to itself. Instantly I recognize it is Wayne Thompson. I was so wired up I thought, "God I could have killed him." Moving on, I feel as if I am walking on air, trying to be as quiet as possible and stopping every few meters to look, smell and listen. I'm listening for a twig to snap, a safety to go off or a heart to beat louder than my own. At this point the entire team has been engulfed by a maze of well-used trails and what seems to be dozens of various sized bunkers, fighting holes and various other man-made fortified positions.



The roof of this bunker is three to four feet thick and very well supported internally. The interior will accommodate several troops.



Notice the large vines used in the construction. There are also medium size sticks used to stop erosion from the monsoon (rainy season). The interior has a well-made floor in case water should get inside.

Some of the bunkers lead deep inside and appear to be massive underground complexes capable of surviving heavy bombardment. I can detect the still present smell of earlier cooked food and the lingering odor of the last night's campfire. We have obviously located a massive enemy camp. From its size, it appears it could easily house a battalion of enemy yet this massive complex appears to be deserted. Now deep within the complex, we are all frightfully aware that if we were hit now, we would be forced to fight are way out or to the death. There could be no chance of survival with a possibility of our team being massacred.

As Marble Champ continues to inspect the area proceeding deeper and deeper into the complex, we find large supply storage areas, pens for animals, a command post and emergency medical area for the wounded. Tables were plentiful for eating and briefings along with toilets throughout the area that were very well made.



Another very well-made bunker, capable of housing half a dozen is one of many in the complex. Once deep into the interior, the enormity of the complex becomes overwhelming to the team. George Boks has taken his 8MM movie camera along on the mission and is fortunately able to document the massive enemy complex.



Knowing a large force is still in this area, we move deeper into the complex. We are now finding tables and chairs as if the enemy just got up and walked off.



This grass hooch was a work of art. It is impossible to see from above and is large enough to be used as a briefing room or hospital. It was waterproofed and may have housed enemy hours before our arrival.



Throughout the complex are several toilets, such as this one. Even the area around the toilet tells the team it has been used recently due to the moistened area around the edge.



As the team enters the complex mess hall, tables with benches are found throughout this area. Approaching this location, I notice no leaf build up on the tables. The leaves that are on this table have fallen only during the time of area inspection and they are very few.

While checking a grass house we come across a metal box which we carefully inspect before moving. Once clear of a threat to the team it is inspected. Inside documents and maps are found carelessly left behind. Later after the mission, we found out that these documents had contained plans and maps for a future attack on Quang Tri Combat Base. Also, inside were contacts for local Viet Cong in the area.

As I look the area over, I am in utter amazement. The actual interior of the complex wasn't disturbed. All materials used for making the bunkers were obtained from another location. The camp was well concealed in a low-lying area and the jungle canopy afforded the enemy excellent aerial camouflage.

Marble Champ has been ordered by superiors to move out of the complex and set up an observation post (coded Eye Ball) to observe the enemy location in case they return. We are told that once in position, Harbor Queen 1Echo2, a Recon team from Echo Company which was operating nearby, will link up with us and once again we are to enter the complex together to check it out further. As Marble Champ prepares to move out of the complex, I take the point, still in constant search of the enemy in the case they have entered behind us. Once at the entry point, Marble Champ will move 200 meters to a position that offers good concealment and will be defendable for the team if spotted by the enemy force.



Staying low in OP site

On our arrival to the OP location, Mike and Wayne set up artillery on-call fire missions around our position and on the bunker complex. As

we set in our defensive perimeter, we are able to observe the area and await the arrival of Echo Company's, Harbor Queen Recon team. As team members of Harbor Queen, John Ebner, Eugene Robinson (Point man), Doc William Loew (Corpsman), Rick Imperiale, Michael Castle Franco, John Bolling, Inge, Larry McKinney, and Sergeant Wil Tootsie (PL) move in our direction Marble Champ watches for any enemy activity between the two teams.



George Boks plots OP and sets up fire missions around our position.



Wayne and Mike plot fire missions on enemy bunker complex.

Team Harbor Queen is on the other side of the bunker complex and have to skirt around it somewhat to meet up with us. In this type of terrain, it shouldn't take long before the link up is made. George has now made communications with the team and they are moving unimpeded towards our location. Marble Champ team members scan the area in their direction, waiting for the first signs of the team. At this time Harbor Queen is not in sight, (coded-No joy with you) but are moving (booting) to our location.



James Smith observes enemy bunker site.

With team Harbor Queen still a few hundred meters distance from our position it happens, “CONTACT, CONTACT, CONTACT.” Team Harbor Queen 1E2 is advising the rear they have made contact with a large enemy force and are taking heavy automatic fire. There’s a break, then there’s another transmission stating “We have made two enemy kills and are still taking fire”. “Be advised we have one WIA at this time with the enemy surrounding our position. We request AO (air observer), fixed-wing and an emergency extract. Enemy is at 20 meters, closing and well equipped.” As the contact intensifies, the AO and F-8’s Crusaders are on station overhead within minutes. As the AO makes a low pass over Harbor Queen, he takes heavy automatic fire. The team is less than 1,000 meters from Marble Champ so we are able to hear

somewhat the heavy automatic fire. With the team now located the AO moves in low to mark the enemy target. As he makes his inbound pass, he fires a White Phosphorous rocket to mark the enemy's position. It is danger close to the team as the Crusaders drop out of the sky starting their bombing runs dropping Mark-82 high explosives bombs and Blu-27 napalm around the team's position. Our team is close to the action as George records the aerial support for team Harbor Queen on his 8mm movie camera.



While attempting to link with 3Charlie1 team Harbor Queen utilizes fixed-wing aircraft to repel attacking enemy forces.



Again, and again the jets make their bombing runs. As we watch, the planes are taking AK machine gun fire on every run. As they swing wide making a low approach from south to north, they punch off two canisters of napalm, one behind the other with devastating accuracy engulfing the enemy force.



One of two F-8 Crusaders jets supporting team Harbor Queen. These aircraft and their pilots put their lives on the line daily for ground troops in Vietnam. Their dedication and courage were extraordinary.



Air support is “danger close” in support of team Harbor Queen.



Bombs dropped at danger close range (50 meters or less from the team's position) are necessary when an eight-man recon team confronts overwhelming enemy odds. Massive gun fire, grenades, 500-pound bombs, (two at a time are dropped) along with canisters of BLU-27 napalm fire bombs will put a fear inside you that is indescribable. Even so, you have to overcome this fear and fight the enemy as a team or you will die.

Yet the battle rages on. With the jets now out of ordnance and low on fuel, gunships work the area over in support of the team.

As the CH-46 comes on station, there will be an attempt to take the team out. The pilot has requested that the team mark their position with a smoke grenade so they can swoop down to the team's position. I can see red smoke through my 7X50 binoculars but there are two smokes as the chopper lands in the zone. As Marble Champ monitors the radio the pilot is coming back with-- "Be advised we are taking heavy enemy fire—we're pulling out, we are pulling out." As the

chopper pulls out of the zone, the bird was riddled with enemy gunfire but managed to lift out of the zone. Gunships cover the big bird by laying down a heavy base of fire. The enemy popped a red smoke as well and the first chopper goes in on the enemy position.

With the team now located without a doubt by the second 46, another attempt will be made to pull the team and their wounded out. As gunships move in to support the 46, the chopper sets in the zone with guns blazing. As well, gunships are at tree-top level firing rockets and miniguns in support of the bird now on the ground. The radio is silent but the heavy fire can be heard as we wait for the bird to pull out of the hot LZ. As door gunners open fire on the enemy, we see that they have cleared out of the zone. The chopper has taken heavy enemy fire but crew and team Harbor Queen are on board and all are out of the enemy's clutches. Our hopes are that the team and crews took no more wounded.

The first CH-46 that went in to the zone was hit bad and was forced to make an emergency landing at YD191589, close to Hwy #9. It appears that the enemy was monitoring the radio frequency and by throwing their own red smoke grenade had lured the chopper into their gun sights.

With the large NVA force (27th Independent Battalion) still in the area and relatively close to Marble Champ, we pull back some, set up another 360 and continue to observe the area. As a precaution the team will limit radio communications due to enemy monitoring the radio.

Marble Champ's orders are to observe the base camp and wait for a Force Recon team, Team "Ice Boat", to link up with us and go back into

the enemy camp. With another day coming to a close we soon move out of the OP to a harbor site for the night. Mike has chosen a location still close enough to the bunker complex so that we can observe any activity of the enemy should they return. Again, the night's site will have to be moved into at almost total darkness to eliminate being spotted by enemy forces in the area. Failure to move into one's harbor site after dark could get you killed. If the team is seen moving in a harbor site it is common for the enemy to surround you at night and when the time is right for them, they could throw 30 Chi-com hand grenades into our position. It would be over for us in seconds.

With arty on-calls set up and night watches assigned Marble Champ moves to the site. Once there, we will hold strict surveillance of the area. There is a strong possibility, as close as the team is to the base camp, the enemy could move right through this very area in the night.

Marble Champ's night has gone by without any enemy sightings. First light will be here soon and the team is ready to move out of the site under the cover of darkness. Still uncomfortably close to the NVA base camp, the team moves into a better OP. It will be important to keep the lowest of profiles while there. Marble Champ cannot take any chances of being spotted by the enemy forces suspected to be close.



Jim Young

John Romero



It is quiet as I sit observing the tree line where the NVA base camp is hidden. Only a breeze moves over the area which gives us some relief from the intense 100 plus degree heat and never-ending insects. Marble Champ has seen nothing. We suspect the enemy might still be in the area but evidently is staying out of sight. I'm sure everybody's thoughts are focused on tomorrow, when we will have to go back and explore the enemy base camp again. Being very apprehensive is sometime beneficial because it heightens all of your senses and reinforces your instinct for survival. I am afraid but maybe this is the very thing that may keep me alive. Tomorrow we'll be linking up with the Force team Ice Boat, which will mean we will have double the firepower.



MARCH 26, 1968

We've made the link with Team Ice Boat and are prepared to move out of our position. After applying fresh camouflage, both teams move toward the base camp while staying off any trails. Sliding my grenades in my shirt just in case the enemy have returned, we prepare to move. With a fire mission set up on my projected entry point I am boot to the complex.



George Boks, 3C1 and team Ice Boat are boot to the complex.

As I, along with the members of both teams, move toward the complex, I get a mixed feeling. On one hand, I feel that if the enemy has moved back into the huge complex, our survival will be nil but then on the other hand, it is unlikely that the enemy would move back into a base camp whose position he knows has been compromised. Even so there's always the chance that the enemy might decide to make a stand and slug it out with the U.S. forces. When we entered the first time, we felt the enemy had hastily exited the base camp and ran into team Harbor Queen. With every step, I walk as if I am a ghost, ready, intensively listening and looking for anything that may be out of order. Mostly praying to God to watch over us all but knowing we are the only ones we could depend on.

We have made it to the tree line and enemy base camp, I step inside. Again, I wait for enemy contact at any second as I move a few meters deeper. I hope the NVA are not in one of their observation towers watching us move in. If so, this could be a trap for there are hundreds of places for the enemy to hide and spring a trap on both teams once deep within the complex. If this is the case, there will be a snowball's chance in hell that all of us will make it out alive.

Once we enter into the edge of the base camp four men are staged at the observation tower to cover our rear.



James Smith

(Photo above)

Inside this fighting hole above, I had spotted a vine attached to an M-26 grenade barely seen. It was the vine that was out of place halfway down in the hole. With security set up at our entry point the teams prepare to move into the complex.

As both teams and I move deeper into the base camp it is as if the Angel of Death himself is leading me by the hand into the pit of hellfire. Marble Champ and team Ice Boat are now totally engulfed within the base camp and find the complex again to be vacant.





The above photograph shows large timbers used for roof support.

Our search of the base camp is now under way. All extra information has been noted and stored for the return trip. With the day spent in the enemy base camp, both teams prepare to move out for the night's harbor site to await further orders. As we make our exit from the enemy stronghold, there is a sigh of relief once we are completely out. With orders from Air Minded 3, (the rear) to depart the area both teams find a good defendable position and take a chow break. There will be no cooking of our food. The smell would travel for miles and surely get us all killed. With the day at a close it will be too late for Ice Boat and Marble Champ to separate. With both teams still united, tonight we will share the same harbor site.



Once out of the complex both teams breathe a sigh of relief. Teams wait for sundown to move into harbor site under the cover of darkness.

Our night has gone smoothly and without incident. Both teams move out of the harbor site under the cover of early morning darkness and find a good observation point. After morning chow, while still observing the base camp, George has received word for both teams to boot to Check Point 28, where a rough-rider will return the teams to Dong Ha for debriefing. It is over and we are alive. It will be good to get back to the rear.



Photo above; is of Teams Ice Boat and Marble Champ after returning from battalion bunker complex. While waiting for our rough-rider we pose for a photo with locals on Muc Duc road.



On our arrival, Marble Champ and Force team Ice Boat report for a debriefing. Considering that such a large enemy base camp was concealed in what is predominantly open area and in close proximity to U.S. base camps, the military higher ups were amazed and considered it to be a major find. Also, the retrieval of the metal ammo box containing enemy intelligence information delighted them. On this patrol, George Boks, with his small 8mm movie camera had not only documented the interior of the base camp but also had on film the distant contact that occurred between the Harbor Queen team and NVA. After the movies were developed, the high-ranking officers viewed them and were surprised to see just how well the enemy had entrenched itself. With our debriefing over, we cannot wait to shower and crash. (Sleep) We are all completely drained and look forward to some much-needed rest.

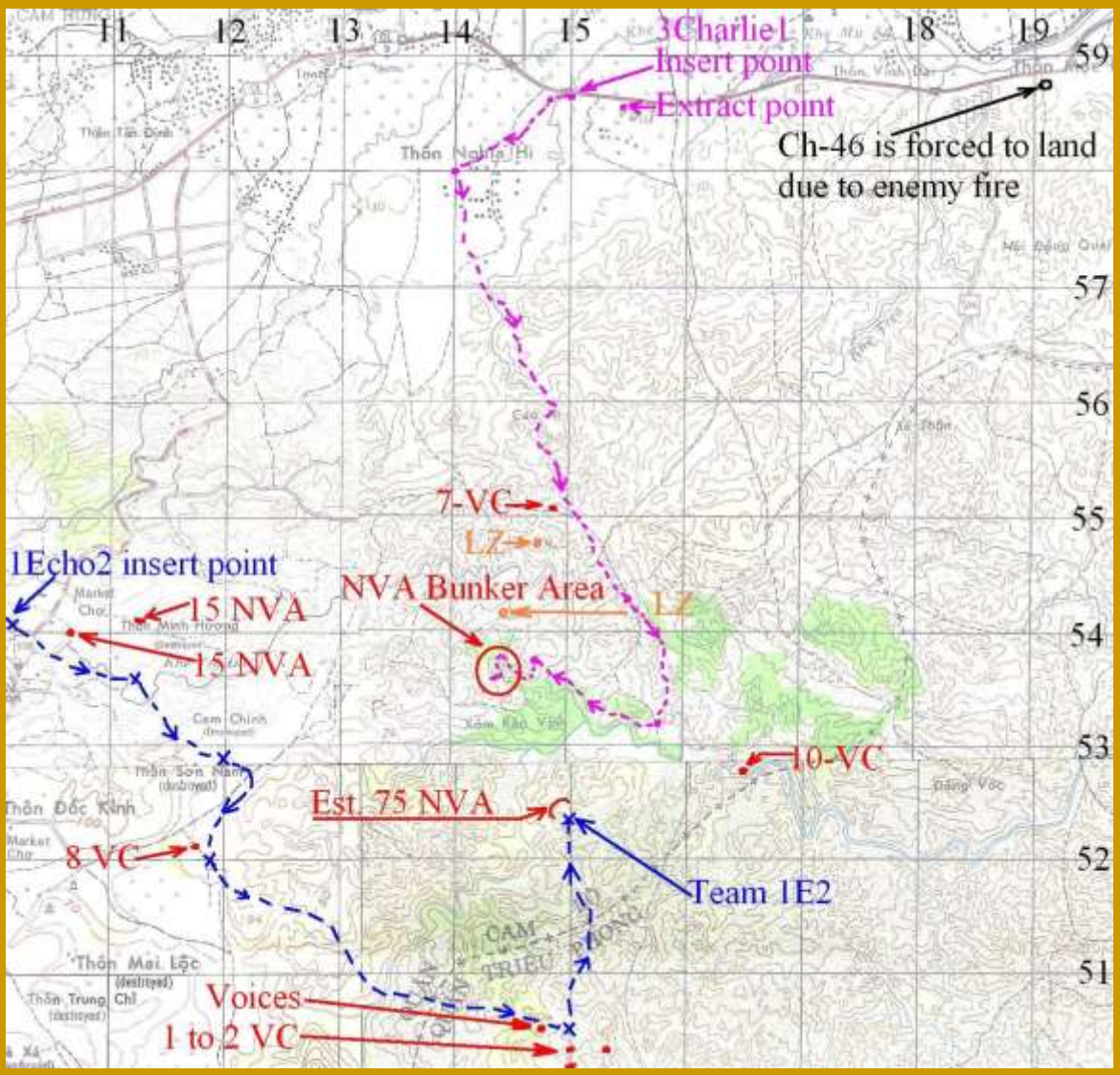
Force Recon Team “Ice Boat” Photo taken by Captain G. O’Dell



Back L to R: Sgt. Jerry Owens, PFC Jeff Schmidt, Lance Cpl. Rod Hajdino

Front L to R: Lance Cpl Jack Chiarmonte, Lance Cpl Ron Haffman, PFC James O’Flynn

The following are the reports of 1-Echo-2 and 3-Charlie-1's missions.



CONFIDENTIAL
ATTN: AC OF S G-2
DEBRIEF OF RECON PATROL: 1E2 (HARBOR QUEEN) THIRD RECON BN
OPERATION ORDER: 249-68 (SGT TOOTSIE)
A. MAPS: VIETNAM 1:50,000 AMS SERIES L7014 SHEET 6432 III
DEBRIEFER: GYSGT LOPEZ DATE: 26 MAR 68
1. SIZE, COMPOSITION AND EQUIPMENT:
A. COMPOSITION: (9) ENLISTED, (1) USF
B. SPECIAL ATTACHMENTS: NONE
C. COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT: (2) AN/PRC 25
D. OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT: (1) 7x50, (1) STARLITE SCOPE
E. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: (4) CLAYMORE MINES, (10) PROTECTIVE MASKS, (3) OB GRENADES.
F. SPECIAL WEAPONS: (1) M-79 WITH 65 HE RDS AND 15 FIRECRACKER RDS.
2. MISSION: CONDUCT RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE IN ASSIGNED AREA TO DETERMINE ENEMY ACTIVITY. BE ESPECIALLY WATCHFUL FOR ENEMY ACTIVITY ALONG ROUTE 538 AND TOWERD D-5. UTILIZE SUPPORTING ARMS FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY FORCE AND INSTALLATIONS. MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CAPTURE A PRISONER WITHOUT ENDANGERING THE PATROL OR ITS MISSION.
3. DTG INSERTED: 220700H (YD 070565) METHOD: FOOT
4. DTG EXTRACTED: 242330H (YD 150525) METHOD: HELO
5. ROUTE: FRENCA'P CARROLL SOUTHEAST TO (YD 100540), SOUTHEAST TO (YD 120529), SOUTHEAST TO (YD 151526) [redacted] EXTRACTION POINT.
6. OBSERVATION OF ENEMY AND TERRAIN:

A. SYNOPSIS: 40 HOURS OF RECONNAISSANCE RESULTED IN THREE SIGHTINGS TOTALLING APPROXIMATELY (35) VC/NVA AND ONE CONTACT WITH AN ESTIMATED 50-75 NVA/VC RESULTING IN (5) VC/NVA KIA (C) BY SAF AND (4) KIA (C) BY AIR, AND (1) USMC KIA.
B. ENEMY INFORMATION:
221730H (YD 113538) PATROL OBSERVED 12-15 VC/NVA 500-700 METERS TO THE NORTHWEST ON THE SIDE OF A TRAIL. THE ENEMY WAS SCATTERED THROUGHOUT AN ORCHARD AND APPEARED TO BE COOKING CHOW. THE ENEMY WORE KAKI'S, PITH HELMETS AND TWO WORE BUSH COVERS. THE ENEMY HAD PACKS, SEVERAL AK-47'S AND SEVERAL UNKNOWN TYPE OF WEAPONS. PATROL CALLED AN ARTILLERY MISSION WITH GOOD COVERAGE OF TARGET. WHEN INITIAL RDS HIT THE ENEMY, THEY HIT THE DECK AND THEN MOVED OUT OF THE AREA HEADING NORTHWEST. PATROL LOST SIGHT OF THE ENEMY, BUT CONTINUED TO OBSERVE THE AREA. THE PATROL SIGHTED SEVERAL WOODCUTTERS MOVING INTO AREA BUT NO OTHER ENEMY. PATROL CONTINUED MISSION.
230700H (YD 113538) PATROL OBSERVED 12-15 VC/NVA MOVING NORTH OF ROAD TOWARDS CAM LO (YD 105540). ENEMY WORE PACKS AND WERE [redacted]

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

NFIDENTIAL

HQ IEZ

AN UNKNOWN TYPE RAID. PATROL LOST SIGHT OF ENEMY AT [redacted] CONTINUED MISSION. 231239H (YD 119520) PATROL WAS MOVING EAST WHEN IT OBSERVED 8 VC/NVA APPROXIMATELY 15- 20 METERS TO THE NORTH. ENEMY WORE GREEN UTILITIES KAIKI'S, AND WERE ARMED WITH AK-47'S AND SKS. MOST OF THE ENEMY WERE LAYING DOWN OR SITTING DOWN, EXCEPT FOR (2) WHO APPEARED TO BE OBSERVING THE AREA TO THE NORTH. THE ENEMY HAD A PAIR OF BINOCULARS AND APPEARED TO BE OBSERVING THE HELOS THAT PASSED OVER OR NEAR THEIR POSITION. THE TEAM ATTEMPTED TO CALL AN ARTILLERY MISSION, BUT COULD NOT ESTABLISH COMM. PATROL MOVED TO AN AREA WHERE COMM COULD BE ESTABLISHED BUT COULD NO LONGER OBSERVE THE ENEMY. PATROL CONTINUED MISSION. 241630H (YD 130505) PATROL WAS MOVING NORTH WHEN THEY HEARD CHOPPING AND POUNDING OF METAL AGAINST METAL. PATROL OBSERVED (1) ENEMY MOVING SOUTH UP A KNOLL 150 METERS SOUTHEAST OF THE PATROL. THE MAN WORE GREEN TROUSERS, BLACK SHIRT, AND CARRIED A BASKET. PATROL THEN OBSERVED ANOTHER VC/NVA 500 METERS TO THEIR SOUTH, MOVING NORTH. MAN WORE KAIKI'S, CARRIED A PACK AND AN UNKNOWN TYPE WEAPON. AT THIS TIME THE REAR POINT OBSERVED (2) VC/NVA 150 METERS TO THE SOUTH. ENEMY WORE KAIKI'S AND UTILITIES AND APPEARED TO BE SNEAKING TOWARDS THE PATROLS POSITION. ONE WORE A UTILITY COVER AND THE OTHER WORE A GOOKIE HAT; BOTH CARRIED THEIR WEAPONS AT HIGH PORT. ONE ENEMY APPEARED TO BE 15 YEARS OLD. THE PATROL STARTED TO MOVE NORTH WHEN THEY HEARD VOICES 50 METERS TO THE NORTH AND NORTHEAST OF PATROLS POSITION. PATROL HALTED AND STARTED TO CALL GUNSHIPS WHEN (2) VC/NVA PASSED WITHIN TWO METERS OF PATROL. PATROL INITIATED CONTACT WITH SAF RESULTING IN (2) VC/NVA KIA AND THE RECOVERY OF (1) SKS. AT ABOUT 1700H PATROL HEARD MOVEMENT 10-15 METERS TO THEIR NORTH AND FIRED M-79 RDS INTO AREA. PATROL HEARD MOVEMENT

HQ — IEZ

COMPLETELY AROUND THEIR POSITION AND OPENED FIRE WITH SAF, GRENADES AND M-79 FIRE RESULTING IN (2) VC/NVA KIA (C). PATROL THEN RECEIVED (2) INCOMING GRENADES. PATROL RETURNED FIRE INTO AREA AND ALL MOVEMENT STOPPED. GUNSHIPS AND FIXED WING ARRIVED ON STATION AND MADE BOMB AND STRAFFING RUNS RESULTING IN (1) USMC KIA. AT 1800H A CH-46 ATTEMPTED TO EXTRACT THE PATROL, BUT RECEIVED A HEAVY VOLUME OF SAF AND WAS FORCED TO MAKE AN EMERGENCY LANDING IN VICINITY (YD 191537). PATROL CONTINUED TO MOVE SOUTH WHEN THEY OBSERVED (1) VC/NVA MOVING THROUTH THE TREES 10-15 METERS NORTH OF PATROL. PATROL OPENED FIRE WITH SAF RESULTING IN (1) VC/NVA KIA AND THE RECOVERY OF (1) SKS. PATROL MOVED SOUTH AND SET UP IN A DEFENSIVE POSITION. PATROL CONTINUED TO RECEIVE SPORATIC SAF AND HEARD MOVEMENT AROUND THEIR POSITION. AO ON STATION CALLED ARTILLERY AND RAN FIXED WING INTO AREA RESULTING IN YELLING AND SCREAMING COMING FROM THE IMPACT AREA. AO REPORTED (4) BODIES NEAR A BOMB CRATOR. AS PATROL WAS BEING EXTRACTED THE TRANSPORT HELO REPORTED TAKING SAF FROM THE SOUTHWEST.

C. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLSWITH ELEPHANT GRASS, 3-8 FT ON HILLTOPS AND ELEPHANT GRASS AND BRUSH UP TO 15 FT IN LOW AREAS. GOOD OP SITE AT (YD 152523).

(1) COMMUNICATION IS POOR IN THIS AREA.
(2) NATURAL WATER SOURCE ARE PLENTIFUL IN THIS AREA.
(3) RATE OF MOVEMENT IN 500 METERS PER HOUR.
(4) TRAILS ARE NUMEROUS AND SHOW SIGNS OF RECENT USE THROUGHOUT AREA.
B. OTHER INFORMATION: NONE
6. RESULTS OF ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENEMY:
A. ENEMY: (5) VC/NVA KIA (C) WITH SAF, (4) VC/NVA KIA (C) BY AIR.
B. FRIENDLY: (1) USMC WIA
C. CAPTURED EQUIPMENT: (2) SKS, (1) SET 6x30 AND ONE CARTRIDGE BELT.
7. CONDITION OF PATROL: GOOD MORALE: GOOD
8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
A. RECOMMENDATIONS: PATROLS SHOULD BE INSERTED IN RECON ZONES BY HELO IF POSSIBLE BECAUSE HEAT RESTRICTS THE MOVEMENT OF THE PATROL.
B. CONCLUSIONS: AREA COVERED BY THE PATROL REVEALS HEAVY ENEMY MOVEMENT AND BUILD UP IN AREA. ENEMY COULD BE INFILTRATING THROUGH AREA.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

HQ 1E2

9. HLZ'S: NONE
10. DEBRIEFER COMMENTS: THE ENEMY DID NOT APPEAR TO BE WELL DISCIPLINED. HIS TACTICS AND CAMOUFLAGE WERE POOR. HE DID NOT REACT WELL TO ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE PATROL ALTHOUGH HE DID CONTINUE TO PERSUE THE PATROL. SOME OF THE ENEMY APPEARED TO BE 13-16 YEARS OLD. THE ENEMY APPEARED TO FEEL SECURE IN THE AREA BECAUSE THEY CARRIED THEIR WEAPONS AT SLING ARMS AND CAMOUFLAGE WAS ALMOST NIL. THE PATROL RECEIVED OUTSTANDING SUPPORT FROM SUPPORTING ARMS. THE A.O. ON STATION PROVED TO BE A GREAT MORALE FACTOR TO THE TEAM AS HE ACCURATELY DIRECTED SUPPORTING ARMS ON ENEMY POSITIONS WHICH ENABLED THE TEAM TO BE SUCCESSFULLY EXTRACTED.

OP O/ 209-68

OP -4

BT.

Members of 1Echo2 team Harbor Queen



Rear: Doc William Loew, Larry Mckinney, Rick Imperiale, Mike Green



Eugene Robinson 1E2 Harbor Queen



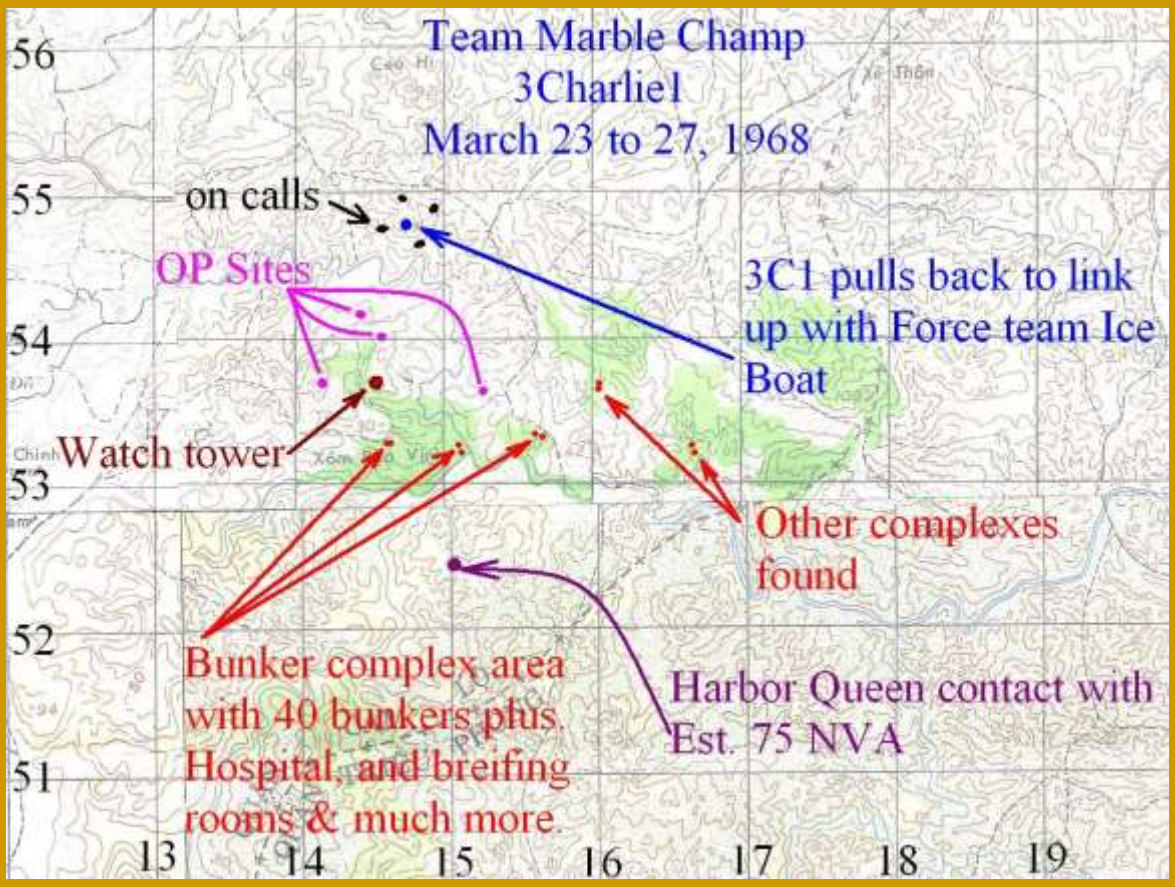
Tex Team 1E2 Harbor Queen



Team Harbor Queen 1E2

Front: Mike Castel Franco, John Ebner Rear: Doc William Loew, Rick Imperiale

Map and report of 3Charlie1's mission.



CONFIDENTIAL
ATTN: AC OF S G-2
DEBRIEF OF RECON PATROL: 301, (MARBLE CHAMP) THIRD RECON BN
OPERATION ORDER: 261-68 (CPL GREEN)
A. MAP: VIETNAM: 1:50,000, SERIES: L-7014, SHEET: 6342 IAYL, 6442 IIIAIV
DEBRIEFER: CAPT. G.W. O'DELL DATE: 26 MARCH 1968
1. SIZE, COMPOSITION, AND EQUIPMENT:
A. COMPOSITION: (7) ENLISTED, (1) USN
B. SPECIAL ATTACHMENTS: NONE
C. COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT: (2) AN/PRC 25
D. OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT: (1) 7x50
E. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: (4) CLAYMORE MINES, (4) WP RIFLE GRENADES, (8) WP HAND GRENADES, (8) PROTECTIVE MASKS, (8) CS [redacted]
F. SPECIAL WEAPONS: (1) M-79 WITH 80 HE, (6) CS, (1) M-14
2. MISSION: CONDUCT RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE IN ASSIGNED AREA TO DETERMINE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ENEMY ACTIVITY. BE ESPECIALLY WATCHFUL FOR ENEMY ACTIVITY AND NORTH-SOUTH TRAILS. UTILIZE SUPPORTING ARMS FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY FORCES AND INSTALLATIONS. DO NOT FIRE SUPPORTING ARMS ON LESS THAN TEN PERSONNEL WITHOUT APPROVAL. REPORT ANY CHANGES IN THE CIVILAIN POPULATION. MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CAPTURE A PRISONER WITHOUT ENDANGERING PATROL OR PATROLS MISSION.
3. DTG INSERTED: 231630H MAR 68 (YD 150587) HOW: FOOT
4. DTG EXTRACTED: 261100H MAR 68 (YD 155587) HOW: FOOT
5. ROUTE: FROM (YD 146538) NORTH TO (YD 140580) NORTHEAST TO (YD 149587) SOUTH TO (YD 147538).
6. OBSERVATION OF ENEMY AND TERRAIN:
A. SYNOPSIS: 66 HOURS OF RECONNAISSANCE PATROLLING RESULTED IN 2 ENEMY SIGHTINGS TOTALING 17 VC/NVA. PATROL FOUND A RECENTLY OCCUPIED BATTALION SIZE BASE CAMP OR C.P. OF 20-30 BUNKERS. PATROL FOUND SEVERAL HAND DRAWN MAPS OF THE CAM LO AREA, DOCUMENTS, AND LETTERS. THIS AREA REVEALS HEAVY ENEMY ACTIVITY.
B. ENEMY: NONE
C. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS, 4-6 FEET OF SCRUB BRUSH WITH SPARCE CANOPY IN DRAW AND STREAM BEDS.

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

1. COMMUNICATION: FAIR
2. NATURAL WATER SOURCES: PLENTIFUL
3. RATE OF MOVEMENT: UNLIMITED
4. OTHER INFORMATION:
251420 (YD 155543) PATROL OBSERVED 7 VC/NVA APPROXIMATELY 1000 METERS NORTHEAST OF THEIR POSITION. FIVE WERE DRESSED IN WHITE P.J.'S, TWO IN BLACK. ONE MAN APPEARED TO BE CARRYING MORTAR TUBE. PATROL CALLED ARTILLERY MISSION BUT ENEMY MOVED OUT OF AREA BEFORE ADJUSTING ROUNDS COULD BE FIRED, PATROL CANCELED MISSION.
251520 (YD 158532) PATROL OBSERVED 10 VC/NVA APPROXIMATELY 1500 METERS SOUTHEAST OF THEM, MOVING NORTHEAST, ENEMY WAS TOO FAR AWAY TO DETERMINE EQUIPMENT OR WEAPONS, ALL WERE DRESSED IN DARK CLOTHING. NO ACTION TAKEN AS PATROL WAS MOVING INTO ENEMY CAMP TO CHECK AREA.
241130H (YD 145537) TEAM FOUND BN. SIZE BASE CAMP. CAMP HAD HOOTCHES WITH WOODEN SIDES, FLOORS AND OUTSIDE EACH HOOTCH THERE WAS A BUNKER. HOOTCHES APPEARED TO BE FOR 3-5 MEN, BUNKERS SUFFICIENT FOR 8-10 MEN, THERE WERE 20-30 BUNKERS IN THE AREA. AREA ALSO HAD THREE MESS HALLS, EACH MESS HALL CAPABLE OF FEEDING 18-20 PEOPLE AT A TIME. TEAM FOUND (2) ONE MAN HEADS WITH WOODEN FLOORS, ALSO SEVERAL CAGES THAT HAD BIRD DROPPINGS ON FLOOR. TEAM FOUND BLOOD-STAINS IN THE AREA THAT APPEARED TO BE NO MORE THAN 3-4 HOURS OLD. PRC 25 BATTERIES, SOME DESTROYED AND SOME INTACT, WERE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT AREA. CAMP WAS IN SHAPE OF A SQUARE APPROXIMATELY 150 METERS ACROSS. AT EACH CORNER OF THE SQUARE A LARGER WAS ATTACHED TO A TREE SO A LOOKOUT COULD BE POSTED. ONE MEMBER OF THE PATROL CLIMBED INTO THE TREE AND STATED THAT HE HAD EXCELLENT OBSERVATION IN ALL DIRECTIONS. THERE WERE LARGE NUMBERS OF NEWLY MADE WOODEN CIRCULAR CAMOUFLAGE HOLDERS. SOME HAD FRESH BRANCHES IN THEM. CLOSE TO CENTER OF CAMP WAS LARGE CRATER THAT HAD COVERED ONE BUNKER. THE CRATER WAS FRESH AND IT SMELLED LIKE ONE OR MORE BODIES WERE STILL BURIED. IN THE BUNKER. TEAM MOVED OUT OF AREA DUE TO DARKNESS AND CONTINUED MISSION. TEAM FOUND A LARGE NUMBER OF MAPS, (HAND DRAWN), DOCUMENTS AND PAPERS IN AMMO CAN IN ONE OF THE BUNKERS. THESE WERE BROUGHT OUT BY TEAM.

6. RESULTS OF ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENEMY: NONE
A. CAPTURE/EQUIPMENT: DOCUMENTS, MAPS, PAPERS.
8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:
A. CONCLUSIONS:
(1) AREA COVERED BY PATROL REVEALS ENEMY TROOPS LIVING IN AREA, LARGE ENEMY UNITS HAVE BEEN OBSERVED IN THE AREA. AREA FOUND BY TEAM APPEARS TO HAVE HEAVY ENEMY ACTIVITY. ANOTHER TEAM IN THIS GENERAL AREA MADE CONTACT WITH ESTIMATED COMPANY SIZE UNIT.
B. RECOMMENDATIONS: KEEP RECON TEAMS IN AREA.
9. HLZ'S:
A. (YD 146549) SITE WILL ACCOMMODATE (2) CH-46'S. SITE IS LOCATED ON HILLTOP WITH 4 FEET OF SCRUB BRUSH. BEST APPROACH IS FROM THE EAST WITH NO OBSTACLES.
B. (YD 145542) SITE WILL ACCOMMODATE (1) UH-34. SITE IS LOCATED ON HILLTOP WITH 4 FEET OF SCRUB BRUSH. BEST APPROACH IS FROM THE NORTH, NO OBSTACLES.
10. DEBRIEFERS COMMENTS:
THIS AREA HAS BEEN THE AREA OF OPERATIONS FOR AN ENEMY BN. FOR QUITE SOME TIME. RECON TEAMS HAVE MADE LARGE SIGHTINGS AND CONTACTS THROUGHOUT THE AREA. THIS APPEARS TO BE EITHER A BASE CAMP OR A C.P. AREA FOR THIS UNIT. PAPERS, DOCUMENTS, AND MAPS WERE TURNED IN TO DIV. G-2.

2 3/CCC/LG/CED AMD

GP-4

Cpo: 261-68

DT

CONFIDENTIAL

With a good night's sleep, the next day we relaxed and had a chance to read some letters from home. Most of the guys are doing a little catching up themselves. It's always good to hear from home and know that things are going fine. In a letter I wrote to my grandmother, I tried to explain what the team's missions are like without getting into the hard details. I told her, without thinking, my main job was to look for Charlie. In this letter I hold, she is asking if I ever found my friend Charlie. I probably won't ever tell her Charlie is the enemy. She might have a heart attack worrying about me.

MARCH 28, 1968

The day starts out very nicely, until the Company Gunny stopped by bringing news I damn sure didn't want to hear. We're told that Marble Champ is ordered to return to the North Vietnamese bunker complex. There will only be four members of the team returning on this trip, Mike Green, George Boks, Wayne Thompson and myself. We're also told that there is a Marine infantry unit in the area looking for the complex and Marble Champ is assigned to show them where it is located. I am saying to myself, "Hellfire, I guess if you go over to anyone's house enough, eventually we are sure to find someone at home." Nevertheless, today its pack your gear, we're leaving in the morning for the enemy complex.



Company Gunny, unknown) Charlie Company 1968 Dong Ha Vietnam. (ID)

Marble Champ is up with the rising sun as our four-man team is at the helicopter pad waiting for chopper transport. A CH-46 comes in, picks us up, and off we go to link up with the grunts.

As the chopper flies to where the grunts are, we are told that a LZ has been secured. As we land, we quickly disembark and ask to speak to the company commander. Mike is told, “He’s up at the front.” As I take the lead moving through the area secured by the infantry, these guys start saying, “Gangway, gangway for the Super Grunts.” (This term was used to describe Marine Recon and was a much-appreciated

compliment). Man, I tried to keep a straight face, but couldn't. In fact, I laughed all the way to the front of the column.

Arriving at the front of the column, Mike found the officer in charge, introduced us and showed him the location of the enemy complex on the map. Mike also confers with him as to our present location and there seems to be some disagreement.

The infantry CO felt that he should call in an artillery spotter round to help ascertain his exact present position whereas Mike informs him that if he does so, the round will land on his own troops. The round was luckily not fired and the infantry CO tells Mike to take the lead and direct them to the enemy complex. Once at the front of the column, I am prepared to take the point. I have told a captain and sergeant who appeared to be in charge that I'd take the point, but I better not hear a damn sound behind me, and moved out.

I didn't need a map to tell me where I was going. My teammates and I have looked over every foot of this area for days and I believe we could find it in our sleep. After a few hundred meters I stopped with my left hand in a fist. I knelt and scanned the area with my 7X50's. The captain and sergeant moved to my position as I knelt on one knee. Pointing to a tree line less than 100 feet away, I told them it was in there. Then, I couldn't believe my ears. The sergeant stood up and at what I felt to be at the top of his lungs, yelled "First Platoon, get on line." I went to the ground as if I had melted. Recon never spoke above a whisper and this guy is loud. As First Platoon got on line and started to move, I started to get up. The sergeant had only taken four or five steps when there was an explosion. He had tripped a booby trap and all hell broke loose. All the grunts starting running and firing at the tree

line in a massive assault. I, along with my teammates watched this in amazement knowing what was just beyond the tree line. Lucky for the infantry unit the enemy complex had been abandoned.

What amazed us was the bravery these men displayed but at the same time we could not accept the methodology of this operation. Our missions, because of our size, eight-man teams or less, always depended on stealth and surprise. Whereas infantry units, we felt, placed a great risk on themselves by not using more stealth prior to engaging the enemy.

As fast as the firing started, it ended. The Marines entered the complex and having found no resistance, stopped their firing and started to set up a safety perimeter and started to inspect the area thoroughly.

As the day closes, we will spend the night with this infantry unit. One of the Marines stuck his entrenching tool out as if he was offering it to me. He said, “You better dig in, we might get hit tonight.” I told him thanks, but no thanks.

Recon Marines and the infantry operate somewhat differently due to our missions. Infantry are normally in company size force of 100 or more. Recon is set up in small teams of four to eight men and makes longer range patrols. Where the infantry wear helmets and flak jackets, Recon does not. We pack rifle, ammo and water which are more important than a shovel, steel pot and flak jacket. Anyway, if we dug holes to sleep in on patrol, we might as well be digging our own graves. It would be too much unnecessary noise and would just get us all killed. Also, it would add extra weight and that could be a few more M-79

rounds, extra water or ammo that could make a difference in a contact deep in enemy territory.

As night starts to fall, team Marble Champ will dine with the infantry. With the grunts offering the team first pick of the rats, (C-Rations) I am blessed with meatballs and beans. This just happens to be my favorite and to top it off one of the Marines gave me the dearest thing to my stomach, peaches and pound cake. I was in heaven and enjoying every minute of it.

MARCH 29, 1968

The night has gone without incident and as the morning brings light, we will be moving within the base NVA camp, again exploring the enemy's fortified position. George proceeds to take more movies of the base camp.



Carvings that appear to be graffiti are in fact directional markings to an adjoining complex as large, if not larger than the one 3Charlie1 had found.



George Boks checks out enemy hooch deep within bunker complex. Notice the outstanding grass work on this hooch.



Hat shows the size of bunker weapon firing portal.



James Smith checks this hooch deep within the complex. On our first trip into the complex enemy documents had carelessly been left behind.



The amazing thing about this complex is that most of the timbers were cut in a different location and brought in.



One of several bunkers deep into the complex.

As the search starts in the complex, the infantry unit locates a grave and starts digging to find out who is buried in it. As we stand and watch, the grave is uncovered. It is a grave of what appears to be a Vietnamese man, wrapped in a green poncho. As the poncho was unwrapped, the smell of death was overwhelming. All of a sudden, flies from all around descended on the corpse. While standing at the head of the grave, the Marine at the foot looked at me and said, “Get your end, let’s lift him out.” As I reached down, grabbing the poncho, lifting the enemy soldier out, his face was inches from mine. His eyes slightly opened as if he were watching me as he was removed. God, I almost lost it. Removing him, I felt as though I robbed him of his peace and released Death to pluck another soul from the men around me. The

smell of death consumed every breath within me. I was done for. I couldn't take another second and had to leave the immediate area as did George who was standing a few feet away documenting this with his movie camera. I guess once you get the smell the stench of a human corpse decaying in your nostrils, it's something you will never forget. Unfortunately, in Vietnam, we had to endure this stench quite too often.

Later in the day, there were four NVA/VC spotted on a ridge line very close to our position. In seconds the grunts were firing mortars on the enemy as they attempted to move off the hill to the other side of the ridge. It's not known if there were any enemy kills made once they had moved out of sight.

Demolition teams are now placing explosives throughout the complex so it will be of no further use to the enemy if he should ever attempt to return. After today there will be no further need to return to the complex. Marble Champ's job is over and we will be returned to Dong Ha Recon.

MARCH 30, 1968

As with all return trips to the rear, we feel relieved to be back at the rear base camp. On this last patrol, had the enemy not decided to move out, we could have definitely all been wiped out within matter of seconds considering the size of the enemy force that was encamped there. We all consider ourselves very lucky to be alive.

APRIL 1, 1968

Word has come down from the top, “Marble Champ, get out of town.” Yes, it’s a five-day R&R at China Beach. Man, we couldn’t pack our stuff fast enough. R&R stands for rest and recuperation and China Beach is an area in the South set up for the troops in the Nam. The POW snatch and bunker complex find paid off. It was nice to be getting out of the area and the bush for some real fun. Even though it was still in-country, we’re in the land of the big PX, the beer garden of Southeast Asia. It wasn’t the beaches of Waikiki, but what the hell, we’re out of the bush and basking in the sun on the sandy beaches, living the good life. It was nice, and the team really needed the break.



L to R: Jerry Beasley, Steve Laktash, James Smith

R&R at China Beach, Vietnam. R&R from battalion as a reward for captured enemy soldier and bunker complex find.



L to R: Steve Laktash, Jim Young, (Down) Al Moore, George Boks, James Smith



(Doc) Dale Watchorn



L to R: Wayne Thompson, John Romero, (Hidden James Smith)



Mike Green John Romero



Beer! And lots of it at China Beach R&R

APRIL 7, 1968

I hate to say it; but the beach and R&R must come to an end, party time is over, it's back to work. Today we return to Dong Ha.

Once back, Charlie Company gets bad news about a team, call-sign, "Dallas Girl" 1Delta2. Dallas Girl, was a team in one of our sister companies, Delta Company, who hit the shit on a mission five klicks north of Camp Carroll, one klick northeast of the Dong Kio Mountain.

Team members were wounded, one man killed, and the Kit Carson was killed or believed missing in action.

It all took place north of Camp Carroll.



Dallas Girl, 1Delta2

Rear standing: Nickie G. Smith, Leslie Goebel, Michael D. Cappa

Center: Michael Komezos, Charles (Chuck) Suchocki, Gary Myers

Bottom: Stan (Doc) Sellers, Andre Boersma, & Kit Carson Scout

On April 4th 1968, recon team Dallas Girl 1D2, after departing Camp JJ Carroll, were heading for a ridgeline northeast of Dong Kio Mountain. They're mission, was to make every effort to locate an NVA observation post that have been calling in artillery and mortars on the base at Camp Carroll, located south of the Dong Ma, Dong Kio Mountain range area,

which overlooked the base. This area was heavily covered with enemy activity and well known to be dangerous. As in all areas of the I Corps, there isn't any area taken for granted.

After crossing Highway 9, the river is low, and the team is able to walk across the Song Cam Lo river, starting up the mountain to the team's recon zone. About half way up, the team locates a well-used trail about two feet wide. The trail is running from southwest to northeast, toward the top of the hill. Along this well-used trail, comm-wire is found heading in the direction in which the team is moving. With the day growing late, at three quarters up the mountain the team locates a harbor-site for the night.

Once in the nights harbor-site, the Lt. commented that from the looks of enemy signs found, he wanted the team well rested in case enemy contact is made the next day. The night goes without incident, as dawn approaches.

In the early hours of April 5, the team departs they're harbor-site early, booting towards the summit's ridge reaching it by noon.

After a short break, assistance patrol leader Nickie Smith, and patrol leader Lt. Matocha, with team, continued to follow the comm-wire.

As the team moved forward, they notice large rocks once at the top, and moved to investigate. Nearing the location, the point-man hears Vietnamese voices, as he moves closer to check the situation out. The comm-wire leads to a cave going inside, where the voices came out of. This can only be the enemy, as Lt. Matocha throws a CS Grenade (gas) into the cave. Very quickly, four NVA ran out of the cave and the team engaged the enemy killing all four.

What seemed like in seconds, the enemy exit the bunker from another location and engages the team from several positions. As the NVA exchange grenades and small arms fire with the team, who is heavily outnumbered, them, the team takes wounded.

During the initial fire-fight a NVA soldier moves from another exit from the cave firing on the Lieutenant taking a deadly burst of AK-47 fire and was killed. Under heavy fire, Doc Sellers makes an attempt to get to the Lieutenant but is wounded in the leg. In horrid pain, Doc makes a second attempt to get to the Lieutenant. Again, Doc Sellers is held back by enemy automatic AK-47 fire, but manages to get within five feet of the Lieutenant, only to confirm he was dead.

As the fire fight continued, other team members were wounded. As team mates making every effort to hold the enemy at bay, Doc make's an effort to take care of the wounded.

Able to break contact, the team pulls back about 50 feet setting up a 360-degree perimeter in a bomb crater, as air support comes on station. It was at that time the team realized the Kit Carson scout has been separated from the team, or is dead, or missing in action. Nickie Smith, makes a search of the area but was unable to locate the Scout.

The radioman had taken a small-arms round across his spine and could not feel his legs. As Doc moves to aid his wound's he becomes light headed due to lose of blood and passes out on the battle field. Moments later Doc Sellers comes too; hearing the patrol leader yelling! "Corpsman up"! Doc makes every effort to move, but in a last-ditch effort throws his "unit one" (medical supplies) to Nickie Smith, passing out again on the battle field.

As gunships come on station, they give close air support as in a stand-off with the enemy, as the team is hoist evacuated out, by HMM-262, CH-46, piloted by Captain Ronald L. Gatewood. Captain Gatewood under heavy enemy fire hovered over the team as each team member were hoisted into the helicopter, one by one. Captain Gatewood held his position as his aircraft is riddled with NVA fire over the zone. Still taking fire Captain Gatewood is directing fire from three gun-ships on enemy locations making the extraction possible. After all team members are aboard, he pulls out of the zone under intense enemy fire. With the aircraft taking an estimated 2000 rounds of enemy small arms fire, the bird miraculously makes its way with wounded to Delta Med as medical teams stand-by to except the wounded.

Team Dallas Girl, credits Captain Gatewood, his crew and support aircraft, with saving their lives.

These men, these heroes, who extract recon teams and infantry from intense enemy engagements are considered the most heroic of this war. From the gun-ships and crews, to HMM-262, they put their lives on the line daily. They are truly our heroes.

It was later found out that the Kit Carson Scout was wounded in the fire-fight, as well as being separated from the team, was forced to evade the enemy. He was later spotted by another recon team in the area moving toward friendly lines. He was medevac'd by the team on April 6, 1968.

As the result of this mission, team Dallas Girl, 1Delta2, took five wounded, one killed in action, Lt. Donald J. Matocha.

Unfortunately, due to the number of enemy forces at this location Lt. Donald J. Matocha's body was not recovered.



Captain Ronald L. Gatewood

Call Sign; Chatter Box

THE FOLLOWING IS A REPORT OF THE DALLAS GIRL MISSION

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL FROM: CAPT [redacted] R. ARNOLA/mmw IMMEDIATE (ACTION)
ROUTINE (INFO)

DTG: 070824Z APR 68

FM: THIRD RECON BN
TO: CG THIRD MAR DIV

INFO: CG III MAF
CG PCV
FIRST AIR CAV DIV USA
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
NINTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
TWENTY SIXTH MARINES
MAG-36 ALPHA
PROVINCE ADVISOR QUANG TRI
THIRD RECON BN
THIRD FORCE RECON CO

TOR/COUR# 15
3dReconBn S/C No. 1516-68
1 of 3
RECEIVED 8 APR 1968 R027

BT

CONFIDENTIAL
ATTN: AC OF S G-2
DEBRIEF OF RECON PATROL: YD2, (DALLAS GIRL) THIRD RECON BN
A. MAP: VIETNAM: 1:50,000, SERIES: L-7014, SHEET: 6342 I
DEBRIEFER: LT. R.G. WALLS DATE: 5 APRIL 68
1. SIZE, COMPOSITION AND EQUIPMENT:
A. COMPOSITION: (1) OFFICER, (7) ENLISTED, (1) USN
B. SPECIAL ATTACHMENTS: (1) KIT CARSON SCOUT
C. COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT: (2) AN/PRC 25
D. OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT: (1) 7x50
E. SPECIAL EQUIPMENT: (4) CLAYMORE MINES, (4) WP RIFLE GRENADES, (2) WP HAND GRENADES, (10) PROTECTIVE MASKS, (10) CS GRENADES, (4) BLOCKS OF C-4,
F. SPECIAL WEAPONS: (1) M-79 WITH 50 RDS, (1) CS, (8) CANISTER,
2. MISSION: CONDUCT RECONNAISSANCE AND SURVEILLANCE IN AREA TO DETERMINE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ENEMY ACTIVITY. BE ESPECIALLY WATCHFUL FOR ENEMY ACTIVITY WHICH MAY POSE A THREAT TO CAMP CARROLL. UTILIZE SUPPORTING ARMS FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY FORCES AND INSTALLATION. MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO CAPTURE A PRISONER WITHOUT ENDANGERING PATROL OR PATROLS MISSION.
3. DTG INSERTED: 041630H APR 68 (YD 077572) HOW: FOOT
4. DTG EXTRACTED: 051800H APR 68 (YD 072593) HOW: HELO
5. ROUTE: FROM (YD 074572) NORTH TO (YD 075583) NORTH WEST TO (YD 062590) NORTHEAST TO (YD 075593).
6. OBSERVATION OF ENEMY AND TERRAIN:
A. SYNOPSIS: 25½ HOURS OF RECONNAISSANCE PATROLLING RESULTED IN (1) ENEMY CONTACT WITH AN ESTIMATED 15 NVA. AS A RESULT OF THE CONTACT THE PATROL SUSTAINED (1) USMC KIA, (3) USMC WIA, (1) USN WIA, AND (1) KCS WIA. THE ENEMY SUFFERED 7 NVA KIA (C). THE PATROL FOUND WHAT APPEARS TO BE AN ENEMY F.O. POSITION. THE AREA REVEALS MODERATE-HEAVY ENEMY ACTIVITY.
B. ENEMY:
051710H (YD 066594) PATROL MOVING UP TOWARD THE TOP OF A HILL VIC (YD 066594) WHEN PATROL FOUND A 2 FOOT WIDE TRAIL RUNNING NORTHWEST-SOUTHEAST UP TOWARD THE TOP OF THE HILL. THE TRAIL APPEARED TO BE WELL USED. PATROL FOUND COMM WIRE RUNNING ALONG NEXT TO THE TRAIL. THE COMM WIRE HAD BEEN SPLICED IN SEVERAL PLACES. ON THE SIDE OF THE

G-2 G-3 CofS CG/C3

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

WHEN THE PATROL OBSERVED A PORTION OF AN 82MM MORTAR TUBE. THE TUBE LOOKED AS THOUGH IT HAD BEEN DESTROYED IN THE PAST 2 DAYS. THE PATROL ALSO OBSERVED (3) TWO MAN FIGHTING HOLES AS THEY MOVED UP THE HILL. THE HOLES APPEARED TO BE ABOUT ONE WEEK OLD. THE PATROL MOVED ON UP ALONG THE TOP OF THE HILL AND OBSERVED SEVERAL LARGE ROCKS ON THE TOP OF THE HILL VIC (YD 072593). PATROL MOVED UP TO CHECK OUT THE TOP OF ROCKS WHEN POINT HEARD TALKING AND OBSERVED WHAT APPEARED TO BE THE OPENING OF A BUNKER BUILT BACK INTO THE ROCKS. THE PATROL SET UP DEFENSIVE POSITION AND THE POINT THREW A CS GRENADE INTO THE OPENING. APPROXIMATELY 10 SECONDS LATER 4-5 NVA RAN FROM THE OPENING. ENEMY WORE GREEN UTILITIES, NVA BOOTS, AND CARRIED AK-47'S. THE PATROL INITIATED SAF RESULTING IN 4 NVA KIA (C). AT THIS TIME THE ENEMY BEGAN TO EXIT THE BUNKER FROM ANOTHER ENTRANCE AND PATROL ALSO RECEIVED SOME SAF FROM VIC (YD 060594). PATROL EXCHANGED SA/AWF AND GRENADES WITH AN ESTIMATED 15 NVA. AS A RESULT OF THE FIRE FIGHT THE PATROL SUSTAINED (1) USMC KIA (PATROL LEADER), (3) USMC WIA, (1) USN WIA, AND (1) KCS WIA (MINOR). THE ENEMY SUFFERED ADDITIONAL 3 KIA (C). PATROL WITHDREW APPROXIMATELY 50 FEET DOWN THE HILL TO A POSITION NEAR A BOMB CRATER. PATROL CONTINUED TO RECEIVE SPORADIC SAF. AN A.O. AND GUNSHIPS CAME ON STATION. AT THIS TIME PATROL OBSERVED (1) NVA MOVING TOWARD THE TEAM ON THE TRAIL. THE PATROL FIRED AT THE ENTITY AND GUNSHIPS MADE STRAFING RUNS WITH UNKNOWN RESULTS. ENEMY WORE GREEN UTILITIES AND A STEEL HELMET. TRANSPORT HELO'S CAME IN TO EXTRACT THE PATROL. THE WOUNDED PATROL MEMBERS WERE HOISTED INTO TRANSPORT HELO'S. PATROL COULD NOT FIND KCS AT THIS TIME. PATROL ATTEMPTED TO RECOVER BODY OF KIA BUT COULD NOT AS THE BODY HAD FALLEN OFF A ROCK AND WAS LOGED IN SOME BRUSH. THE ASSISTANT PATROL LEADER CHECKED THE AREA BUT COULD NOT LOCATE THE KCS. THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF THE PATROL WERE HOISTED IN TO THE TRANSPORT HELO'S. WHEN EXTRACTION WAS COMPLETED (1) USMC KIA REMAINED ON THE HILL WITH (1) KCS MIA. TRANSPORT HELO'S WERE RECEIVING SPORTIC SAF DURING THE EXTRACTION.

C. TERRAIN: CHARACTERIZED BY STEEP HILLS WITH SCRUB BRUSH UP TO 10 FEET AND THICK UNDERGROWTH IN SOME AREAS. LARGE ROCKS ON THE TOP OF THE HILLS.

(1) COMMUNICATION: GOOD WITH TAPE.

(2) NATURAL WATER SOURCES: AS INDICATED ON THE MAP.

(3) RATE OF MOVEMENT: 200 METERS PER HOURS.

(4) TRAILS: NUMEROUS SMALL TRAILS THROUGHOUT THE AREA.

D. OTHER INFORMATION: NONE

6. RESULTS OF ENCOUNTERS WITH THE ENEMY:

A. ENEMY: 7 NVA KIA (C)

B. FRIENDLY: 1 USMC KIA, 3 USMC WIA, 1 USN WIA, 1 KCS WIA (MINOR)

C. CAPTURES/EQUIPMENT: NONE

7. CONDITION OF PATROL: PHYSICAL: POOR MORALE: FAIR

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

A. RECOMMENDATIONS: INFANTRY SHOULD CONDUCT AN OPERATION IN THIS AREA.

B. CONCLUSIONS:

(1) AREA COVERED BY PATROL REVEALS: MODERATE ENEMY ACTIVITY IN THE AREA. IT APPEARS AS THOUGH THE BUNKER IN WHICH THE ENEMY WERE LOCATED WAS A F.O. POSITION. THE BUNKER PROVIDED AN OUTSTANDING VIEW OF THE CAMP CARROLL-CAM LO AREA. THE COMM WIRE LEADING UP TO THE BUNKER COULD BE A LAND LINE FOR COMMUNICATION TO A MORTAR POSITION IN THE AREA OR TO A RADIO FOR COMM TO ARTILLERY TO THE NORTH.

9. HLZ'S: NONE OBSERVED

10. DEBRIEFER COMMENTS:

THE PATROL WAS FORCED TO LEAVE THE FOLLING GEAR AT THE CONTACT SITE:

(1) AN/PRC 25 RADIO	(8) M-26 GRENADES	(1) STROBE LIGHT
(4) M-16 RIFLES	(1) PINK AIRPANEL	(2) MAPS
(42) M-79 ROUNDS	(4) CLAYMORE MINES	(7) M-17 PROTECT
(2) M-33 GRE	(4) BLOCKS OF C-4	(1) COMPASS

CONFIDENTIA

(3) CS GRENADES
(1) RED SMOKE GRENADE
(1) THERMITE GRENADE
(25) M-16 MAGAZINES
KCS WAS CUT OFF FROM THE REST OF THE SQUAD DURING THE EXTRACTION BY ENEMY FIRE. THE KCS ESCAPED AND EVADED HIS WAY OUT OF THE AREA. THE MORNING OF 06 APRIL 68, THE KCS WAS SPOTTED MOVING TOWARDS FRIENDLY LINES BY ANOTHER RECON TEAM. KCS WAS MED-EVACED BY THE PATROL.

GP-4

OpO: 298-68

BT

Map of the area in which Team Dallas Girl mission and Lt. Matocha's body was lost.



The next day, April 6, 1968, a reactionary force with the Fourth Marines, out of Camp Carroll makes an attempt to retrieve Lieutenant Matocha's body, only to meet strong enemy forces still in the area.



Nickie Smith

Team member, Nickie Smith, who accompanied the reactionary force, was wounded during the stand-off as well as marines of the Fourth Marine's. Still the Lieutenant's body has not been recovered.

The battalion is at a great loss!

THIS MISSION CONTINUE'S ON PAGE 278

April 12, 1968

Once again in Dong Ha, after returning from our R&R, we have spent several days taking care of many jobs around the company area. The closing of the day brings the team "Three Charlie One" a warning order and new mission.

THIRTEENTH MISSION APRIL 13 TO 18, 1968

We will be assigned an area southwest of Camp Carroll that has wide areas of elephant grass that are very tall and razor sharp. It's actually sharp enough to slice you to the bone. There are also sections of thick jungle and areas that will make excellent observation sites. The team has been briefed that the area is heavily used by the enemy with suspected supply routes. Marble Champ's mission will be to determine what type of equipment and now many enemy troops are moving through the area. The mission will run from the 13th to the 18th. Marble Champ will be inserted by CH-46 helicopter and boot to its zone of operation. If enemy are observed, call in supporting arms. If the possibility arises, take a prisoner.



Helicopter crews were quite creative when it came to decorating or naming their aircraft.



THIRTEENTH PATROL APRIL 13TH TO 18TH

Team Marble Champ 3Charlie1 ready for a mission.



3Charlie1 on CH-46 departing Dong Ha for a mission

I'm glad I'm not superstitious because this happens to be my thirteenth patrol. It's time to go to work.

Marble Champ has boarded the chopper and is now en-route to the insert point. As with all chopper inserts once inbound to the zone the team will have a birds-eye view of the LZ below. To help out with the situation, the choppers on many occasions will make a few false inserts to confuse the enemy if he is around. It's a thumbs up from the crew chief and the CH-46 drops into the zone. All eyes will be fixed on the area that the chopper will land in.

As the chopper pulls out of the zone, you feel as if every NVA in the area just saw you land. Once in, we form a 360 and wait to see if any enemy fire is taken, then we're off to our recon zone. In most areas the enemy has recon killer teams, which specialize in tracking and intercepting a recon team. That is why it is essential after being inserted into a LZ, to move out of the area as quickly as possible and make sure we are not being followed.

When moving in the jungle, the team leader often makes direction changes which sometimes force us to transverse very difficult terrain. This is all done in an effort to make it more difficult for the enemy to follow us.

Marble Champ has made it in without problems and is now well within the team's assigned recon zone. The first day has been spent covering the area, checking for enemy activity and plotting good OP sites. With the day almost at a close, we will observe our harbor site before moving into it for the night. Tomorrow we will continue to observe and report.

The next few days were somewhat productive and we found quite a few signs of enemy activity which included heavily used trails running through the area. We continued to OP the area in hopes of an actual enemy sighting. Even though we have not sighted the enemy himself, we do not take anything for granted and are always on alert. Marble Champ team members are always prepared for the worst. Each team member knows the enemy is here, somewhere close by.

There is no room for error in this place. One major mistake here and you're on your way back to the world with first-class airfare, in your very own bag and flag.

Our days of observing the area will come to a close tomorrow. Marble Champ has covered the assigned area and managed to accumulate good intelligence information. Morning will bring the team's extraction from the assigned area by CH-46.

With the night going without problems around our harbor site, we are getting ready to move out early. The team has a few hundred meters to move before reaching the extraction point. Once close to the LZ, the team will stop short to observe the area before entering. When George makes contact with the choppers, the team will move in to the LZ at the chopper's signal for extract.

Landing zones are not always what one would visualize. They can be anywhere where a slick, or CH-46 can manage to squeeze in. Our extract is on somewhat of an angle. One thing for sure, regardless of the situation or LZ, with Bonnie Sue and the boys (helicopter squadron) you can bet they can get you in and out of the bush under any circumstance.

With gunships overhead, the chopper has informed the team that there will be a flip-flop. (Coded hand-off) This is when a team is replaced with another team. The chopper will hover while one team exits and 3Charle1 climbs aboard.

George has the word from above and we get ready to move. Still with watchful eyes, the team makes their way to the landing zone. Marble Champ is ready. From tree top level the gunships watch as the big 46 drops down into the small LZ. The rear door opens and a team of Recon Marines quickly disembark jumping out as we climb aboard. All goes very smoothly. As we are lifted out of the zone, a thumbs up is the farewell from Marble Champ to the team below.



With terrain too steep to land, a CH-46 hovers to drop off a recon team.



Flip Flop as newly inserted team vanishes into the jungle in seconds.



As team 3Charlie1 departs in CH-46 newly inserted team resumes where 3Charlie1 left off.



We will be taken back to Dong Ha for debriefing. Once in the rear we notice our neighboring teams on the pad (LZ) ready to depart for their missions. We wish them good luck and a thumbs up just before they board choppers.



Steve Matheson with team mates from 3Charlie2

Dong Ha Vietnam 1968



Team Moleskin 3Charlie3

Ward Reed, Michael Landreth, Sgt. Richard May, Thomas Ringler

APRIL 19, 1968

After our return to the rear, we are given the word that Charlie Company Recon is moving to Quang Tri Combat Base. The new base is about ten miles south from our present location and is out of range of the North Vietnamese heavy artillery guns north of the DMZ. This however does not mean that we won't still be subjected to occasional rocket and mortar attacks. Charlie Company will be uniting with other recon companies of the battalion that up to now have been spread out in the Northern I Corps.



(Above) George Boks and team members arrive to help construct our new base at Quang Tri.



John Romero and team members construct bunker in case of incoming artillery or rockets.

Day by day, the entire company is working on moving to the new location. The new area doesn't look like much but with hard work we can make it home. As the tents go up and bunkers are constructed, our new home seems to be looking more organized. We are now ready to get back to recon work. With tomorrow the start of a new month, we are sure to receive a warning order.



3Rd Recon Battalion area Quang Tri 1968.

It's now May 1st, and as expected Marble Champ has a new mission. The team's mission will be just off the Da Krong River southwest of hill 824, Dong Cho Mountain or (Whiskey Relay-grid box XD0139) located deep in enemy territory.

Military intelligence suspects that some of the large number of NVA units that had surrounded Khe Sanh moved into this area. Since team Marble Champ has performed rather well on previous patrols, we are

assigned this important mission. On a previous mission east of this location, we captured a prisoner at a small NVA camp that was hidden by a tall bamboo forest so we know this area is hot.

With Steve Laktash as patrol leader, the team's briefing of the area confirms what we already suspected. Intelligence briefings indicate the assigned recon zone is very heavily infested by the NVA. The team will set up OP sites and plot all trails within the assigned area. If the enemy is sighted, we are to observe and relay all information to the rear. If possible, take a prisoner.

This mission will start on May 2nd and run until May 6th. Marble Champ will be inserted by CH-46. Its pack tonight, we leave first thing in the morning.

FOURTEENTH PATROL: MAY 2-6 1968

It is the morning of the 2nd of May and Marble Champ 3C1 is waiting at the base helicopter pad for the helicopters to arrive that will take us to our assigned recon zone. As we wait, we take the opportunity to chat with some other recon teams that are also waiting to be picked up and inserted into their designated recon zones. We wait for the choppers while making last-minute checks of our gear before we board. Using my signal mirror, I apply some more camouflage on my face. The use of bug juice (deet) really helps. A squirt of a little deet insect repellent in your hand helps to dissolve the camouflage grease and it applies easier to the skin while at the same time affords protection from mosquitoes and other biting insects.

After getting the deet on your hands, you have to make sure not to touch your pecker or any other sensitive skin because the stuff burns like hell!



James Smith, George Boks, Robert Charles

Recon chopper pad Quang Tri 1968

I can hear the choppers and know they will be on the pad in seconds. The CH-46s make their approach to the pad followed by the gunships as they set down at the Recon landing zone.



(Above) Unknown CH-46 crew man awaits departure to insert our recon team into a landing zone deep in enemy territory.



Above: Huey gunship used on insertion and extraction of recon teams.



Above: John Romero, James Smith, and Wayne Thompson chat with Huey gunner about the landing zone and mission 3Charlie1 is about to undertake.

Once the pilots are briefed, the inserts begin. Before we depart, the team is informed by the chopper crew that our zone is an extremely dangerous area and after we are inserted, they will standby at a distance so they can expedite an extraction in case we are

overwhelmed by NVA forces. There will also be fixed-wing on station for support.

Marble Champ is ready to go. As we approach our recon zone we start to circle and all team members are now on their feet ready to disembark. I guess we know what to expect down there so we're all on edge. I could see the Da Krong River below. We get the thumbs up from the crew chief as the chopper starts to dive toward the LZ. As we set into the landing zone all eyes are scanning the area for enemy fire. It's a go, and the team is out the rear of the chopper. As we disembark, we form a 360, wait to see if we draw fire and then we quickly proceed to our recon zone. Steve Laktash checks his map and confirms our location as he points in the direction I am to go. Now moving in the right direction, we continue at a fast but cautious pace. Ten meters through short elephant grass and before me is a well-cultivated corn patch. My mind is telling me I am in the middle of nowhere and know this crop doesn't grow wild. I can feel the enemy is close and probably watched us land. Once through the corn patch, it's down a small hill and across a shallow stream. Once on the other side, I am faced with an open area about 50 meters wide. On the other side close to the jungle is a large grass hooch on stilts. I call Wayne Thompson and John Romero up to cover my crossing. As I move across the area using every means possible for cover, I reach the other side and check the area out. Wayne has made it across and covers for the next team member. Now at the bottom of Hill 287, there is only one way to go, up. While team members cross the open area, I have located a trail moving up the hill. It appears to look so well-used that it is hard as concrete and about six feet wide. Marble Champ will not use the trail but will parallel it. The team's LZ was located close to the river in what one might call a pocket.

I can tell now it was not a wise move but considering landing zones are slim around here, we have no choice but to go up to reach the recon zone. Entering the jungle, I move up the hill fearing what might lie at the top. Twenty-five, fifty, one hundred meters more as the team moves toward the top. My eyes must be an inch out of my head as I scan the area. With every step I can smell the enemy as I move on. The enemy would saturate their clothing with smoke in order to keep insects at bay. But this practice would also warn us of their presence when they were in very close proximity. Mike has found several cooking ovens as we move toward the ridge. They have small tunnels radiating out like an octopus to dissipate the smoke.

They're here, I can feel it. I can smell the little shits. Twenty feet more and my left hand is now in a fist. I have found fresh fighting holes that appear as if the enemy has just stopped their work to take a break. The fighting holes are along a wide (5 to 6 feet), hard-packed trail made with steps as it climbed to the ridge above. There are also several long boxes with Chinese writing on them. It is obvious these are rifle boxes. These crates are made of fresh wood, (light in color) and look as though they have just been opened and emptied. As we position ourselves in a line, Doc Watchorn and I move on the left side of the large trail while Wayne Thompson and John Romero set up on the fighting-hole side. Randy Rhoads, Jerry Beasley and Al Moore are set up on the right flank. Steve Laktash, Mike Green and George Boks investigate the boxes; they make notes of the writing and then find a box that still appears to contain its contents. The enemy never just leaves its ammo or weapons behind. In fact, it is common knowledge that even after heavy engagements the enemy goes out of their way, even at the risk of more casualties, to retrieve all of its equipment including fallen comrades.

We now come to the realization that we must be in the midst of an enemy encampment. I feel the enemy has heard us land and are meters above us possibly organizing their forces. Nevertheless, we must continue the mission but the thought of moving any higher terrifies me to the point of feeling as if I am crawling into the jaws of death itself.

It is very quiet as a light breeze brings the odor of the enemy down to where we are. Lying on the ground looking across the jungle floor, I scan the area above. I hear a twig snap. I can see them now, two, no three, moving down from the top of the hill. I snap my fingers at Mike Green, pointing to my eye indicating three NVA at less than 50 feet. I tell Doc to take the one on the right, I'd get the one on the left and then go for the one about 10 feet higher up. I move my selector to semi fire and I am just about to squeeze the trigger when Steve tells me to move down the hill and move fast. I felt the enemy was too close but I moved, never taking my eyes off the enemy.

I could have taken those suckers down right then. I had them in my sights and was ready. There was no way out for them, they were that close. In fact, they were so close I felt Doc and I would be shot down making the move.

Steve's mind was on the safety of the team more than anything, so I moved quickly as I watched the advancing enemy. Now moving down the hill, the team progresses only a few feet when there is a loud crack as a rotten tree falls to the jungle floor. Suddenly the enemy opens fire on the team with AK-47s. As the AK-47 fire cracks over our heads, the enemy then opens up with a heavy machine gun. The enemy's fire quickly intensifies to a point that team Marble Champ is laying there with incoming rounds flying inches over our heads. We are making

every effort to return fire as the foliage above our heads is being shredded by enemy bullets and covering us with debris. It is obvious the enemy is quickly gathering troops from above and with the rate of fire that is pouring down on us, we know that we have tackled a very large enemy force. The noise of gunfire is so intense that our ears are ringing and the fear of being overrun, killed or captured is on everyone's mind. With all this confusion, George is informing the rear of the situation and requesting immediate support.

We knew we have to get out of there fast, due to the size of the enemy force attacking, because we will not be able to hold out for the time it takes for supporting aircraft to come back on the scene.

Wayne Thompson and I are side-by-side as we lay down suppressing fire while moving back down the hill in the direction of our insert point.

George Boks, Steve Laktash, Mike Green and John Romero are now taking the heaviest amount of enemy fire. With the enemy less than 50 feet from the team, Mike is taken under intense fire as his bush hat is literally shot off his head. Mike returns fire killing an enemy soldier. Randy Rhoads, Aaron Moore and Doc Dale Watchorn along with Jerry Beasley cover our right flank. Wayne Thompson and I cover the left side of the trail to eliminate being surrounded by the enemy force.

As Wayne and I stop, we wait for the team to regroup. As team mates are covering each other in this heavy enemy contact, we make our way down the hill. The team regroups and again takes a stand to fight the advancing NVA.

As we look around, we realize that we can't find George. John Romero, our M-79 man, while firing his M-79, scrambles back up the

hill with Steve Laktash and is again taken under enemy fire as bullet fragments hit John Romero. George Boks is hopelessly entangled in wait-a-minute vines and is desperately trying to free himself. As Steve and John move to his aid under heavy fire, untangling George, Steve lays down a base of automatic fire while John Romero cuts George loose from the vines with his K-Bar knife. After George is cut free the enemy assaults their position. Together they manage to hold the enemy at bay with automatic fire as they scramble back down the hill and rejoin the team.

George, the team's primary radio man, is not a man to be lost in our present situation. Marble Champ would fight the enemy to the end to retrieve him or any team member.

We all know from past experience, he probably, if not killed instantly by enemy gunfire, would have been tortured then killed. We are all brothers and will leave no one behind, wounded or dead. George later told me that with the enemy closing in on him that he was seriously contemplating taking his own life rather than getting captured and that the sight of John Romero and Steve Laktash coming back for him was something words can't describe.

I know this all too well. On an earlier patrol, Steve had put his life on the line with Jim King and returned for me. There are no words to describe that gallantry. Steve and John were the heroes of the day, disregarding their own lives to save a comrade. Steve and John along with all team mates have put their lives on the line more than once for another team mate but if called a hero, which is what they truly were, they would just say it's part of the job. If given an award for their

gallantry they would have the Medal of Honor with Steve deserving it on more than one occasion.

As Steve, John and George make it down the hill we regroup in a hasty three-sixty defensive perimeter as we hear the enemy continuing to advance down the hill. After a moment of catching his breath and regaining his composure, George informs the rear that Marble Champ has taken two minor WIA's and is still under heavy fire.

As the team lays down a base of fire, John is firing his M-79 as fast as possible straight up into the air. After he rapidly fires about 20 rounds, it's as if an arty barrage is showering the enemy position. John is nicknamed the Mule, for along with his regular supplies he carries a minimum of 100 HE M-79 rounds, weighing one half pound each, through some of the most difficult terrain on the face of the earth. This time we needed every damn round he had.

Steve now gives the word to make a dash down the hill to the LZ. Again, Wayne and I move side by side spraying the area with small arms fire hoping we're not leading the team into an ambush and that the enemy is not trying to encircle us.

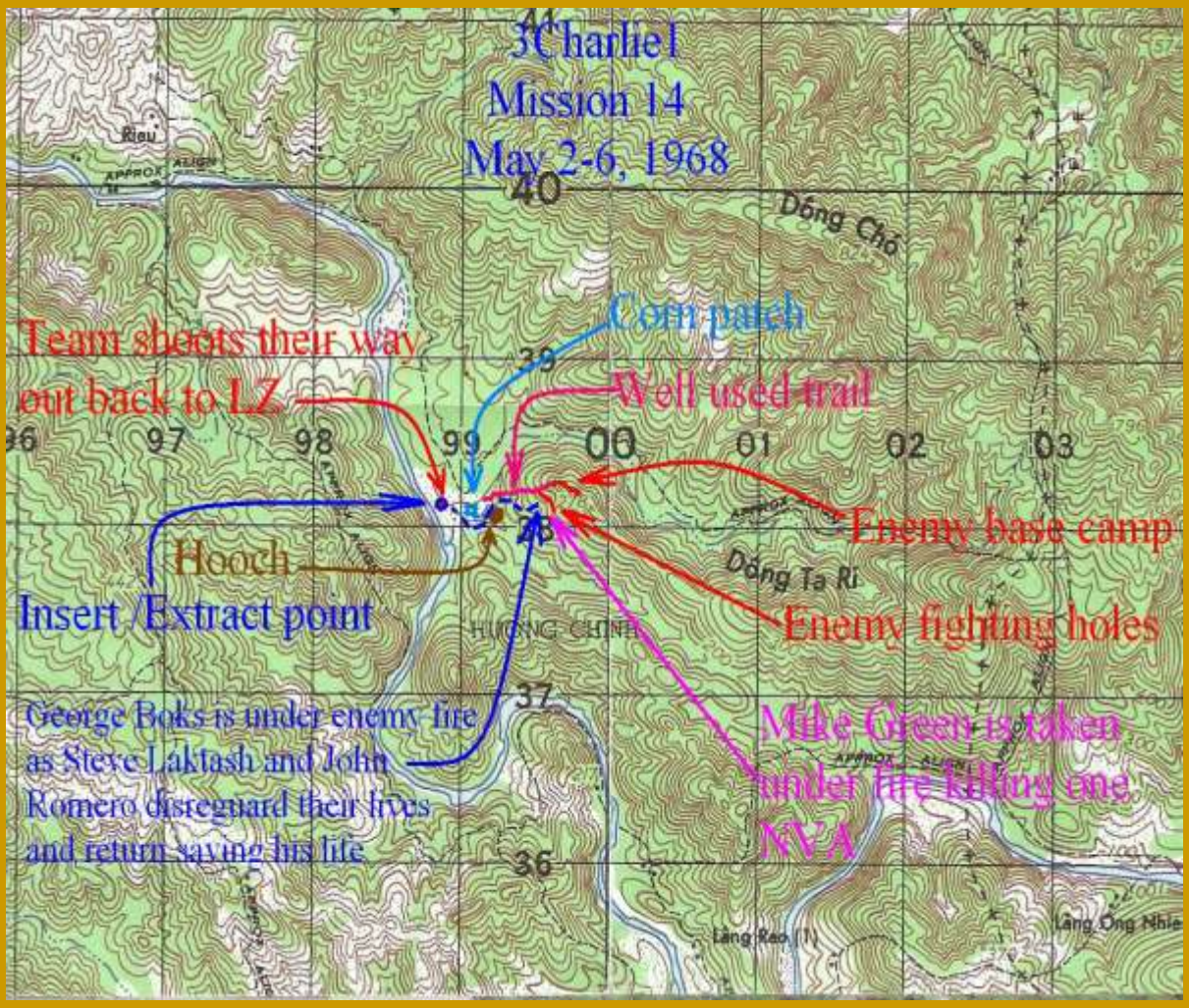
Once at the bottom of Hill 278, I am faced with the open area to cross. Calling John and Wayne up to cover me, I tell John to put two M-79 rounds in the hooch on stilts. As the rounds make their impact, destroying the target, I make a run for the other side. Once the crossing is made, I lay down cover fire on the well-used trail in hopes of stopping the enemy's easy access to our position. With Wayne and John now across, we cover for the rest of the team members as they scramble over to our location.

Now comes the time when we will have no cover and will quickly have to dash across the stream and through the corn patch to the LZ. I go for it. Running down the small hill to the stream making the crossing, I can see the bullets hitting the water and once out of the stream, dirt kicking up from sniper fire all around me. The rest of the team is doing the hundred-yard dash while bullets are hitting the water and dirt all around them. Once all team members have united at the LZ, Wayne said, “I thought the sniper had you for sure Smitty.”

As Marble Champ scans the area, George now has communications with the choppers. With gunships overhead, the 46 informs the team they are inbound. The chopper has dropped out of the sky and is making his approach as low as possible coming down the river to the landing zone.

With the enemy still around the team and closing in, the gunships are laying down suppressive machine gun and rocket fire around the team’s perimeter. As the gunship pilots put their choppers between the enemy and team, putting their lives directly in the line of fire, the team waits in the zone. As the rescue chopper sets in the LZ, Marble Champ lays down a final heavy volley of fire into the surrounding jungle and then makes a dash for the chopper. In an instant, the team is on the chopper as it pulls out of the hot LZ with guns blazing taking enemy fire.

We are out of the zone as the helicopter lifts to the sky and over the ridge. Marble Champ is to be taken back to Quang Tri recon for debriefing. Now on the helicopter, en-route back to Quang Tri, team members with minor wounds are taken care of by Doc Watchorn.



DECLASSIFIED 03 May 1968 3C1
XD 9938

3C1
Hill 278 Contact

[redacted]

Copy_____of_____Copies

SEQUENTIAL LISTING OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

OpO 424-68 (3C1) 03100H/03133OH May 68. A patrol operating in the vicinity of XD 9938 conducted ½ hours of reconnaissance resulting in two sightings totalling eight enemy and one contact with approximately 10-15 enemy resulting in one enemy KIA. The patrol broke contact, move to an HLZ and was extracted by a CH-46 under cover of gunships strafing the area.

Command Chronology (Pg 9 of 11 in month of May 1968)

MAY3, 1968

Marble Champ, now in the rear, will have a little time on their hands until the next mission. The new area still holds many things that need to be done so it's not hard to find something to work on.

On the 8th of May, we are given a new mission. It will be back in the CaLu area again. The team knows from past experience that this is a hot area and the intelligence briefing officer confirms this. Aerial observation and other intelligence sources indicate the enemy is still heavily concentrated in this area.

Nevertheless, Marble Champ is preparing for the mission and will depart for Southwest CaLu on the morning of the 10th. We will be inserted by CH-46 and will boot to the assigned area.

Our mission will be to set up observation sites and recon the assigned area. All trails will be plotted and observed. If enemy sightings are made, supporting arms will be used to destroy enemy forces. Should the opportunity arise, we will try to take a prisoner. With team members packed and ready to go, Marble Champ will depart early in the morning.



3Charlie1

Rear: Mike Green, James Smith, Aaron Moore, Jerry Beasley, John Swyers, Kneeling: John Romero, George Boks, Wayne Thompson

FIFTEENTH PATROL; MAY 10TH TO 15TH

It is the morning of the 10th of May as team Marble Champ sits on the helicopter pad. We're up next for insert, waiting the return of the choppers. Only minutes have passed and the choppers can be heard in the distance. As the 46's land at the Recon Company landing pad, Marble Champ wastes no time in boarding. Now in position for the insert, we are airborne to the zone. The method of inserting the team will be as usual. Once in the zone all team members and the aviation crew will scan the area for any enemy and wait to see if the chopper takes fire.

We're over the zone, awaiting the thumbs up. It's a go, as the chopper descends out of the sky like an eagle skimming across the jungle treetops and then slips into the landing zone. Upon landing, we haven't taken enemy fire and the team quickly exits the chopper setting up a three-sixty while scanning the area. After making a quick compass check, Mike Green points the direction and I quickly move out.

Marble Champ is Alpha Sierra and now moving to the assigned recon zone. As on all chopper inserts, it is important to get out of the zone as fast as possible, making all attempts not to leave a trail. The NVA will most likely investigate the insert point and make an effort to follow and locate the team. Mike likes to move five-to-seven-hundred meters and stop to make sure we are not being followed. This gives the team the opportunity to change direction if necessary, making sure our tracks are covers.

Arriving in our recon zone of operation, the team is confident that we have not been followed, with a good observation point located, the team sets up security scanning the area for any enemy activity. After

part of the day in this observation location, Marble Champ finds another location approximately 400 meters away that will make for a good night's harbor site. At dusk, the team cautiously moves in and sets up its defensive perimeter.

The night has passed without any problems, and at early dawn the team moves out in search of a good observation point still within the harbor site's on-call range.

As the days pass, the team continues to plot all enemy trails and make notes of all vital intelligence information concerning enemy activity within this recon zone. Up to now, we have not made any direct human contact with the enemy. This is good because our main mission is after all, to collect intelligence information without being spotted.

Once in an OP site, we will set up a small three-sixty perimeter and start checking an area out. Some team members look at certain areas, such as a trail or river, while others scan other assigned locations.

While sitting in the site, I look at my teammates and feel as if I'm looking at myself. I see young men, just kids, with the serious faces of old men. Most of us are not even old enough to vote, yet we are killers. Each man has been in the Nam long enough to realize, each carries not only the knowledge and fire power to kill, but the will to live by killing another. I guess the following old saying is true. Whoever wrote it had to have been where we are now.

"FOR THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR IT, LIFE HAS A FLAVOR THE PROTECTED WILL NEVER KNOW."

Marble Champ's recon zone has been gone over with a fine-tooth comb and there have been only signs of the enemy moving through the

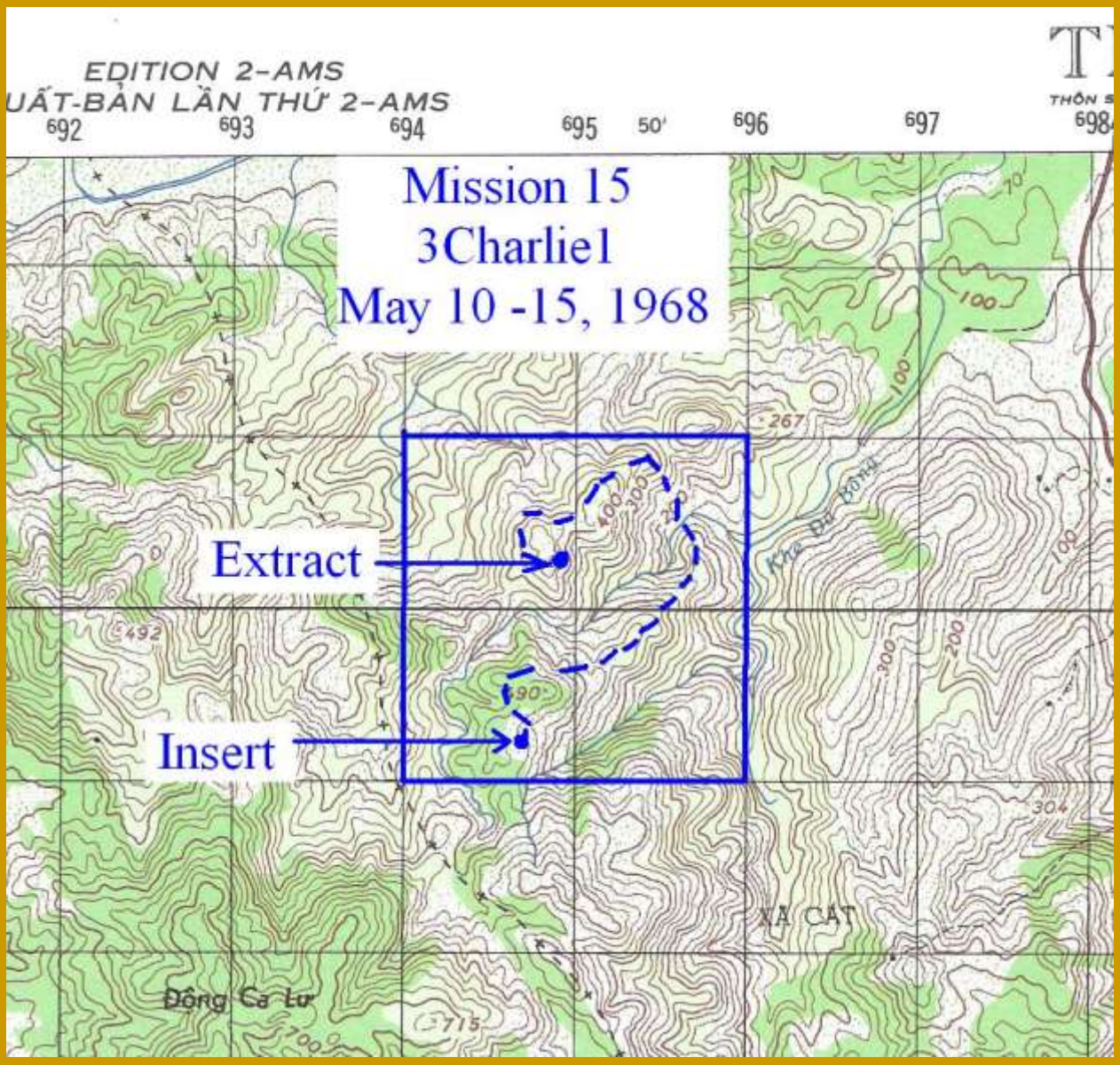
area but no direct contact. The rest of the day will be spent in OP sites observing our zone in hopes of at least one enemy sighting. Tomorrow the team will be extracted in the early morning.

With the night's harbor site passing without incident, we are out of the site early the next morning and boot in the direction of the extract point. The team will, as always, stop short of the area to observe it before entering. George has gotten the word the choppers will be inbound to our position in five minutes.

Marble Champ quickly moves to the edge of the LZ as supporting helicopter gunships circle the area, while working it over with their rockets and machine guns. As the CH-46 drops into the zone and its rear door drops, the team scrambles aboard and is quickly airborne and en-route back to our base camp. All team members feel relief as the tension of the last few days starts to slowly dissipate.



Three Charlie One, team Marble Champ, is being extracted from deep in enemy territory 1968.



Returning safely to our rear base, we report to debriefing. Just after debriefing, the team gets bad news about one of our comrades as well as others, including team members in another company within our battalion, Echo Company.



James Michael Barnerd

In a small unit like Third Recon, news travels fast. Just a few days ago, a guy everyone knew as “Barnyard” (Michael J. Barnerd) went out on a reactionary force to save the lives of fellow reconners who were in a desperate contact with an overwhelming enemy force and was

seriously wounded. Barnerd had very little time remaining in country (Referred to as short) and was assigned as a company driver and clerk.

This situation started back on April 5, 1968 over a month ago, when Lt. Donald Matocha, in the team Dallas Girl 1Delta2, from Delta Company, was killed north of Camp Carroll, one klick, northeast of Dong Kio Mountain.

Now, on May 13, 1968, Echo Company team members, in team 4-Echo-2, led by Lt. Bruce Wilson, took a patrol to the location of where Lt. Matocha had been lost, in an attempt to recon the area as well locate his remains.

In order to save time Gary Myers from team Dallas Girl 1-Delta-2 will accompany 4-Echo-2 to the known enemy location where Lt. Matocha was killed in action.

Four-Echo-two, led by Lt. Bruce Wilson takes his four-man recon team into the area where Lt. Matocha was killed just over a month ago.

The area is infested with large numbers of enemy, using the area for a forward observation site, calling in artillery strikes from the north, on the base, Camp JJ Carroll.

Prior to Lieutenant Wilson's entry into the area, a request for a reactionary force to stand-by in case the team is over taken by enemy forces. Small teams of four men "Key Hole" missions often have support standing by in heavily enemy occupied areas, where enemy contact is likely. Not only is this area dangerous, on this mission the

team is going to attempt to retrieve Lt. Matocha's remains in a known enemy held location.

On May 12, 1968, eight recon marines and one Navy Corpsman from Charlie Company are told to prepare as a reaction-force for a team from Echo Company that was going into a known area of heavy enemy forces. Charlie Company volunteers lead by 1st Lt. Edward Osborne, were, Sgt. Reberto Navarrete, CPL. Jeff Yee, L/CPL James Michael Barnerd, L/CPL James D. King, L/CPL Nathaniel J. Kinson, Frank Kehr, Michael D. Delaughter and Corpsman "Doc" Richard Bradford. An additional Corpsman was picked up once at Camp JJ Carroll making the force 10 strong.

May 13, 1968, the Charlie Company squad is picked up by CH-46 helicopters, at 0530 hours at Quang Tri, and taken to Camp JJ Carroll where the squad staged, waiting for any word over the radio about the Echo team's situation.

The squad from Charlie Company knew this was going to be serious, due to the fact everyone was in flak-jackets, helmets, and carried nothing but small arms-rounds, grenades, Laws (rocket launcher) and all they could carry.

After only two hours on the ground the team 4-Echo-2 makes contact with a large enemy force who were dug in within a bunker complex.

Once the team arrived at the location where Matocha was known to have been lost, the team is taken under heavy automatic enemy fire.

The enemy is well positioned, concentrating heavy machine gun fire, mortars, and rockets on the team. Team 4-Echo-2 is now in a fight for

their lives resulting in two team members killed in the initial contact, PFC Gary F. Myers, point man, and rear point, PFC Carlos Dominguez, with the other two members of the team wounded, Lt. Bruce Wilson and radio operator Clark Christie. Out-numbered, team 4-Echo-2 calls for an emergency extract, air support as well as a reactionary force.

At 0905, over the radio the words “Two Lilies” down! It was code for two men Killed in action, as well the team has two wounded and under heavy enemy fire, which brought everyone in the reactionary force to a stand. In seconds, it is saddle up, and fast, they are going in to assist the team in their desperate situation. After a landing zone is located, the squad will move into the valley below to the location of 4 Echo 2 to retrieve the dead and wounded.

As a CH-46 lands at the Camp Carroll base landing zone, the Charlie company team of eight with corpsman, as well an additional corpsman from Camp Carroll board the bird an takes off. In a few minutes they are circling the LZ a short distance down from the mountain top. While circling they stay clear from the heavy arty support from Camp Carroll, as well jets are doing close air support for the team after the fire missions.

With gunship support the 46 sets the reaction-force into the closest landing zone possible to team 4-Echo-2. Once in the zone, the rear door drops, and the team runs off the bird to the tree line for cover and to orientate themselves for direction to the team in enemy contact.

It takes seconds to hear heavy gun fire, establishing comm with the team, Charlie Company reaction-force moves out toward team 4-Echo-2.

With jets still in the area supporting the team, “Michael Barnerd said the earth shook as they’re bombs impacted close to the team in contact and once the fixed-wing pulled out, gunships were at tree top level gun blazing in the team’s support. It was like something out of some war movie, and I was there”.

Barnerd’s job, was tail-end Charlie (rear point) and was to stay in the tree line in support of his team as they moved into the valley to get the dead.

At last contact with Echo team 4-Echo-2, the team has informed PaPa relay, that they have two killed and two wounded in action, taking heavy enemy fire at this time.

The reactionary force is informed the enemy have automatic weapons and possibly even mortars in the area. As the reactionary force moves toward team 4-Echo-2 under fire it takes about 30 minutes before the reaction force finds the Echo team and starts to return with 4-Echo-2’s wounded and killed.

As Lt. Osborne nears Barnerd, he screamed; Barnyard get the chopper!! As tail-end Charlie, Michael Barnerd moves back to the LZ checking the area, informing the chopper to land. As Barnerd turned and went back to the ridge he signaled the circling CH-46 to land right on him. The bird was coming into the zone, but at the last second, he started pulling away as if it wasn’t the right time to come into the landing zone. Maybe the choppers had seen some enemy close.

It was then Lt. Osbourne yelled, “Barnyard, get down here!!” As Barnerd turned to move back to the tree line he heard and saw an enemy rocket coming straight for him. It was to late, the rocket landed

three feet to his left and exploded. After he was hit, he remained alert and could see the chopper landing almost on top of him. Lt. Osbourne was screaming; “Get Barnyard!” As the team put Barnerd and the dead and wounded of the Echo team on the bird, the CH-46 pulls out of the zone under heavy enemy fire.

As the bird pulls out of the hot landing zone it is realized that two of the members of the reactionary force are not on board. PFC Jim King and Corpsman “Doc” Richard Bradford, were separated from the team during the enemy contact, and are being chased by enemy forces. Amazingly, they are spotted by Ch-46 pilot, Maj. David Althoff and copilot, R. G. Canada. Once the marines are located on the ridgeline, there is no place to land and pick the marines up. Maj. Althoff is forced to hover his craft on the side of the mountain under heavy enemy fire as the two marines were able to board the 46 through the side door.

Jim King, who I have ran patrols with had told me that if not for Major Althoff and his daring rescue, the enemy, who were closing on them, would have over taken them in moments.

As Corpsman work on the wounded, the bird is in flight to Delta Med as medical teams stand by to receive the wounded.

Mike was just one of the guys who put his life on the line to help our fellow recon marines that day. The tragedy was that in a short time he would have been back in the world, out of the war. It was just a bad deal and he will be missed, as all seriously wounded Recon Marines are.

The body of Lt. Matocha, was not retrieved, due to the large number of enemy troops at that location.

Many attempts to recover Lt. Matocha's remains were made but were unsuccessful. Both Infantry and recon made attempts resulting in more men killed in an effort to recover his remains.

Donald's mother even requested the Marine Corps, to stop trying to recover her son's body as she didn't want any more wounded or loss of life, on his account.

Note: In November of 1969, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, departed Vietnam moving to Okinawa and by wars end there had been an estimation of one hundred more marines killed and countless wounded in an effort to retrieve the Lieutenant's body.

In 1996 a former NVA soldier, Nguyen Van Loc, contacted both Vietnamese and American authorities that he and another NVA soldier, in the spring of 1968 had buried an American in a bomb crater, northeast of Dong Ma Mountain.

In the 1990's there were two excavations which were unsuccessful in their efforts to locate human remains. If not for Nguyen Van Loc showing the location of where he had buried the body of Matocha, he may have never been found. A third attempt started in early 2003, during which time an on-site forensics team found a dog tag belonging to Corpsman Stan "Doc" Sellers who was part of team Dallas Girl and wounded at the site. Finding the dog-tag the forensics team were confident they were now working in the right location.

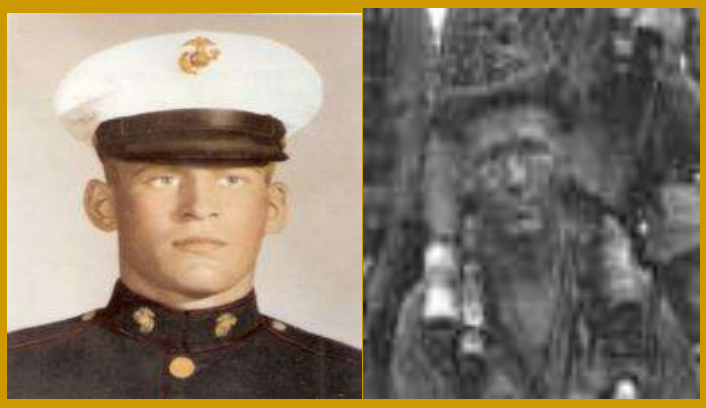
In March 2004, Matocha's body was recovered and sent to Hawaii, US Joint POW/MIA Headquarters for testing where the remains were identified by dental records and family DNA samples confirming the remains were identified as Donald J. Matocha.

It was not until September 18, 2004, 36 years 4 months after his devastating mission, 2nd Lieutenant Donald J. Matocha was returned to his family and was buried in the Oak Hill Cemetery in Smithville, Texas. Following was memorial service, attended by over 3,000, which was held in the Smithville Civic Center. Governor Rick Perry was in attendance, along with the large overflow crowd, were several of Donald's recon brothers from the 3rd Reconnaissance Association.

(For more information about this long journey of Donald, I recommend the documentary "An Ocean Away".



Lt. Donald J. Matocha



PFC Gary F. Myers KIA Team 4-Echo-2

PFC Carlos Dominguez KIA team 4-Echo-2





Toby Curley

MAY 16, 1968

Toby Curlee, a comrade in the team neighboring Marble Champ, starts the day by standing on the sandbags outside the tents and giving his good morning yell. Toby sometimes only dressed in Ho Chi Minh sandals (sandals made by the South Vietnamese from old car tires and inner tubes), stands and yells at the top of his lungs, “GOOD MORNING VIETNAM.” It’s great! Toby carries the M-79 and the word is that he’s pretty damn good with it. It’s been said he could shoot your leg off with the weapon on a dead run.

During Marble Champ's days in the rear, I along with my fellow Marines have been blessed with the honey bowl detail. It's not as delightful a job as it sounds. The honey bowl detail consists of having to remove 55-gallon barrels that have been cut in half and placed in the heads (latrines). Just getting them out of the latrine was a monumental task in that they were quite heavy and the shit would slosh and splash out. Once removed, diesel fuel is added and the whole brew is set afire. Occasionally it would have to be mixed as if it were a witch's potion and more diesel fuel added to keep the shit burning. Personally, the job just flat sucks and filling sandbags and reinforcing the defensive perimeter is preferable to this assignment. We have been in the area for 10 days and soon the team will get another mission.



Before the close of the day Marble Champ has a warning order. The mission will be in the CaLu area once again. Marble Champ's mission will be to observe the Song Thach Han River in hopes of confirming that it is being heavily used in moving enemy supplies. The team will also patrol the assigned zone as always, in search of enemy troops moving through the recon zone. We will be inserted by CH-46 within the assigned RZ. With the mission lasting six days, there is a strong possibility that we will make contact with enemy forces. The team's briefing reveals that the enemy is very concentrated in this area. It will be quite a challenge for us to gather intelligence while eluding enemy forces. Marble Champ leaves tomorrow.

SIXTEENTH-PATROL; MAY 26TH TO 31ST

Marble Champ 3Charlie1, once on the chopper and over the zone now wait for the thumbs up. It's a go, and in seconds we're in the zone and out of the CH-46. Once the team is compass oriented, Mike Green points the direction and I take the point as the team moves out. Again, the team must move out of the area, making all attempts to throw the enemy off as to our direction of travel and location.

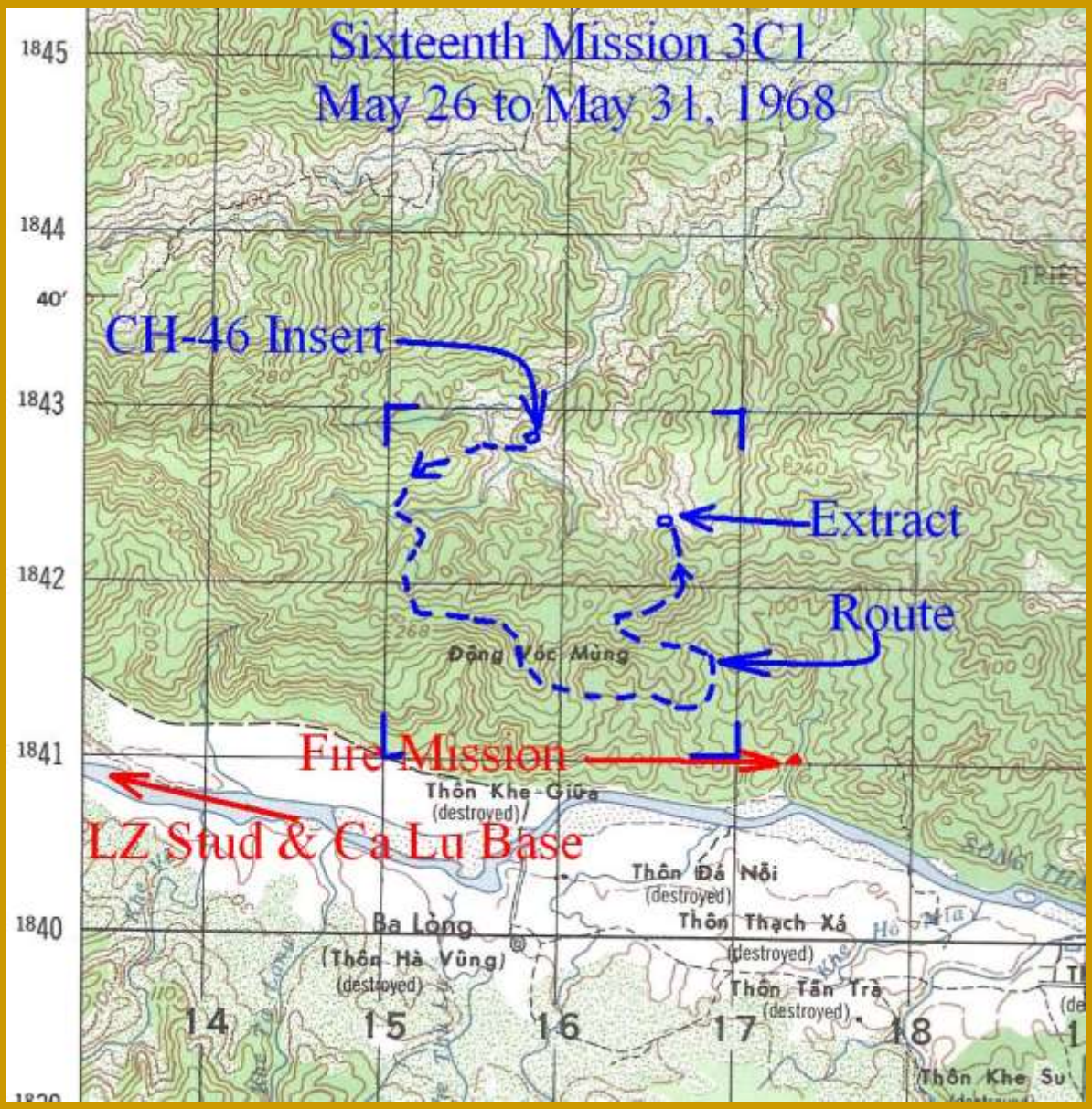
After three days of gathering intelligence, we have not been sighted by the enemy and the trails we have observed do not appear to be heavily used.

At dawn on the fifth day while in a high observation post overlooking the Ba Long Valley through which the Song Thach Ham River flows, George makes a sighting. It's a boat on the river below with three to five NVA in it. After quick referencing of the enemy location on the

map, George gets the coordinates from Mike and proceeds to call in a fire mission on the enemy. George whispers precise information to the radio relay and a fire mission is underway. The first rounds land off target and the enemy is seen now frantically paddling their boat toward the opposite shore into a cove. George quickly adjusts and requests a fire for effect. Just as the enemy boat enters the cove and is not visible to the team, a number of 175MM artillery rounds fired from the Rock Pile land right in the cove. A few seconds later, pieces of the boat are seen floating out of the cove and down with the current. It is highly unlikely that the enemy had time to reach shore and disembark since there were secondary explosions heard and it appeared that the boat was loaded down with ammunition. It appears that the enemy's day outing on the water was ruined due to heavy objects falling from the sky.

The remainder of the day was uneventful. The enemy in the area probably realized that there was a recon team in their midst and decided to keep a low profile. As the day closes, Marble Champ moves into the last night's harbor site. Tomorrow morning will hopefully bring the extraction of the team.

As morning arrives, we move into our extraction point as George notifies the choppers that we are ready for an extraction. The gunships start their suppressing strafing runs around the extraction point and the chopper drops down into the LZ and picks up the team. Marble Champ is taken to Quang Tri Recon for debriefing.



JUNE 12, 1968

Today marks the day I came in the Marine Corps just a year ago, my first real job. I feel like a mercenary and a low-paid one at that. Yet, I am so bitter from the loss of fellow Marines, I almost want to hit the shit just to get even. I sometimes think I must be crazy. I am afraid but know the enemy is also afraid. I've been told sooner or later it gets to

everyone. Maybe so, but I feel I have paybacks to collect. Not for myself but for many others that have paid a horrible price.

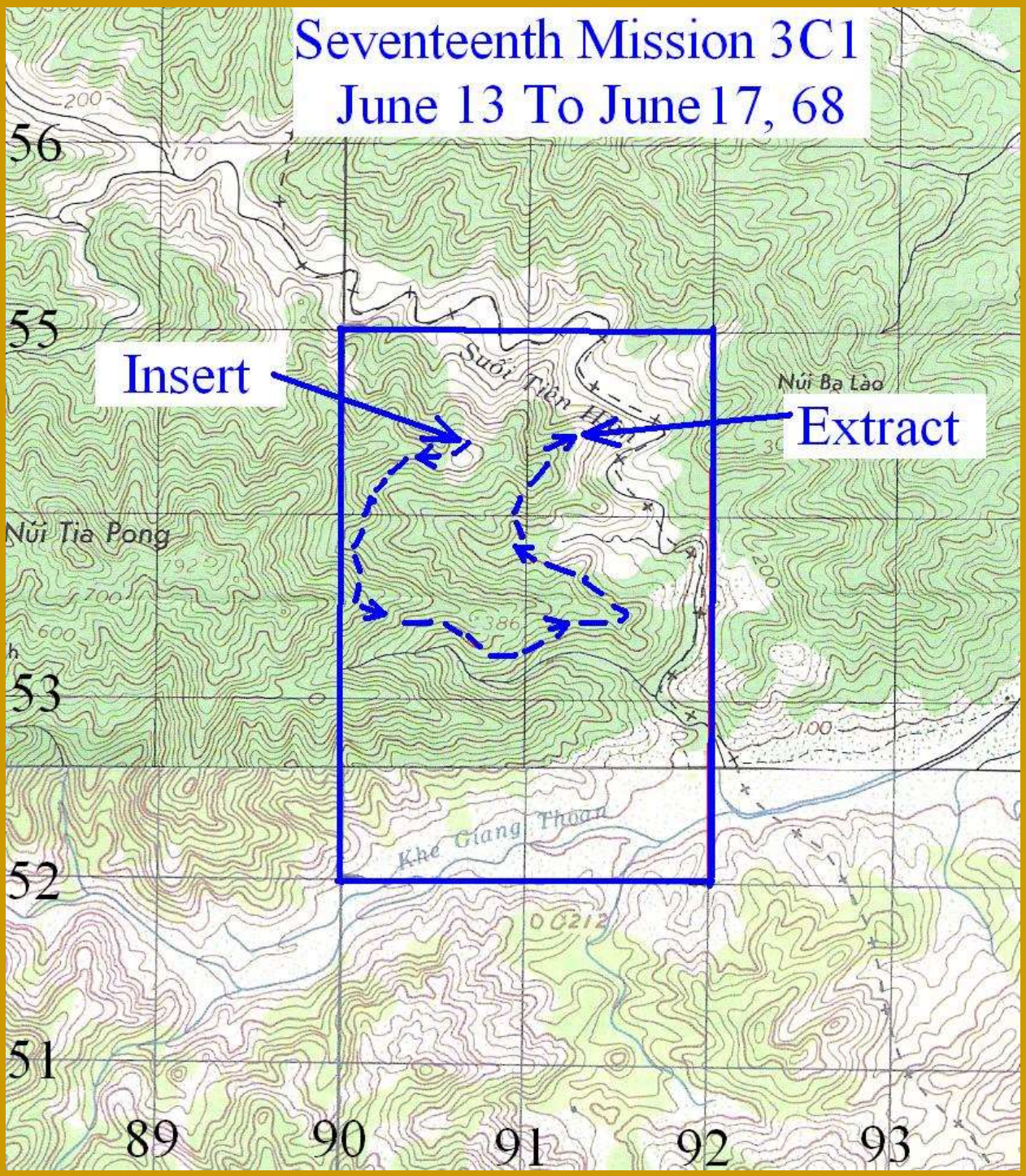
Twelve days! Marble Champ has been in the rear for twelve long days. I don't mind the guard duty, but that shit burning is about to get to me. You talk about getting shit from the company Gunny; I've had barrels of it.

By the day's end, we are assigned a mission. Our team will be going southwest of the Rock Pile and will be inserted by CH-46. The mission will run from June 13th to June 16th. A short mission but as far as I'm concerned it will be a holiday from the honey bowls. Marble Champ will run a regular recon and surveillance of the area, plotting all trails, setting up OP's, with hopes of an enemy sighting. Activity appears to be light in the area but that doesn't mean much to the team. We know we're not being sent into this area for time off. The enemy is in there or we wouldn't be going in. As the team packs for the mission, all team members double check each item taken, putting it in its right spot. All weapons are test fired, making sure they are in perfect working order and cleaned. Once the rifle barrel is taped to keep the dirt out, we are ready. Since my second patrol I have carried an M-16 on most of the missions. After the Hill 94 patrol, I always make it a point to take my extra bolt and keep it in easy retrieving distance. My extractor may never break again but I won't be caught dead without the extra bolt on a mission.

PATROL 17; JUNE 13TH TO 17TH

Now over the team's assigned recon zone, the crew chief gives the thumbs up as the chopper drops into the LZ. Taking no enemy fire, the team is off the CH-46 and setting up a defensive three-sixty. After a

moment of observing, listening and getting a compass orientation, we proceed to our assigned recon zone.



As the days pass, Marble Champ moves about the recon zone only finding trails, some not even well used. The team feels the area may have been heavily used in past months but not at this time. Tomorrow will be the last day for Marble Champ in this area. The early morning will bring the team's extract. A patrol of this type may seem to be a skate but it's not. Every team member is at the ready from the beginning to the end of each mission. When you walk through the jungles of Vietnam as a member of a Recon Team, the tension is always high. Teams are most often placed in areas where the enemy is very active. Sometimes patrols extend so far into enemy territory that they are barely within range of friendly fire support and during inclement weather, air support is practically non-existent. Eight Marines maneuvering through an area infested with thousands of North Vietnamese regular army soldiers definitely pushes patrol members anxiety levels to the limit. Aside from the enemy desperately wanting to kill us, we're constantly fighting the elements of a tropical rainforest.

Out of the night's harbor site, the team carefully observes our LZ to make sure it is safe for an extraction. With the LZ scanned and clear of any enemy movement, George notifies the aircraft and receives a reply that they will be at our location in a matter of moments. As the team moves to the extract point, gunships are overhead. Then, as the 46 makes his approach, the gunships open up with suppression fire as the extract chopper sets in the zone. Every time they do that it scares the shit out of me. The North Vietnamese army had specialized killer teams which would attempt to track a Marine recon team and hit them just as they were getting extracted. It was their hopes that they could also shoot down a helicopter. That is the reason that gunships, and at times

jets, would strafe the area surrounding the extraction point. For that last moment before the chopper would land, with explosions all around, one would never know if they were shooting at the enemy or just laying down preventative suppressive fire. On most occasions, the aircraft would not be able to see the ground around the landing zone due to the dense jungle vegetation but one would never know if one of the pilots actually did spot the enemy. Therefore, each insertion and extraction of a recon team was quite a hectic and nerve-racking experience. Nevertheless, the team was on the chopper and out of there. With this mission over, the team will be taken back to Quang Tri Recon for debriefing.

JUNE 17, 1968

After the team's return, Marble Champ will have a day of rest. This gives team members time to unpack from the mission, patch up cuts and bruises, go to the small PX on the base or just take it easy for the day. Most of the guys have letter reading to catch up on.

Since my second patrol, which was on Hill 94, I have had problems when urinating. There were times I thought I saw blood. Today I find the blood is heavy and it scared me. I am wondering if the grenades thrown in and around the bomb crater, I was in, didn't mess me up on the inside somehow. To say the least, I went to the base aid station to see the doctor. After a test was taken, he told me to come back tomorrow.

Returning early the next day to the base aid station, I was told that I needed to go over to the main medical station and was given paperwork for the doctor to look at. Once there, more tests were run, resulting in the doctor telling me it didn't look good. I'm thinking,

“What doesn’t look good?” I was told to wait outside the ER, and they would let me know the doctor’s decision. As I waited, I wondered if I would have to go in the hospital or maybe I could just take something to get well.

After sitting outside the ER for a couple of hours, choppers started coming into the landing zone. They were loaded with wounded. Man, I couldn’t believe what I saw. There were guys, guys my age, some with bullet holes, arms blown off and legs gone. They all passed right in front of me. As the next chopper came in, there was a guy on a stretcher and as he was brought past me, his arm fell off the stretcher and landed at my feet. As the two stretcher bearers stopped, one guy looked at me and said, “Put the son-of-a-bitch on the stretcher, Marine.” I bent over, picked the arm up, placing it on the young man’s chest and then passed out. Other Marines came to my aid, helping me to a bench. As I sat there, I hid my face, but the guy knew by the tears streaming down my face what the deal was. He just put his arm around me and held me. I’ll never forget those passing faces, never.



Unknown Marine



Wounded Marines entering Delta Med after a battle with North Vietnamese

At the end of the day, after so many wounded were taken care of, the doctor calls me in and said that I was being sent to the USS Sanctuary for more tests. I had no idea that it was a ship off the coast of Nam. Once there, I was placed in a room with other troops, some wounded very badly. After several days on the ship, which was heaven for me without a doubt, I still had not heard any word on my condition. If not for the wounded, this is one place that a guy could definitely get to like. You eat off real glass plates with a knife, fork and spoon. The food is great and the milk isn't sour. When you're finished eating, there is no washing your plate, just leave it, someone picks everything up.

Shit, these suckers even have ice cream. They have real sheets and beds with mattresses. Boy, do some guys really skate in the Nam.



USS Sanctuary

After a few days I was told I would be going to Da Nang and on to Japan for an operation. I was told if I were wounded in my present condition I would most likely bleed to death before I could get treatment. Tomorrow will be the 25th of June and I will leave early.

Once in Da Nang, I ask the doctor if there is any way I could stay here, and not go to Japan. I told him I really couldn't go because I was point man for a Recon team, and if it wasn't serious; I just didn't need to go. He told me I was losing blood and it had to be taken care of now. I knew the guys were the best in Marble Champ but who would run

point? I was worried about them and hoped this wouldn't take long. I felt as if I were abandoning my family.

JUNE 27, 1968

I am in Japan. The hospital is loaded with wounded but it is clean and cool inside. The food is as if your own chef has cooked just for you. What I call getting back to real living is the plates. There are no metal trays here. It's all the real stuff and more ice cream. Man, I was in heaven for sure. I hope the guys are okay.

I have been put in a ward of soldiers of all branches. The wounded and wounds of these soldiers at this hospital are overwhelming. In the few days I've been here, I have been overwhelmed by the horror of seeing torn bodies, some so badly mutilated it amazes me that they are still alive.

As I walk through the hospital, I feel afraid and mad at the same time. I feel I shouldn't even be here. It's as if I don't rate to be here. My injury is not in the same class as that of these brave men. I've got to get out of here, back to the Nam, back to my team.

This place makes my anger boil as if a demon resting inside me wanted not to just fight the NVA but take revenge. With time on my hands, I have more time to think and now I wonder if it is all worth it. Can this war be won? Just the cost in human suffering that I've witnessed here is too high.

I believe the South Vietnamese people whom we are trying to shield from communism really do not care. They just want to get on with their

lives. These people have been fighting since before I was born. The French, the Japanese, the Chinese, now us. The North Vietnamese are not weak. They have one thing over us, they're fighting for their homeland and their people are behind them. They have a cause and are firmly committed to it. For the United States to win this war, they would have to kill every man, woman and child. I have great respect for them as soldiers but yet I have a burning desire to inflict pain on them for what they have done to us. This has become a downright dirty and ugly war. Rules of the Geneva Convention do not apply here. American units that were wiped out were sometimes found mutilated.

Today I am helping some of the seriously wounded men move about the hospital. Its guys that are confined to beds or wheelchairs that I take wherever they need or want to go. This afternoon I had to take one of the guys down for his checkup. As I tried to get him and his bed in the elevator, I just couldn't get it to work. God, I felt bad, I couldn't get the damn bed in the elevator with him on it. This guy had been hit with 40MM friendly fire. Most of his platoon had been killed and this guy was really hurt bad. As he sits up, getting off the bed, he tells me to just lean him in the corner. As I got the bed in, and helped him on, I could see his wounds. Shit, this guy had areas on his body with flesh gone two inches wide and ten to fifteen inches long. He told me it was okay and we moved on.

It's a new day. A guy two racks down calls out "Smitty, come here." I did. He told me to get his camera and help him get his dressings off that covered his wounds. He said, "I want you to take a couple of pictures of my bullet hole for me." I said, "You got to be shitting me." He said, "No man, please, for me Smitty." I helped him remove the dressing and once the outer dressing was taken off, I could see the entry hole was

very small. The exit hole was packed with dark red gauze, so blood soaked it was almost black. When I started to remove it, he said to just pinch it in the middle and pull it out. As I pinched it, my fingers were instantly blood stained, but when I pulled the gauze packing out of the hole, he flinched. Son-of-a-bitch! I couldn't believe it. The hole was huge and cone-shaped. My God, I could see inside him the hole was so big. I told him, "Damn man! I can't believe you even made it." I snapped a few shots and redressed his wound, being as careful as possible. Man, if the nurse would have caught us it would have been hell to pay. What a day!

Today I will have my operation. It seems the grenades back on Hill 94 put out enough concussion to do something inside me. They say it's no big deal and I will be out in no time. Guess I don't have to worry about an experienced doctor around here. These guys have probably looked inside hundreds of 18 and 19-year-olds. After seeing all of this horror, I think some of them might be having second thoughts about the career choice. The stress on the staff must be enormous, to see these young men day after day wounded and in pain. The nurses that work with these wounded are the bravest and should be given the respect of any combat soldier. They go through day after day appearing to be strong, holding their heads high. I know at night they must cry themselves to sleep thinking of the sights they have seen each day.

It's the next day, I guess I slept in. I'm a little sore but I won't say shit. These guys in my ward hurt all the time. They've paid a heavy price. A little cut like mine isn't shit. The guy next to me got his pecker shot off and the man across from me has no legs. At night it is as if you relive the battles these men fought. The moans and screams of nightmares are enough to either put you in a nightmare or pull you out of the one

you're in. All I know is I've got to get well and out of here, back to the guys and the bush. I feel payback will be in order once I return.

JULY 15, 1968

I am much better now and have even ventured into the city. Japan is interesting. When you go into a bar, girls flock to you saying "G.I., you want a girl, buy me drink." God, I think, a gook is a gook but then the other side of me experiences something different. They are very soft and it makes me think of being home with my own girl.

JULY 17, 1968

I am out of here. The doctor tells me I'll be going to Okinawa tomorrow. After saying my good-byes to the guys, I wish them all good luck and said I'll probably see them back in the world someday. I leave in the morning.

JULY 18, 1968

I have arrived in Okinawa. I've been put in a medical company and can tell I hate it already. There is nothing to do and I know I've got to get out of here and soon.

JULY 20, 1968

It has taken three days of complaining to everyone up to the Colonel to get out of here. Tomorrow I will return to the Nam. They all think I am crazy wanting to go back. Maybe I am crazy maybe the whole world is crazy. I know the guys will understand and be glad to see me. I know

whoever is running point will probably be damn happy I'm back. It's my job point, and the team is important to me. My team mates are my family.

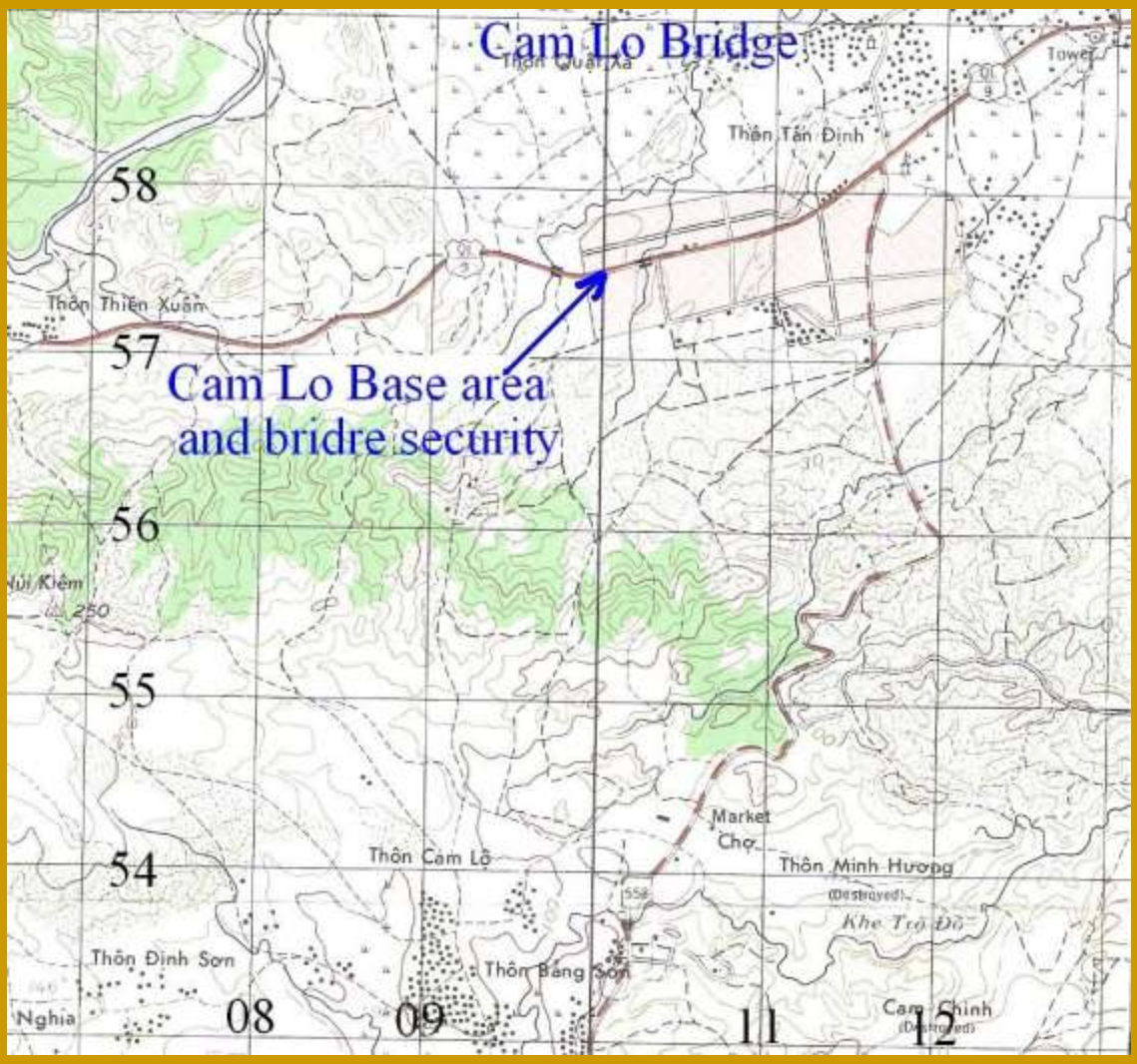
JULY 21, 1968

At the close of July 1968, I have returned to the Nam from my stay in the hospital. Once back in Da Nang I start my way north to Quang Tri to join my unit tomorrow. I had procured a .38 pistol out of a jeep. It only had six rounds but I don't feel comfortable without a weapon. Now under way, I find it isn't as easy as I thought it would be to get back. It takes several rides before I am within walking distance.

Once in the company area I report in. With all my paperwork dropped off at the company office, I will start my search for my foot locker. Luckily, I find it in the company supply area just as I left it. The important things like my bush hat, boots and the first part of my diary are okay. What is unlucky is that the team is on special guard duty in Cam Lo. I will not be able to get there until the 23rd.

On the 23rd, a rough-rider departs Quang Tri for Cam Lo where I am reunited with the team. They are glad to see me, just as I thought. It is good to be back in the Nam with the guys even if we are pulling guard duty at Cam Lo. The team will be in this location for a short time, and then return to Quang Tri.

PART THREE



Camp Cam Lo Area

Once I had reunited with the team, I was happy to see and hear that everyone was still all in one piece and no one had been wounded or killed. Mike Green has been keeping a diary as well and was able to bring me up to date on the events that had taken place in the team and Charlie Company while I was in the hospital.

It seems, on the day I had left, our team call sign was changed to "Dixie Diner" but missions deep into enemy territory stayed the same. Even with the change in call signs, 3Charlie1 still refers to ourselves in the rear as the Marble Champ gang.

On June 20, 1968 Team Three Charlie One, along with the rest of Charlie Company has made a sweep of our perimeter. The NVA had been setting booby traps outside the wire close to the base. This posed a problem for the security forces patrolling the perimeter checking the wire for any breaks. Only one enemy was seen in the area at the time of the sweep but disappeared into the bush.

On June 24, 1968 Three Charlie One was inserted for a five-day mission returning on the 29th. The team had made no enemy sightings and found very little activity in the zone.

On the 29th of June the battalion had inserted six recon teams from Quang Tri to Camp Carroll with the intent of making enemy contact with known NVA units. A company of infantry was on standby at Camp Carroll; to act as a reaction force and a recon battalion was also on standby for additional support.

On June 30, 1968 Dixie Diner, Three Charlie One and Ringlet Three Charlie two were inserted by rough-rider at a check point off highway #9 then proceeded down Muc Duc road well into the bush. Once in

their designated area of operation, parting each moving into their respective recon zones.

On the next day team 3Charlie 1 spotted 12 individuals moving towards the team. As the team set up an ambush the 12 people turned out to be civilians looking for firewood. The team also observed another 100 plus individuals later in the day, but after gunships were over-head, they too were found to be civilians in the area. With two days remaining in the recon zone the team watched several groups of civilians and set up as many as six ambush sites. In this sector that 3Charlie1 was patrolling there have been company size enemy units as well as confirmed battalions moving through the area. In a situation such as this it takes total team work. Only one man can set off the ambush, the Patrol Leader. One mistake can cost a life of a team member or in this case the lives of several civilians. On July 3, 1968 the team was extracted with a flip-flop at 1630 hours returning to Quang Tri alpha sierra.

July 4, 1968 morning formation brought Mike Green a warrant to Sergeant. Mike was stepping up in the ranks and was forced to move to the NCO quarters taking the Platoon Sergeants job.

On the 5th of July 1968 George Boks was awarded for a heroic achievement, the NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL as well as the Purple Heart for wounds received under enemy fire. The award was for his outstanding radio work during an enemy contact that occurred on January 19, 1968 while linked with a Force Recon team deep in enemy territory. This was described as well in the writing of the team's sixth mission. The award and citation describe the intense situation both recon teams were in during the enemy contact. The reality was that

without George Boks' expertise radio work the teams may have taken additional causalities. It is men like George Boks as well as all recon team members that are constantly putting themselves in danger to save others.



George Boks



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAS AWARDED THE

NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL

(WITH COMBAT "V")

TO

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS GEORGE T. BOKS, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

FOR

HEROIC ACHIEVEMENT AS A RADIO OPERATOR WITH COMPANY C, THIRD RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION, THIRD MARINE DIVISION IN VIETNAM ON 19 JANUARY 1968

S 18TH DAY OF APRIL 1968

Paul R. Ignatius

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
HEADQUARTERS, FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC
FPO, SAN FRANCISCO 96610

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL to

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS GEORGE T. BOKS

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For heroic achievement while serving as a Radio Operator with Company C, Third Reconnaissance Battalion, Third Marine Division in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On 19 January 1968, Private First Class BOKS was participating in a sixteen man reconnaissance patrol west of Quang Tri City when the Marines suddenly came under a heavy volume of enemy fire and received several hand grenades within their position. Although painfully wounded in the face by grenade fragments, he skillfully requested and adjusted artillery fire to within sixty meters of the patrol's perimeter. Then, as the patrol leader directed the Marines fire, Private First Class BOKS calmly maintained radio contact with higher headquarters and accurately relayed tactical information. Later, when helicopters arrived to extract the patrol, he ably directed the aircraft into the landing zone while simultaneously directing the strafing runs of armed helicopters. By his courage, bold initiative and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of great personal danger, Private First Class BOKS contributed significantly to the safe extraction of his patrol and upheld the finest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service."

Private First Class BOKS is authorized to wear the Combat "V".

FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY,

V. H. KRULAK
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, U. S. MARINE CORPS
COMMANDING GENERAL, FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC

Also, on the 5th of July Aaron L. Moore was awarded the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received while under an enemy rocket attack at Dong Ha. Jerry Beasley told me that he and Aaron had just arrived in country. It was the first day they had both arrived in the Recon Company area in Dong Ha. Jerry told me the team was in the bush on a mission and he an Aaron had just finished settling in the 3Charlie1 hooch when they came under a rocket attack. Jerry said on the first-round impact, he looked up at Aaron and right between his eyes was a piece of shrapnel about the size of a half-a-dollar stuck in his head. Fortunately for Aaron the wound wasn't serious. The wound was taken care of and Aaron was treated, but what a way to start your tour off in the Nam.

Mike also informs me that Division was mounting an extensive operation which would require a few Recon Marines. Later that day on the 5th of July the orders from Division Headquarters required First and Third Platoons of Charlie Company to move to the Cam Lo Bridge to provide security. Team 3Charlie1 has a portion of the perimeter and 3Charlie2 and 3Charlie3 have the bridge itself. The area along the river was dense vegetation and teems with a variety of snakes. The uplands are rolling terrain with low scrub brush about knee-high. Perimeter guard consisted of the teams standing 50 percent alerts during the nights and caught up on sleep during the day with a minimum of men on the perimeter.



Cam Lo Bridge



July 6, 1968, the tank OP took a few sniper rounds, and about 30 troops conducted a sweep around our side of the perimeter without spotting anything.

On the 8th the team tore down the old shower before it fell down and built a new one up from stolen lumber. Someone "found" a 55-gallon drum for the shower and a few days later Lt. Osborn sent up a spigot. Also, on the 8th Wayne Thompson returned from pre-scuba school. Since the shower was not yet ready, the team hitched a ride on a tank to the bridge for showers – the first pressurized shower for me, said Mike since he had left Okinawa.



Photo (Top) Wayne Thompson, (R) Mike Green (Cam Lo Shower)

On the 18th the perimeter was invaded by children and a herd of water buffalo and we spent most of the day chasing them out of the perimeters wire.



Above: Local kids to close to the perimeter at Cam Lo outpost



Area landscape South from Cam Lo





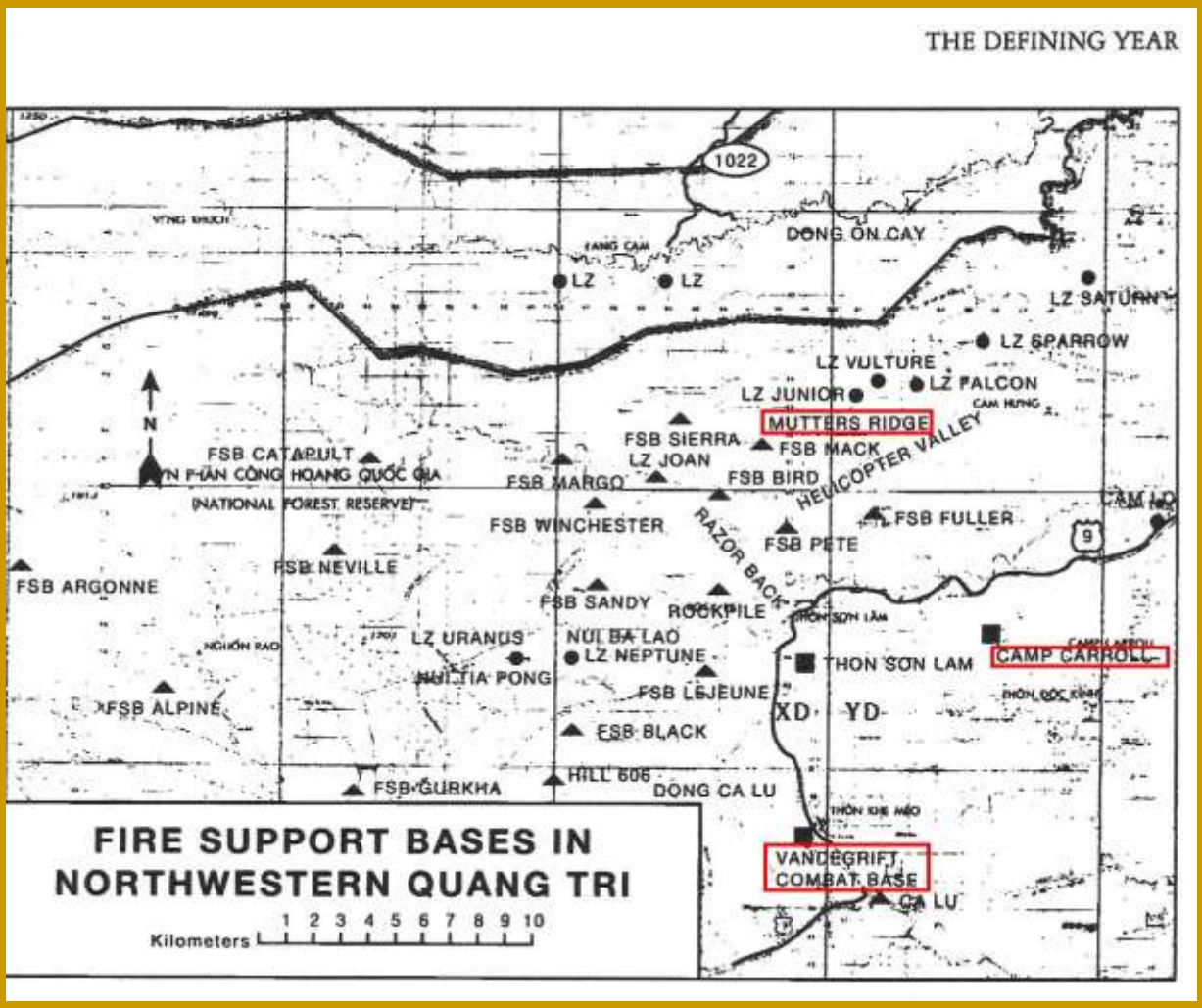
Cam Lo Village



Cam Lo Village

All in all, the month at Cam Lo Bridge was somewhat uneventful but it provided a respite from being in the bush. The worst part was that the team came down with dysentery and at times not everybody made it to the latrines on time. We didn't know if it was the water or the food at the mess hall, but we resorted to eating our twenty-six-year-old 1942 C-Rats.

Once the job was finished at Cam Lo, I along with team 3Charlie1 and the rest of Charlie Company teams returned to Quang Tri.



It is now August 1968, and Charlie Company has returned to Quang Tri. George Boks is short and the next mission will be his last patrol. Steve Laktash has been put in another team, Two Charlie One as patrol leader just after I had left the Nam for my medical problems. Steve was one of the best radio operators and patrol leaders 3Charlie1 has had. He will be missed in the team.



Steve Laktash Dong Ha 1968

(Above photo) Steve Laktash, his dedication and courage were exemplary. On many occasions he had risked his own life to save the lives of his fellow team members in 3Charlie1.

With the new changes in our team, Randy Rhoads will be taking the primary radio. Randy is very experienced on the radio and is an outstanding member of the team. There is no doubt he is the man for this job.

Mike Green has taken the Platoon Sergeants position so Wayne Thompson will take Mike's job as patrol leader. Wayne has had several patrols as assistant patrol leader and I think he will also be outstanding as the team's leader. I've seen Wayne under pressure in an enemy contact and he makes quick decisions that are right. Most of all he's scared shitless like all of us. If you're not afraid of the enemy you may not exert your mind to its fullest to defeat him. Any man that says he's not afraid is crazy.

With some reorganization, there should be no problems. Team 3Charlie team members are tight in the bush as well as the rear. They are all very loyal to each other. With Doc Watchorn also leaving for a new assignment down south and George on his last patrol, we will miss all their combined experience but they have been good teachers. These guys will be missed but nevertheless, our missions must go on. After only three days back in the area Dixie Diner 3Charlie1 receives a warning order.

Dixie Diner's mission will be southwest of Quang Tri. The team will be inserted by Ch-46 helicopter on the fifth of August for a five-day mission. Dixie Diner's mission is to set up observation sites, patrolling the assigned recon zone for any signs of the enemy. If enemy are

sighted, call in supporting arms. If the possibility arises, capture a prisoner – basically another stingray operation. The team is informed at the briefing that there are enemy rocket sites in the RZ which pose a danger to friendly forces. The terrain in this area is low rolling hills with elephant grass about three to four feet high. It's a backyard patrol, but nevertheless the team knows that backyard or not, its Charlie country, and we are ready.

While I was in the hospital, the team received two new members, Robert Jenkins from Florida and Daniel Tirado from Bronx, New York City. I can tell by looking at these guys that they're going to work out fine. Robert is quiet, he kind of reminds me of myself. I kept my mouth shut and my ears open when I first got here also. Robert will run second point position behind me. Daniel will take up the seventh-man position carrying the Unit One (Medical Bag) in front of Al Moore at Tail End Charlie and the team's assistant patrol leader.



Robert Jenkins



Daniel Tirado

PATROL 18; AUGUST 5TH TO 9TH

As team Dixie Diner sits on the chopper, we wait for the crew to make all last-minute checks before getting underway. With the crew in place, the rotors are turning as the 46 lifts to the sky.



Left: Radio operator Randy Rhoads, Patrol Leader Wayne Thompson, and Point man James Smith

As we enter the area of the insertion point, all members of the team as well as the crew scan the ground below for any signs of the enemy. The insertion chopper is now circling the area while jets prep the zone. Once the jets move out of the area the gunships move in close also prepping our entry point as well. Once prepped, the team has thumbs up and we're inbound. With the 46 approaching the zone, gunships are abreast peppering the area with 7.62 gun-fire and rockets. As the CH-46 sets down in the zone, the team disembarks, forms a defensive 360 perimeter and scans the area for any sign of enemy. I check my compass as the 46 lifts out of the zone. Wayne verifies the direction

and we start moving. The team now realizes the 500-pound Snakes Eyes used to prep the zone have started a fire in the elephant grass to the west. The wind is blowing to the east and the team has seconds to get out of the zone before the fire overtakes us. I move at a run with the 100 plus pounds of gear and ammo strapped to my body along with my team mates.

We ran down the side of the hill to a saddle crossing over to the other side of the ridge. The heat is unbelievable and the fire is massive. Within one minute the fire has traveled over 300 meters, spreading in width as it climbs the small mountain. Dixie Diner has barely escaped the fire and some of the team members have had some of their hair singed. With the amount of ordnance on each team member, to be overtaken by a fire would be a disaster to the team. Once on fire, we would pop like a bag of fireworks. As the team looks on, the fire rages out of control but the team is now safe. Some of the team members are still coughing from inhaling the hot smoke. With the notification the team is Alpha Sierra, I move out and away from the insert point. We know that by now every NVA in the area must know that we are here so I must be careful. While moving at a fast pace to get out of the area, I am at a heightened state of alert and while traveling forward, I am making sure that both flanks are secure. If the enemy is within distance of the team, they know all the short cuts and could set up an ambush. If I see an area that looks like a possible ambush site, I may make some moves to try to draw fire. Every time I move out of an LZ, I go over the things old Cos told me. It's like a checklist locked in my mind and I try to leave nothing out. One mistake on my part and the whole team could be wiped out.

Now well away from the insert point, the team has found an OP site that will conceal the team giving us an opportunity to look the area over. Setting in the OP, it would be nice to see some enemy moving through the area. Maybe get some payback for the guys back at the hospital.

I look around the countryside at the low rolling hills, it reminds me of home and the days when I used to go deer hunting. Deer hunting and hunting the enemy are somewhat alike, you must be very quiet and smart. Smart enough to try to keep the edge on your side. The only catch here is these deer have weapons. As Dixie Diner scans the area from our observation point, we observe an area that might make for a good night's harbor site.

With on-calls set up on our projected site, the team moves in under the cover of darkness. Once Claymores are out, darkness is on us as the night watches start.

The night passes without incident and just before full daylight we retrieve our Claymores and move out. Moving out of the night's harbor site is always a tense situation because we never know if the enemy has followed us to the general location of the harbor site. Sometimes they would be unable to pinpoint our exact location and would wait patiently until they could hear our movement which would then give away our exact position. Before I got to Vietnam, George had an experience while on patrol in a night's harbor site which was quite hair-raising. The team had settled into their harbor site and during the night there was a torrential thunderstorm. After some time in the harbor site, one of the team members started to make a moaning sound at which point George placed his hand over the guy's mouth. The team

member who had made the moaning sound was bleeding around the area of his eyes and nose. The rest of the team members were quickly woken up. They discovered that the team member had been hit in the face by a rock. For the rest of the night, the team stayed on full alert. It turned out that in the heavy rain and thunder, the NVA were unsure of the team's exact position and were throwing rocks to try to stir the team up into giving away its position. The team did not dare engage the enemy at that time due to the fact that air support would have been impossible due to the inclement weather and the team had no way of knowing how large the enemy force was. If the situation had deteriorated, the team could have closed in its ring of artillery fire but this also could have endangered the team due to the close proximity of the enemy. Luckily, patience, stealth and silence saved the team. Therefore, all teams would be very cautious before they moved out of a harbor site.

AUGUST 8, 1968

As the team starts the day, Dixie Diner moves through the RZ finding trails that indicate enemy movement within the area. Dixie Diner will set up a new OP and check the area out. Throughout the day, the team has made no enemy sightings. After noon chow, maybe we'll move to a new location that may prove to be more productive. As the team finishes chow, Wayne makes a sighting and in seconds a fire mission is being worked up. As Wayne and Big Al follow the enemy's movement, George and Randy work up a fire mission. The enemy is moving to the north, carrying a long shiny tube, probably a rocket launcher. There are four enemy and they are moving fast. As the fire mission is called in, the team now watches and waits for the artillery rounds to land. These suckers are history. They're in the open and there's nowhere for them

to hide. Payback time is here. As the team waits for the arty mission, there is nothing. The artillery support evidently got a priority call from an infantry unit that was in contact with the enemy and could not respond to our request. All the team can do is watch the enemy move over the ridge out of sight. We've lost them but the team will continue to observe the zone in hopes there will be more enemy passing through the area. With today being the last day in the zone for the team, there may be no further chance of getting the enemy in that position again. There is nothing worse than having the enemy in your sights and not being able to take them out. We could have called in air support but by the time they would have arrived on station, the enemy would be in the thickness of the jungle and they were too far away to try to take on with small arms fire from us. With little time left in the day, soon the team will move to the last night's harbor site.

AUGUST 9TH, 1968

With our night going without problems, the team is out of the site standing by for our extract. While waiting for extract we still have the hope of maybe sighting some enemy but that was not to be – no kills on this patrol. We get word that the choppers are on their way. As they near our position, I hit the lead chopper with my signal mirror and he has us spotted. In seconds the CH-46 is in the zone and the team is taken out of the recon zone. Once in the rear Marble Champ 3C1 reports to debriefing.

It's time for a send-off for George. I will truly miss George but he has done his time in the Nam. One of these days, if I should make it out of here alive, I would like to look George up. I was always amazed how he could keep a cool head while relaying vital information on the radio and

at the same time return fire. Under pressure George was one of the best. With 28 patrols under his belt, his experience will be missed. He always took care of the team and will be a great loss to team 3Carlie1.



Jack Kinson and George Boks

“Thirteen-month tour is over and we are alive, next stop the world”.



Angel Reyes gives George Boks farewell as George departs to the USA.

As usual in the rear it's do a little work, do a little play, answer letters from home, or just try to take it easy.

AUGUST 14, 1968

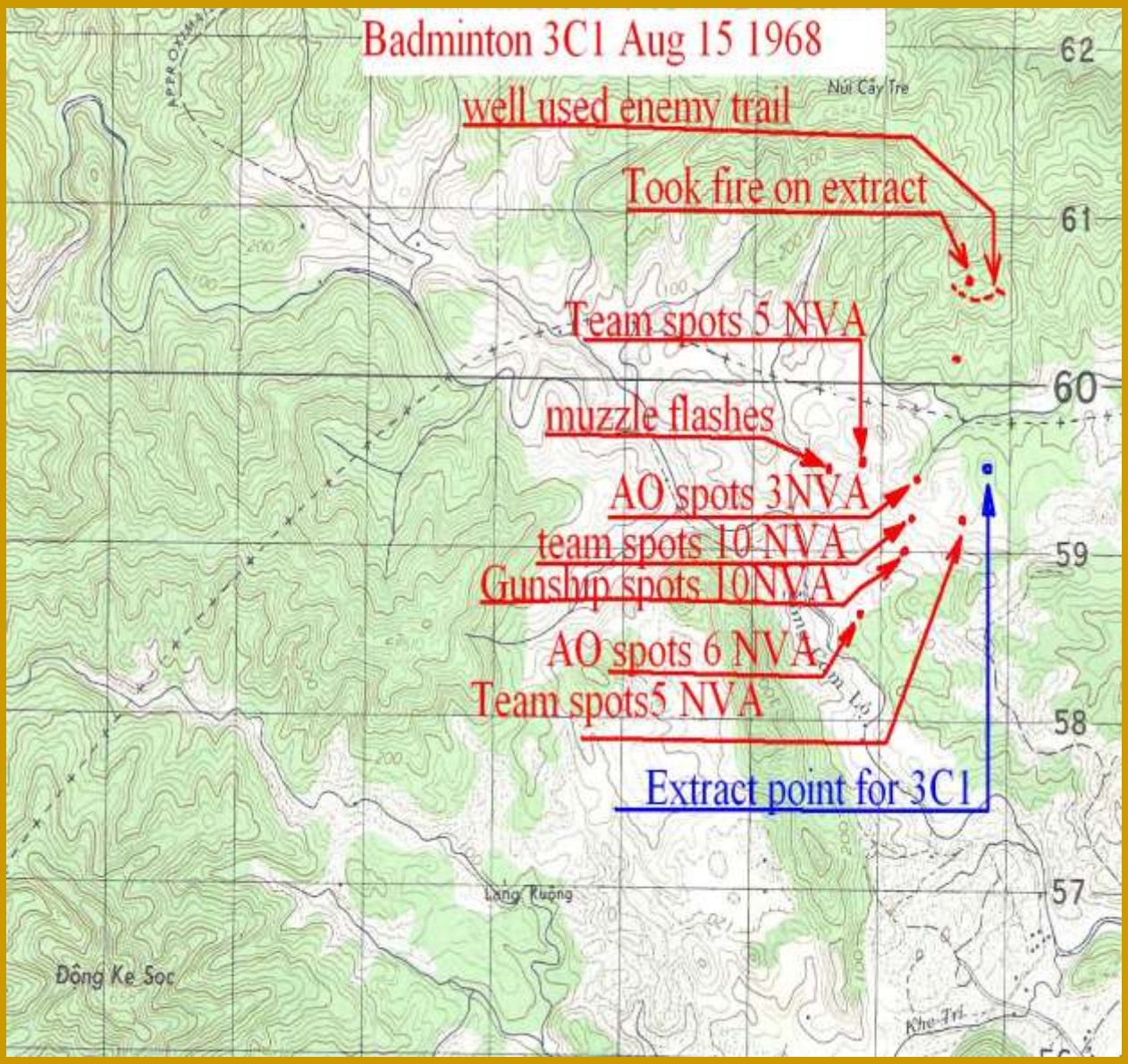
Today is my birthday. I am 19 years old. Still too young to vote, yet still old enough to fight for the good old USA. What the hell, I am in the rear taking it easy. Most of all I am alive. I could be in the bush running for my life. A guy doesn't get many presents over here but before the close of the day 3 Charlie 1 is gifted with a warning order. I guess this will be my present.

Three Charlie One's mission will be north of the Rock Pile very close to Mutters Ridge area. The team's mission will start on the 15th of

August ending on the 19th. With this mission in a tough area, again the team will be faced with steep mountains, August heat and lots of enemy. You don't know what hot is until you've experienced August in Vietnam. With the number of enemies in this area, hunting will be very good. The team's briefing informs us of several enemy sightings within the area. Our mission will be to recon the area, plotting all trails and set up OP's, in hopes of spotting enemy passing through the zone. If enemy are spotted, we are to call in supporting arms on the targets. As always if possible, take a prisoner. For Three Charlie One, the remainder of the day will be spent preparing and packing our gear for the patrol and tomorrow we'll be picked up by a chopper in the morning. The team's mission will consist of five men which will give a chance for other team mates to stay behind. I am blessed with a birthday gift after all and will be one of the team members to stay back. I will be worried of course but know the team will be OK.

From time-to-time call signs change and Three Charlie One had their share of call sign names. Marble Champ was the longest running and was used from late 1967 into 1968. Even with the name change we were always referred to as the "Marble Champ gang". No matter what the call sign, there was only one Three Charlie One. On this mission the call sign will be Badminton 3Charlie1.

The following is the report of that mission;



DECLASSIFIED ① Aug 16 1968 3c1
Pg 15 of 30

[redacted]

RELEASED BY: CAPT. C.R. [redacted]

DTG: 160263Z AUGUST 1968
30 MARINE DIVISION

FM: THIRD RECON BN
TO: CG THIRD MARDIV
CG PCV

INFO: FIRST AIR CAV DIV USA
FIRST BDE FIFTH MECH INF USA
THIRD MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG-THREE NINE
PROVINCE ADVISOR QUANG TRI
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

ACTION-IMMEDIATE
INFO-ROUTINE

CO
XO
S-2
S-3
S-4
SUP
MT
COMM

Recon

RECEIVED
17 AUG 1968
R076

BT

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT

Telecon Ser No. 4257-68
Copy 1 of 3

1. RECON TEAM: BADMINTON 301 (5 MEN)
2. DATE INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 151030H/151630H
3. SPOT REPORT IN LIEU OF PATROL REPORT.

OPO 857-68
(7 HOURS)

151130H (XD975595) TEAM OBSERVED 8-10 ENEMY AT (XD973592) MOVING EAST TOWARD THE TEAM. ENEMY WORE GREEN UTILITIES, BUSH COVERS, [redacted] TYPE WEAPONS, CARTRIDGE BELTS, AND AT LEAST FOUR ENEMY WORE HEAVY PACKS. TEAM CONDUCTED AN ARTILLERY MISSION OF SIX ROUNDS ON THE ENEMY.

GUNSHIPS HAD OBSERVED SIX ENEMY AT (XD969587) AND WERE FIRING ON THEM. THE TEAM CALLED THE GUNSHIPS AND THE GUNSHIPS MADE RUNS ON THE ENEMY SPOTTED BY THE TEAM. THE TEAM OBSERVED TWO ENEMY MOVING WEST AFTER THE GUNSHIPS FIRED ON THE ENEMY.

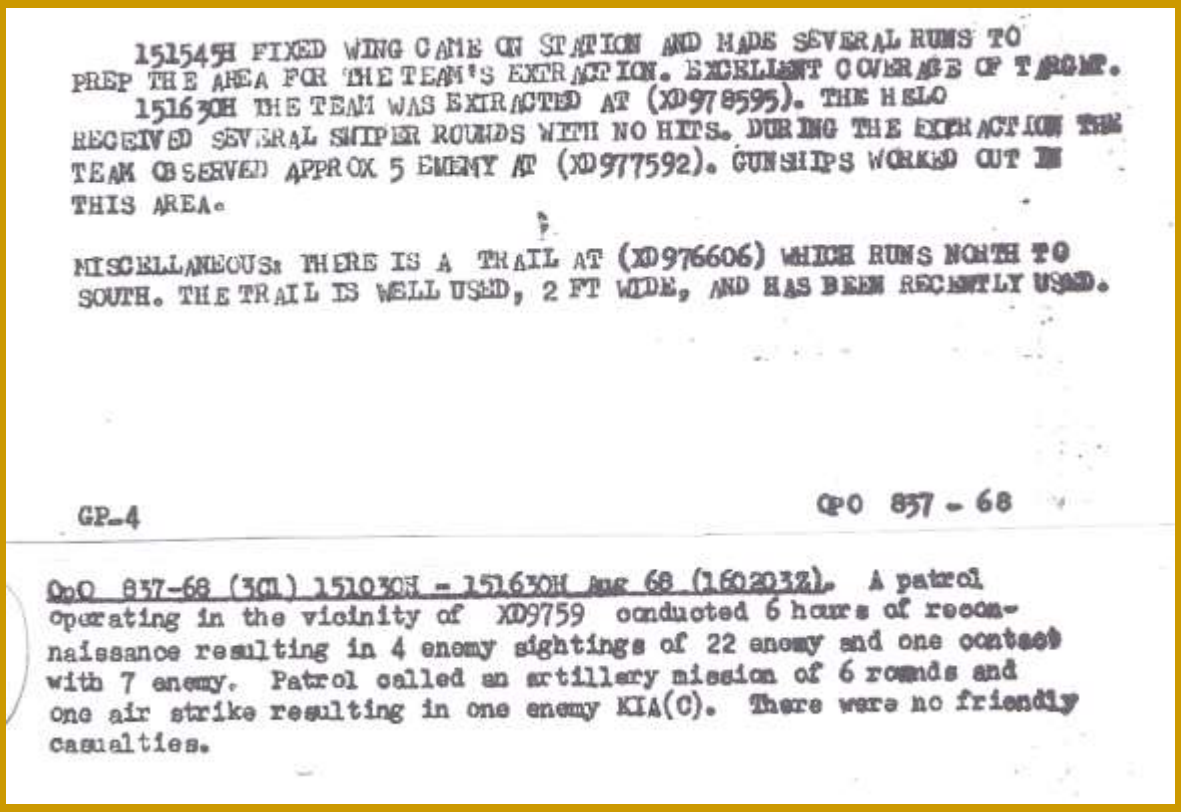
151230H THE TEAM CALLED FOR AN AO AND THE AO OBSERVED 3 ENEMY AT (XD973596) MOVING TOWARD THE TEAM. THE GUNSHIPS MADE SEVERAL RUNS ON THE ENEMY RESULTING IN (1) KBA. THE AO CALLED A FIRE MISSION ON THE ENEMY WITH UNKNOWN RESULTS.

151400H THE TEAM OBSERVED 2-5 ENEMY AT (XD968595) MOVING EAST. UNKNOWN WEAPONS, UNIFORMS, ETC. TEAM CONTINUED MISSION. TEAM WAS UNABLE TO CALL FIRE MISSION BECAUSE OF FRIENDLY AIRCRAFT IN THE AREA.

151500H ANOTHER AO CAME ON STATION AND OBSERVED 10 ENEMY AT (XD976602). ENEMY WAS MOVING SOUTH. GUNSHIPS CAME ON STATION AND FIRED ON THE ENEMY.

151530H THE GUNSHIPS OBSERVED 5 ENEMY (XD971590) AND FIRED ON THE ENEMY. THE AO OBSERVED MUZZLE FLASHES VIC OF (XD965595) AND THOUGHT THE ENEMY WAS SHOOTING AT THE TEAM.

[redacted]



151545H FIXED WING CAME ON STATION AND MADE SEVERAL RUNS TO PREP THE AREA FOR THE TEAM'S EXTRACTION. EXCELLENT COVERAGE OF TARGET.
1516 30H THE TEAM WAS EXTRACTED AT (XD978595). THE HELO RECEIVED SEVERAL SNIPER ROUNDS WITH NO HITS. DURING THE EXTRACTION THE TEAM OBSERVED APPROX 5 ENEMY AT (XD977592). GUNSHIPS WORKED OUT IN THIS AREA.

MISCELLANEOUS: THERE IS A TRAIL AT (XD976606) WHICH RUNS NORTH TO SOUTH. THE TRAIL IS WELL USED, 2 FT WIDE, AND HAS BEEN RECENTLY USED.

GP-4 OpO 837 - 68

OpO 837-68 (3Cl) 151030H - 151630H Aug 68 (160203Z). A patrol operating in the vicinity of XD9759 conducted 6 hours of reconnaissance resulting in 4 enemy sightings of 22 enemy and one contact with 7 enemy. Patrol called an artillery mission of 6 rounds and one air strike resulting in one enemy KIA(C). There were no friendly casualties.

AUGUST 17, 1968

With the team making enemy contact on the first day in the zone the team was taken out of the contact and returned to our home base for debriefing. All team members were okay with no one in the team killed or wounded.

3Charlie1 has been given a new mission. It will be a backyard mission just outside Dong Ha. Up with the rising sun, the team boards a rough-rider and departs to Dong Ha. With Dong Ha only a few miles to the north very soon the mission will be under way.

PATROL 19

Once at Dong Ha, Randy notifies the base of the team's departure as we prepare to move off the base. After we are escorted through the base's defensive mine field we prepare to move into the bush.

When walking out of a base like Dong Ha, even with the notification of the team's departure there is always this question in the back of my head: Was everyone on the perimeter notified of the team's departure?

Considering Recon Marines do not wear helmets or flack-jackets and their faces are greased over with camouflage paint, it would be just our luck if some (NIC) "new guy in country", opened fire on us thinking we were the enemy. It's happened before, probably more than once. With the enemy troops moving closer to our bases, our troops are on edge. The way they look at it is, if you're seen outside the wire, your free game. The Lord will sort the dead out.

Once over a small ridge and out of the open view of the base, the team is somewhat more secure and the mission is underway. After a few hundred meters, Wayne gives the hand signal for a break. I will secure an area just ahead and wait for the team to move to my position. Once in a three-sixty, Wayne plots our location on the map while Randy calls the rear notifying them of our position and that we are Alpha Sierra within the recon zone.

As the area is scanned, Wayne Thompson and Big Al have found a location that will give the team good concealment and is defendable for an OP site. With our break at an end, Wayne points out my direction as I move to the OP.

Now in the site, Randy Rhoads sets up a fire mission around us as the team observes the area in hopes of an enemy sighting. As the time passes, there are no signs of the enemy. Three Charlie One will move out of our present OP to another location in hopes hunting will be better. As the day is coming to an end, the team will soon have to find a night's harbor site.

The team has been in the zone for three days unable to spot any enemy. There have been several trails found but that is about it. As the team sets in the last day's OP site, the temperature is high. With the high humidity and heat it feels like 130 degrees in the shade and considering we have no shade, it's unbearable. Each team member, this time of year, has the added burden of carrying many more canteens of water and before the mission is over, you'll be wishing you would have brought more.

I've always said this must be the only place in the world you can get a suntan through your clothes. But I guess the team would rather be where it's hot, temperature-wise, than where it's hot enemy-wise. With the heat so high, the team has only been able to recon the area in the early morning and late afternoon hours to eliminate heat stroke. OP's are set up throughout the day, relocating two to three times a day. It's not good to stay stationary for a long period of time in any location. To make yourself at home for the day in one place could get you surrounded and killed. Wayne, like Three Charlie One's past team leaders, take nothing for granted and always has a fallback move for safety.

As the day comes to a close the team will move into our last night's harbor site. Tomorrow the team will boot back to Dong Ha.

With the night's site going fine, the team moves out early and is now boot to Dong Ha. Once within distance of the US forces, Randy informs the base of our arrival. With permission to boot in, the team is Alpha Sierra moving to the base. Again, I sure hope all the troops on the line have been notified of the team's entry.

Once escorted into the base the team moves to the awaiting rough-rider. As our link-up takes place, the team is returned to Quang Tri for debriefing.

The mission is over and it's good to be back in the rear with good food, cool water, and a nice shower.

AUGUST 21, 1968

Our team has only been in the rear two days but receives a warning order. The mission will be east of the base of Khe Sanh. Our team will run a regular stingray recon mission, finding enemy units within the assigned recon zone. Our team is to be inserted by Ch-46 on the 22nd of August. Insert point will be Hill 679, an old fire support base just at the edge of the RZ. Once in, the team will boot to our zone. This area around Khe Sanh is tough in two ways -the terrain is totally mountainous with few landing zones and the jungle is so thick in areas that at high noon it's as dark as if the sun had set. The second thing is, the enemy. Khe Sanh, you might say, has been the stronghold for several divisions of enemy troops moving in from the North. The area is known as the Purple Heart capital of the world. In our briefing Wayne Thompson tells the team there may be as many as 30,000 NVA camped within the mountainous areas. I am sure this patrol will be good hunting, not only for Three Charlie One but the enemy as well. Three-Charlie One, even up against unbelievable odds can take care of the

job. If we can get in undetected the team will have a good possibility of a successful mission.

We will be taking guests on this mission, Chris Helligso and Angel Reyes from neighboring teams. Chris was just in this area making contact with a large enemy force of NVA. While in the contact Chris had taken down an NVA officer. Chris said the man wore a new uniform, was clean shaved, his hair was short and very well kept. His boots were new and he also had a brand-new AK-47 with paratrooper stock. This tells me fresh troops, very well supplied, are setting up for something big. Three-Charlie-One will pack our gear, tomorrow we go in.

PATROL 20: AUGUST 22ND TO 26TH

It is 0845 hours and the birds are cranking up. As we take our positions on the craft, the bird is soon in the sky. Now en-route to the insert point, the team members are quiet as they peer out the windows in the chopper. Randy Rhoads as primary radioman and I are at the rear of the bird and will be the first out in case there are any problems. This way if the bird had to pull out of the landing zone due to enemy contact, we would have communications with the chopper.

For some reason the choppers will stop at a small fire base, possibly to gather more information about the area. As the bird drops into the dark outpost, just to see this place gives me the willies. While there, I look over the small base. It might be okay to visit but I wouldn't want to live there.

I walk to the front of the chopper and relay my concern to the crew chief that I think this area is very hot. The crew chief tells me, "don't worry man, I'm getting short bud, soon I will be back in the world. You

can bet your ass I'll be watching." He takes his fist and pounds on his chest, "half-inch steel man." As he takes the homemade bulletproof vest off, I tell him, "shit man, this is what I need. I run point man for the team and I could use one of these." He said, handing it to me, "it's heavy." It was, probably 10 pounds. I told him it was great, setting it at his feet.

After a short time at the small base, the word is there are no friendlies at the fire base on Hill 679. Then they say there may be a possibility of some ARVN's (Army of Republic Vietnam) at the location but they don't know for sure. I am thinking to myself, bullshit, this guy is rapping off nothing but bullshit. Obviously, he isn't sure and now we don't know if there are friendlies there or not. If the friendlies have moved out it is a possibility that the NVA could have moved in and we will be landing into a trap. At least if we knew that there were definitely no friendlies then the gunships and jets could prep the zone prior to our insertion. The rotors are turning as the team takes their positions for the insert.

As Randy Rhoads and I get to the rear of the bird, Big Al Moore, Wayne Thompson and Angel Reyes get on the right. John Romero, Chris Helligso, Daniel Tirado and Robert Jenkins take the left side of the bird. As I look back at the crew chief, I see thumbs up. We are inbound to the zone, and it is very small, causing the pilot to go in slow. I, along with team members and crew, scan the area for any signs of enemy movement. We are not far off the ground and are moving in by way of a ravine to gain entry to the small zone.

Jesus Christ, as I look out the rear of the bird, I spot two NVA in the ravine below. They're not ARVN's, not with pith helmets and AK-47s. I

take aim to fire and son-of-a-bitch, the chopper turned and I lost sight of the enemy. I move to the crew chief and patrol leader informing them of the enemy sighted. This is it! I know they're just waiting for us. Still looking for the NVA, the bird is now in the zone. We have taken no fire and they say it's a go.

I'm waiting for the rear door to drop. Oh shit! The zone is too small and the rear ramp is hung up on a stump and won't go down. Everyone was looking out the windows, trying to look up the hill. The crew chief wants us to go out the side door on the front right side of the bird. As I move toward the front of the bird, the crew chief is lowering the door. Looking up the hill I stand behind him when he lowers the door. I see legs moving toward the landing zone. In a second, the crew chief is thrown backwards as blood splatters my face, shit, he's hit! As the crew chief falls to the floor of the chopper, the gunner on the .50 caliber machine gun opens fire along with all Three Charlie One's team members.

The little gook bastards were everywhere and closing in on the chopper. Still in the zone, the chopper is riddled with gunfire. The gunner on the .50 caliber is hit and also falls to the floor of the bird. Chris runs to the .50 caliber machine gun and opens fire on the advancing force.

As Randy and I move to the rear of the bird each of us find a window to return fire from. As the bullets rip through the bird, we are still in the killing zone. I look to the front of the bird and see Chris is working the .50 and making hits on the enemy. Glancing to the rear of the bird, I see two NVA moving to the back of the bird. Both Randy and I open fire,

hitting the enemy. Still taking heavy fire, we sit in the zone as the enemy close in on us.

Why is the pilot still sitting in the goddamn killing zone? I was just waiting for the bird to take an RPG (rocket propelled grenade) and we're all history. Angel, was thrown to the other side of the bird, I assume he is hit.

Still taking heavy fire, the bird is struggling to take off. He's getting it up and pulls out of the zone. We're up and it's a hard bank to the left and down the hill. Randy and I, lying on the rear ramp can see the LZ and enemy. As we fire on the LZ and enemy below, we can't give them enough M-16 fire.

Then gunships drop into position, hovering just above the landing zone as if in a standoff with the heavily armed enemy force. Dipping their noses, they open fire with 2.75 rockets and 7.62 machine gunfire, devastating the location.

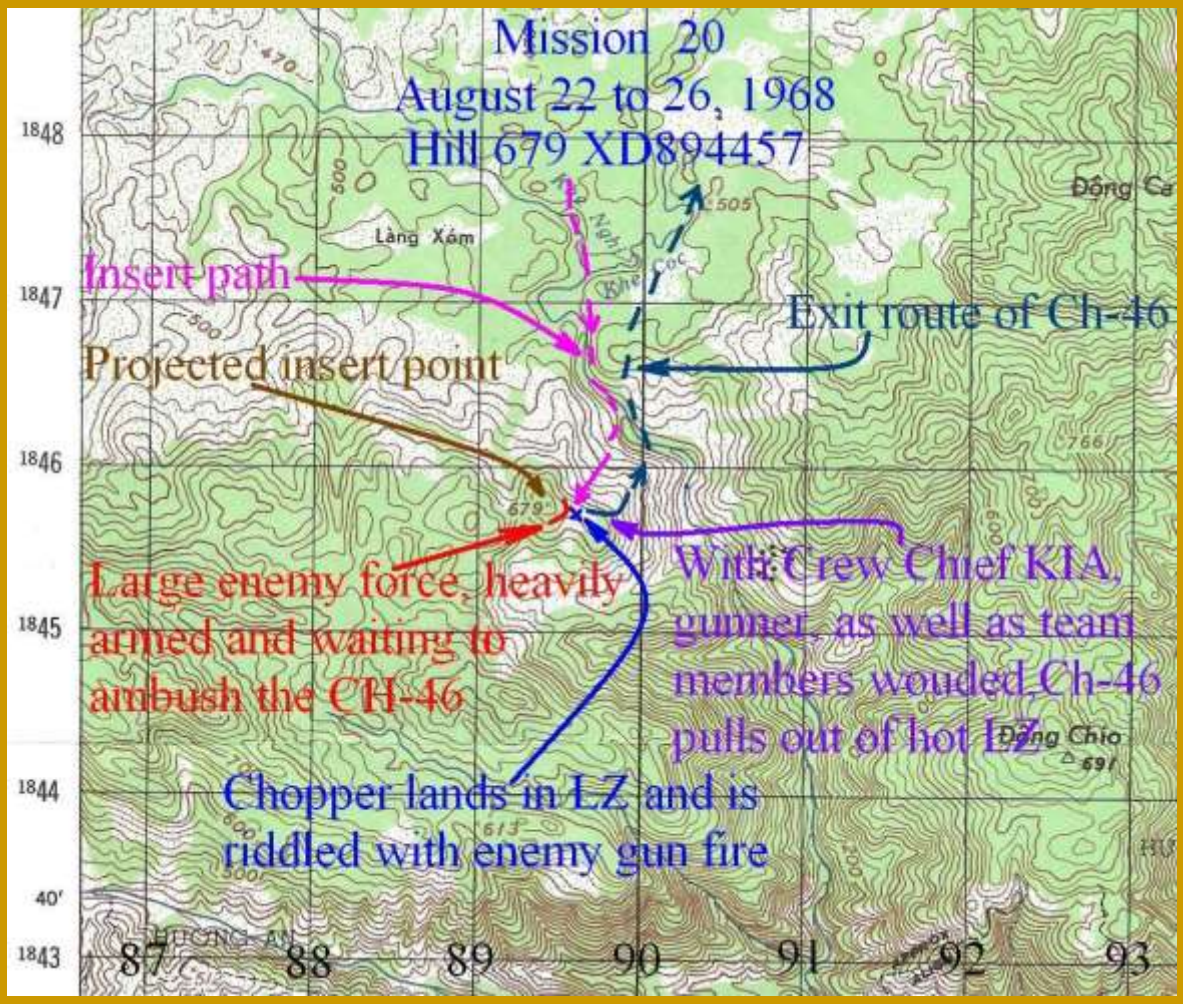
Then I realize we are in the trees. The remaining gunner is yelling and waving his arms, "WE'RE GOING TO CRASH, GET ON THE FLOOR." I knew we were low but it looked like it was over for the team. I could see the rotors hitting the trees above us. If he could just make it to the small river below, we might have a chance crashing into the water. In the last few seconds, the bird managed to lift upward. I know everyone was saying inside, come on baby, get up, you can do it.

Now if we could just make the ridge. The mountains are high and the chopper may be too badly damaged to make the east-ridge. The ridge was coming up. The pilot skims the treetops but we make it over the top. Once on the other side of the ridge we lose altitude fast. The bird is

at treetop level and en-route to Delta-Med to get help for our wounded.

The gunner was hit in the leg. It's bad but he's alive. Angel was hit with bullet fragments but he seems to be okay. As far as the crew chief, man he's hit bad in the chest. I think he's dead.

The bird bounces into the landing zone at B-Med and medical teams are standing by to receive our wounded. With the bird being shot up badly, we exit from the front door. The rear door won't even go down now. With the number of bullets taken, I can see why. While the team was deplaning to the other bird to be taken back to the Recon area, there on the floor of the chopper lay the crew chief's bulletproof vest. It made me sick to my stomach. With so little time left in the Nam. I am so pissed off I could kill every gook in this country. I will get payback.



As we get back to our base camp, even though we never got off the bird, we are exhausted physically and emotionally. It was as if we had been on an extended patrol with a bad enemy contact.

Later that day we find out that the crew chief that had taken off his steel plate to show me had not put it back on and had died from his wounds. I realized then that in reality the crew chief had not only saved my life at the cost of his, but the entire team and the 46 crew.

In seconds I would have departed the chopper with team mates into a death trap and we very well would have been completely wiped out. The premature ambush of the enemy killing the crew chief caused the team not to exit the CH-46 thereby pulling out of the hot enemy zone.



HMM-161 Ch-46 “Greyhawks”

Crew Chief Kenneth Neil Brandes

Later that night the team went to drink a few beers maybe trying to kill the sorrow we all felt for the chopper crew chief. As the team members talked about what had happened amongst ourselves, Angel relayed to us how, as he was firing out one of the chopper windows he

was knocked to the other side of the bird. He said it had felt as if he had been kicked in the chest. It knocked the air out of him but he found no blood and continued to return fire. Angel tapped his chest and then pulled out a green notebook from his shirt pocket. As he opened it, we saw that a bullet fragment had entered the front of the book and was protruding out the back. Obviously, the bullet had first hit the metal parts of the chopper, fragmented and the fragment was finally stopped by Angel's notebook.

As the old saying goes, "You've never lived, till you've almost died." There were times I have felt Death's embrace but at the last second, he has spared my life and taken another.

I will forever remember Crew Chief Kenneth Brandes and his unknowingly heroic act of bravery that was above and beyond the call of duty.



Angel Reyes and James Smith



Chris Helligso

Photo taken by Dennis Solder 1Charlie2

AUGUST 25, 1968

Badminton 3Charlie1 has a warning order, the team will be back in the same area of Khe Sanh. Our mission will be to observe enemy units within the assigned recon zone and if possible, engage them with supporting arms while also trying to take a prisoner.

As with our last mission, the area is mountainous with very thick jungle and hard-to-get-to landing zones. Water is plentiful which will

help in this time of the hot season. Less weight in water allows team members to replace that weight with more ammunition. On this patrol, I personally will carry an extra 200 rounds of M-16 and a total of 10 M-26 grenades. The teams' briefing hasn't changed from our last adventure into this area a week ago. There is still a large mass of enemy troops in the area and as our last mission, hunting will most surely be good.

The enemy is known to have specialized teams in this area whose sole purpose is to track and kill Marine Corps Recon teams. Their mission is to force our patrols out of the area making it impossible to locate enemy base camps. Three Charlie One, will be taken to Romeo Relay on Hill 950, overlooking the old Khe Sanh base and dropped off. Our plan will be to walk out with a grunt squad on their patrol of the area, stopping once in the jungle and then letting the squad move on. It is then our hope is to make it to the assigned recon zone undetected. Badminton 3Charlie1 will depart on August 26, 1968.



PATROL 21: AUGUST 26TH TO 30TH

It is the 26th of August as our team boards the bird for Romeo Relay. In minutes we will be airborne and on our way. Once in the air, the team members sit quietly probably wondering as I do, if this mission will be the same as our last.

In the area we are going into, the jungle is very thick. Most contacts with enemy units in this type of terrain will be at very close range- 10 to 20 feet at the most. As point man I sometimes wish I could carry a shotgun with a barrel the size of a cannon. On the other hand, it's not

how many rounds you shoot but it's how accurate you are on the first short burst.

Romeo Relay on hill 950, is what is called a secure area, as if there is such a thing. The small base perched on this hill top has been attacked several times, even being overrun by NVA enemy forces. On June 6, 1967 the relay was attacked and over run resulting in several Marines dead and wounded. Our battalion lost three Recon radio rep's killed in action. They were; Cpl. David F. Sherrell, Cpl. Dale L. Speir and Cpl. Howard H. Withey, all from Alpha Company.

The relay is important giving support to Recon teams on missions in the surrounding jungle and overlooks the Khe Sanh Valley and the old base the Marines held for so long.

This area is very important for the enemy and they must dominate it at all cost. They have done an outstanding job so far. In the last few months during the siege, the casualty rate on both sides has been very high.

We have the Relay in sight and are inbound. Once on the pad, we are told to get out fast and take cover. I am off the bird first with my teammates close behind. The NVA start lobbing mortars at us. In seconds the bird lifts to the sky and out of enemy fire. Our team has made it to cover as the rounds continue to explode on the tiny hilltop. After about 30 minutes the incoming stops. One round had landed only 10 feet from the bunker the team was in but miraculously no one was hit. Hell, there's nothing like the safety of a secure area and bunker to start the day off.

After checking in with the Relay and CO in charge, the team is told to take it easy. They won't have another patrol going out until tomorrow and now isn't a good time to go out anyway. We are told there is a possibility of a ground attack on the small outpost. With that in mind we are prepared as we settle in and wait. The rest of the day goes by without incident and we make ourselves at home. Tomorrow the team will leave in the early morning for our recon zone.

AUGUST 27, 1968

As daylight is barely visible on the horizon over the jungle, the team prepares to depart. With camouflaged face and hands, we are ready. As we move outside the perimeter, the grunt patrol takes the lead. Now down the hillside and into the jungle, it's as if we are entering midnight. The jungle is dark and the feeling of death is all around. The thick, dark jungle will give us that one edge on getting into the recon zone undetected. Now a few hundred meters from the relay, we stop as the grunt patrol moves on. The team will wait a few minutes until they are well out of sight, making sure we are not followed. Randy is now informing the relay that Badminton 3Charlie1 is Alpha Sierra, booting to the assigned area. From time-to-time I get a smell of something that I've smelled before, smoked clothes or the odor of food that hangs in the jungle trees from the enemy in the area. Off and on I stop, smell, listen, and look for anything that may await me with my next step.

With the team now well into the zone, we find trails that look as if they are in constant use by the enemy. Moving on, the team finds what may be the only open area in the jungle. It is now afternoon and we are in the process of verifying our location. The area is hard to navigate which necessitates constantly checking our compass and counting off

our paces. With the canopy towering some 100 feet or more over our heads, it is hard to shoot a compass azimuth to get a correct fix on our position. The team stops and forms a three-sixty on the crest of a ridge. Suddenly we hear enemy movement. It's about at 20 meters and heavy. Randy requests an AO to pinpoint the team's position just in case we make enemy contact. Now, while in the only area open to the sky and with little sunlight, I may be able to hit the AO with my signal mirror. As the team scans the area, we have not made a sighting of the enemy but we are ready for whatever happens.

As the AO comes on station, the trees prevent me from using the signal mirror. The AO asks the team to bring him in on our position and once overhead give him a mark-mark on the radio. With the jungle so thick and the open area so small, Randy Rhoads (Primary radio man) will have to call him in using only the sound of the plane's engines. Our hopes are to get him to find our location by laying out an international orange air panel. It's our only chance before we are located by the enemy who seem to be getting closer.

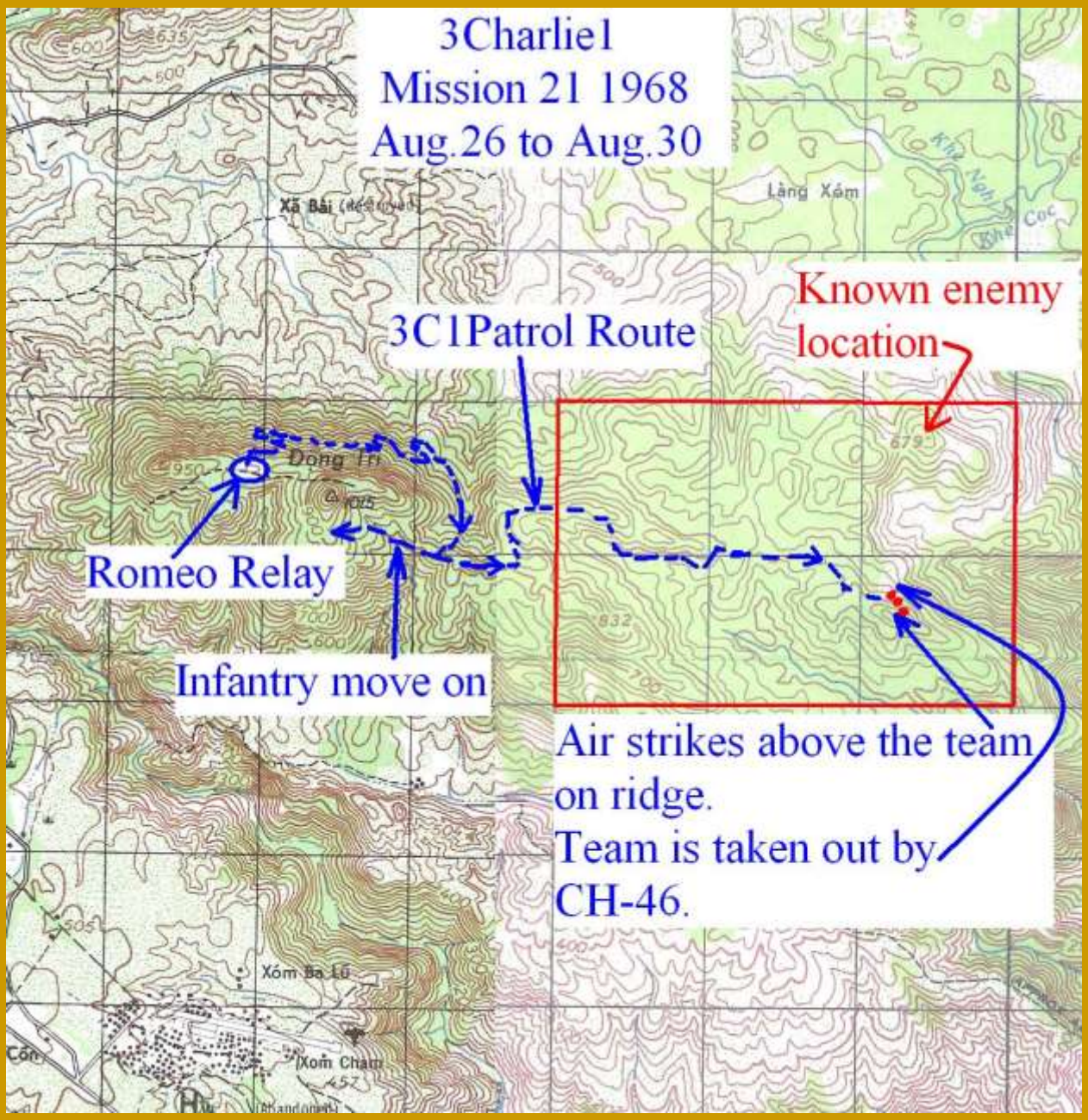
A mark-mark is used to maneuver the aircraft over a location using the clock system. Once the engines are heard, the radio man calls the craft and gives him his location as to his proximity to the team and the direction he should head to be over the team. At that time the craft will be told mark-mark, meaning we are directly below him. Once he has us spotted, being the eye in the sky, he can give us our exact location which we can verify on our topographic map.

Randy calls the OV-10 into our position. The plane is low and in seconds flies over our heads. Randy instantly gives him a mark-mark. He's spotted the team as he banks hard right for another pass. Again, at

treetop level, the AO flies over our heads, this time taking fire only 50 meters from the team. The enemy has not spotted us yet but continues to fire at the AO. With gunships now coming on station, gun runs are made above the team on the ridge and the enemy returns fire with every pass. Badminton is notified fixed-wing is now coming on station. As the AO drops out of the sky with the sun at his rear, he fires a white phosphorus rocket marking the enemy position less than 150 feet from the team. The explosion is loud, but nothing like what will be coming once the air strikes start. Pulling up hard and rolling to the right, he is taking enemy fire and radios back to the team, “Badminton, Badminton, get your heads down, jets inbound hot.” Out of the same direction I see an inbound F-4 Phantom as he drops out of the sky to deliver his payload on the enemy position. Just then he’s on us, its four Mark 82 500-pound low-drag Snake Eyes as they are punched off the plane. They’re out in front of the team and for a split second you can hear the fins pop open locking into place to give the bombs a low drag effect to the target. Then the jet pulls up to the sky and the massive blast of the engines roar like an explosion shaking the very earth, putting fear in your mind as he shoots to the sky taking heavy automatic machine gun fire. As the bombs wiggle their way over the team’s head to the target, there is a horrendous explosion as the bombs hit 50 meters from our position. Damn they are close! Right on his ass the second jet is coming in punching four more 82’s off, landing just meters from the first. The blast is so tremendous that the ground shakes under our trembling bodies. Shrapnel cracks and whistles over our heads making a buzzing sound. As the second jet pulls away taking enemy fire, the first jet is in bound again. I along with my teammates still scan the area in search of the enemy. Looking over my shoulder, I

see two canisters of napalm drop off the belly of the jet as he blasts his way back up to the sky. They are shiny canisters that tumble end over end. I watch them tumble over our heads at extremely danger close range. The explosion is so massive it causes a backlash of fire literally within feet of the team. It is as if DEATH HIMSELF HAS ARRIVED. With this volume of noise from the jet engines, bombs and gun fire our senses are overwhelmed. The AO informs the team to move down the hill to a bomb crater that will give us better cover from the enemy as well as the friendly supporting fire. The team makes the crater just in time as the jets drop out of the sky for another attack. More Snake and Napalm with devastating destruction on the ridge above. With the jets giving the team their full load, they run low on fuel and depart the area as gunships move in to take up the slack. The team cannot go down any further because it is almost a sheer drop off to the valley below. Instead, there will be an attempt to take the team out. The AO has told us to stay put. They will attempt to take us off the edge of a bomb crater. If the attempt fails, Badminton will most surely be forced to fight it out with remaining enemy force above. The gunships are covering the ridge, placing themselves in the line of fire while the 46 hovers on the edge of our bomb crater, as each team member is pulled into the bird one at a time. There is so much shooting I can't tell if we are taking fire or not. The team along with gunships returns fire on the enemy location as Randy Rhoads, the primary radio man is the last pulled in the bird before he lifts out of the hot LZ. Now out of the zone, I look to the rear as the secondary 46 along with gunships trail our craft. I wanted to hug every damn one of those brave aviators for getting us out of this hellish situation. All team members now on the chopper are

very quiet as if still in shock realizing just how close we came to total annihilation.



AUGUST 27, 1968

Once back at the Recon area, everyone is still drained and quiet. Combat situations like these really take it out of you. As your adrenaline slows and your heartbeat starts to normalize, the gravity of the situation you just lived through really sets in and you feel total emotional and physical exhaustion. All you want to do is sleep.

Two days have passed as the team receives another warning order. The mission will be Southwest of Vandergrift Combat base. Team Badminton will be dropped off at the Vandergrift base by CH-46 helicopters, booting to their assigned Recon zone. The Vandergrift base is near the Rock Pile area and is very mountainous with thick jungle. Marble Champ's mission will be to recon the area plotting all trails and noting all signs of enemy activity. We are to set up observation sites and call-in supporting arms on any enemy sighted. The mission will start on August 30, 1968 ending on September 4th. Badminton's team briefing informs us that the area has had several enemy sightings as well as contacts. Wayne has made a point, as on each mission to make all team members aware of the escape azimuth in case of enemy contact resulting in team separation. With a river crossing to be made on this mission, team separation is possible if contact is made. The team packs for the mission.

PATROL 22: AUGUST 30, TO SEPTEMBER 4TH 1968

It is August 30 as team Three Charlie One is now en-route to the Vandergrift base. In moments the base will be in sight and soon the team's mission will be underway. Moving toward the recon zone I step out of the bush to stand at the banks of the Song Quang Tri River. I am saying to myself, shit, we have to cross that? Man, this river is wide and

I hope not very deep. Each team member is carrying ninety to one hundred pounds of food and ammo, kind of like a big rock strapped to your back. The team's Recon Zone is on the other side of the river and in order to complete the mission we have no choice but to cross. Crossing rivers is extremely dangerous. On numerous occasions, members of other recon teams have drowned and in other instances the enemy has taken advantage of the situation and hit the team during this vulnerable time. After observing the other side for a possible ambush, Wayne and Randy set up fire missions just in case there is enemy awaiting the team's arrival. As the team covers me, I start to move across. The only part of me sticking out of the water is my head and rifle. I guess if they could hit a watermelon now would be a good time to pop me. The water is up to my chin but I have made it across and will secure my side before the rest of the team makes the approximate hundred foot wide, water crossing. After a quick check of the area, it appears to be okay and I motion the next team member across. As I continue to scan the area on my side for anything out of order, Robert Jenkins makes the crossing to my side. Once across, I feel somewhat relieved to have Robert on my side. If the enemy did have an ambush planned, I would feel a lot better having a man like Robert to watch my back as we fight it out. As team members cross one at a time our forces slowly build on my side. Jerry Beasley is the shortest man in the team, and is carrying a heavy load with the secondary radio but makes the crossing. Once all members are across, we move out of the area into the jungle. With the river at our back this is not a good location to stay in any longer than we have to. Now heading toward the assigned recon zone, the team stops three hundred meters into the bush to make sure we are not being followed.

For some reason I just don't like this area. I feel as if the team is bottlenecked in. We have the river at our rear to the North, a valley of low land to the East and the thickest jungle I've ever seen in my life to the South and West. What a way to start off the day. As the team moves up a ridge line, the jungle thickens. Our rate of movement slows down to about fifty meters an hour and the jungle thicket cuts visibility down to a couple of feet.

Three Charlie One has been in this thick bush for almost five hours, having moved only three hundred and fifty meters. We are trying to be as quiet as possible but getting through this is not easy. Two more hours have passed as the team is still boot (moving) to the Recon zone that is less than a mile away. I feel if anyone is out here, they are either crazy or lost. This area is unbelievable. At this point the team has checked the area across the ridge in case there may be a trail but there is nothing found. Normally a direction change would be in order but to move off the ridge would be dangerous for it is almost a sheer drop off. The team will be forced to continue on our present course. As the team continues, it is as if we had entered into a nightmare. The jungle is so thick now that we are moving slower than a snail's pace. The team is leaving a trail a blind man could follow. Pushing through this thick brush, I am making noise that can get us killed but there is no other choice.

As the day moves on, progress is slow. Then all of a sudden, from the rear, I hear cracking of heavy gunfire. An urgent distress call is immediately sent out on the radio: BADMINTON CONTACT, CONTACT, – taking small arms fire from approximately five NVA. Tail End-Charlie, Big Al Moore and Daniel Tirado are exchanging fire with the enemy at the rear as I frantically make every effort to move forward. There's only

been a few moments of fire exchanged with the enemy force. Now as I move quickly forward, I also try to make sure that we are not being pushed into an ambush. I finally find a small open area into which the team enters, setting up a defensive three-sixty-degree perimeter. At this point we quickly assess the situation and check out if anybody has been wounded. With Randy informing the relay of the situation, the team waits for the enemy's next move. Badminton appears to be in a desperate situation. We do not know of any close LZs and the vegetation around and above us is so thick that there is no way of even signaling any aircraft with a flare. Wayne tells the team to stay put.

The team remains in a three-sixty and we listen for any movement around our position. The team members together have over five thousand rounds of ammunition and an ample supply of M-79 grenades. For cover we are surrounded by the thickest jungle in the world which also works to our advantage.

An hour has gone by and the team hasn't heard anything. We have decided that we will now continue to move to the assigned recon zone. With only fifty meters gained, darkness falls over the jungle forcing us to stop and set up our harbor site. The area is so steep team members will straddle or tie themselves to trees to eliminate sliding off the ridge at night. The night is long and tense but passes without incident.

With the second day off to the same start, the steaming jungle has no sympathy for the team members of Three Charlie One. Day after day the team breaks through dense bush in an attempt to reach our recon zone. The only good thing is that it appears we have shaken the enemy off our tail. Maybe the enemy that had engaged us earlier were under

the impression they were dealing with a much larger Marine force and decided not to pursue.

On the fifth day the team makes the recon zone. After only one hour in the zone Randy has received word from the team's relay to boot out of the area back to Vandergrift as soon as possible. We have been informed there is a typhoon expected to hit the coast of Vietnam very soon. It is suspected that heavy rains will cover our area in a short time and it will be impossible to get any air support in case of enemy contact.

The power of the oncoming typhoon rapidly became evident. Winds started to whip up in excess of eighty miles an hour and an unbelievable torrential downpour plummeted down on our team as we struggled back to Vandergrift fire base.

Three miserable days have passed bringing the mission to eight days as the tired waterlogged team makes its way down to the valley. Now in the low land we move to the river.

As I come upon the river, I am instantly overwhelmed by what I see. Only days ago, we had walked across the river and now because of all the rain, it looks like a white-water rafting paradise. Unfortunately, we have no raft. With all choppers on weather hold, the team will just have to wait it out. With the day closing fast the team sets into some thick brush close to the river but has to move twice during the night due to the rising river water.

The next day, the team will move into the jungle staying out of sight. While moving to a safe spot, we had located an enemy corn field. With the team now on our ninth day of the mission, food is getting low. I'm

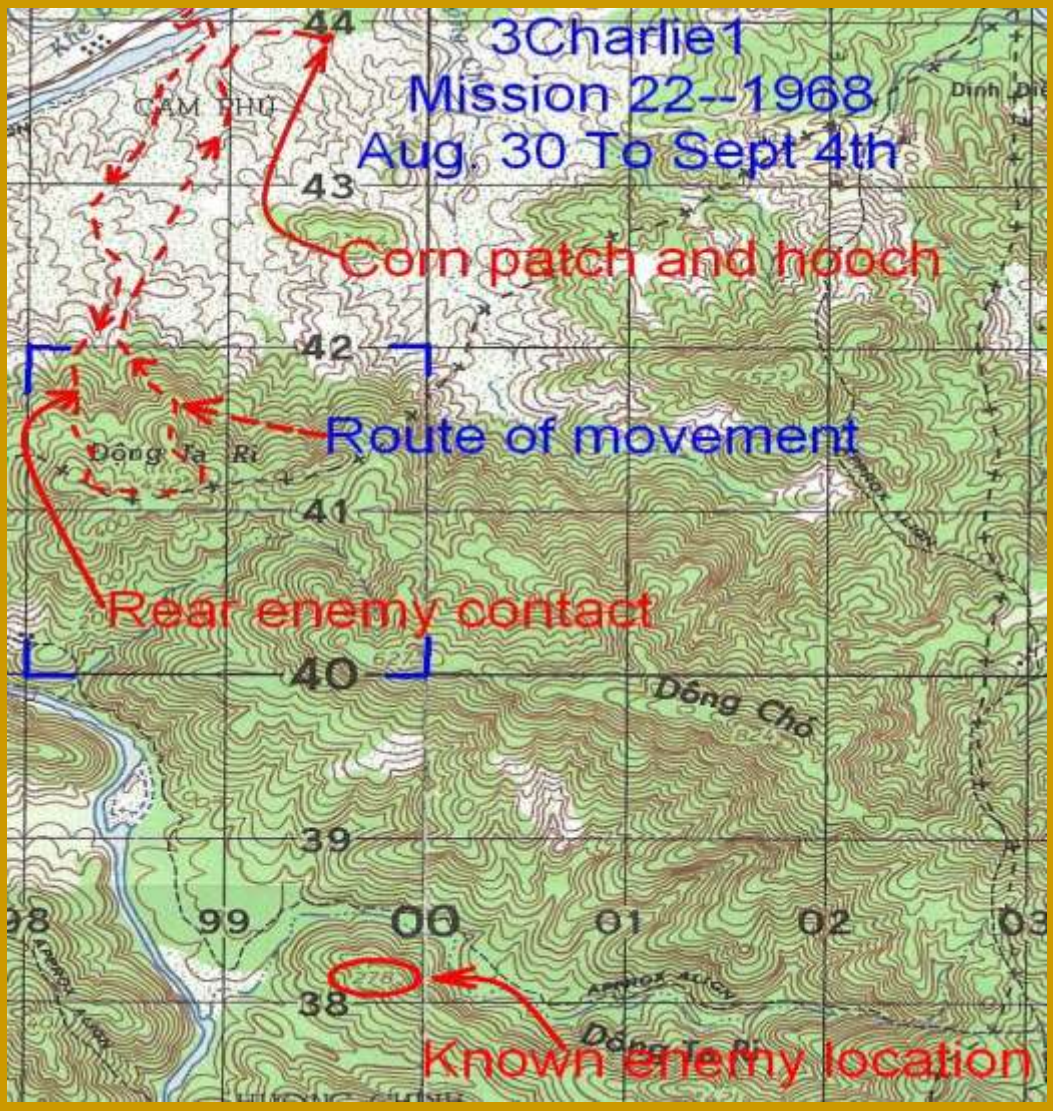
down to two crackers and jelly and most of the other guys are out of food. We are totally exhausted and have been constantly soaked. We need some food desperately to replenish our energy.

We decide to sneak into the small enemy corn patch and try to steal some corn. With a recon of the corn patch, we observe that there is a small hooch on stilts on the other side of the patch. After thoroughly inspecting the hooch and area for any booby traps, we decide to utilize the hooch and sneak in there under the cover of darkness. The hooch is somewhat dry and is a hell-of-a lot better than being out in the downpour.

Being in a downpour for days soaked to the bone, everyone's hands are wrinkled and bleeding. Finding this dry refuge is a relief for the team. Because of the obvious danger of staying in this hooch, there will be no smoking or eating cooked food while in the hooch. The enemy would smell it and seek us out and kill us. Badminton has set up a two man watch outside the hooch to scan the area throughout the night, making it a point to move out before daylight. Before leaving the hooch, the team makes sure not to leave anything behind to indicate our presence. During the day we will stay in the jungle, moving back to the hooch again at night to dry out some more. We utilize our heat tabs that come with the C-rations by putting a poncho over our body tied tight around our neck so our head is sticking out. You might be sitting in water but the warmth from the heat tab that engulfs the area inside the poncho warms us up.

Three more days have passed. Eleven days into the mission and the weather has not changed. Then on the eleventh day we hear a Huey helicopter and it sounds close as though it has landed at Vandergrift.

Randy instantly gets on the radio and asks if there's any chance the team can be pulled out by the bird. Minutes pass without word. Then it comes, "Badminton, Badminton; this is Foxtrot. Badminton, go! Be advised the bird has no gunners for extract but will pick you up anyway." All teammate's spirits soar as they hear the chopper lifting up in the distance. The bird has informed the team they will have to make two trips in order to get the team out. Now that the bird is overhead, we pop a smoke grenade to mark our exact position. Having seen the smoke, the bird drops into the zone. Four of Three Charlie One's team members are on the bird and now moving across the river. It felt like forever before the return of the bird but it is now inbound. We are on the bird and out of there. Damn if we didn't make it to Vandergrift just in time for chow. It has been eleven days in the bush and it's good to get out and in to somewhere dry. Once returned to the rear the team recuperates from the long-wet ordeal. After this patrol I will never eat corn on the cob again.



SEPTEMBER 10, 1968

Badminton has been returned to Quang Tri Recon area at which time the team reports to debriefing. With debriefing over we return to our tent to find the team is blessed with two new teammates. The new teammates are Fred D. Ostrom from New York and Roger D. Runyon from Richmond, Indiana. We welcome them.

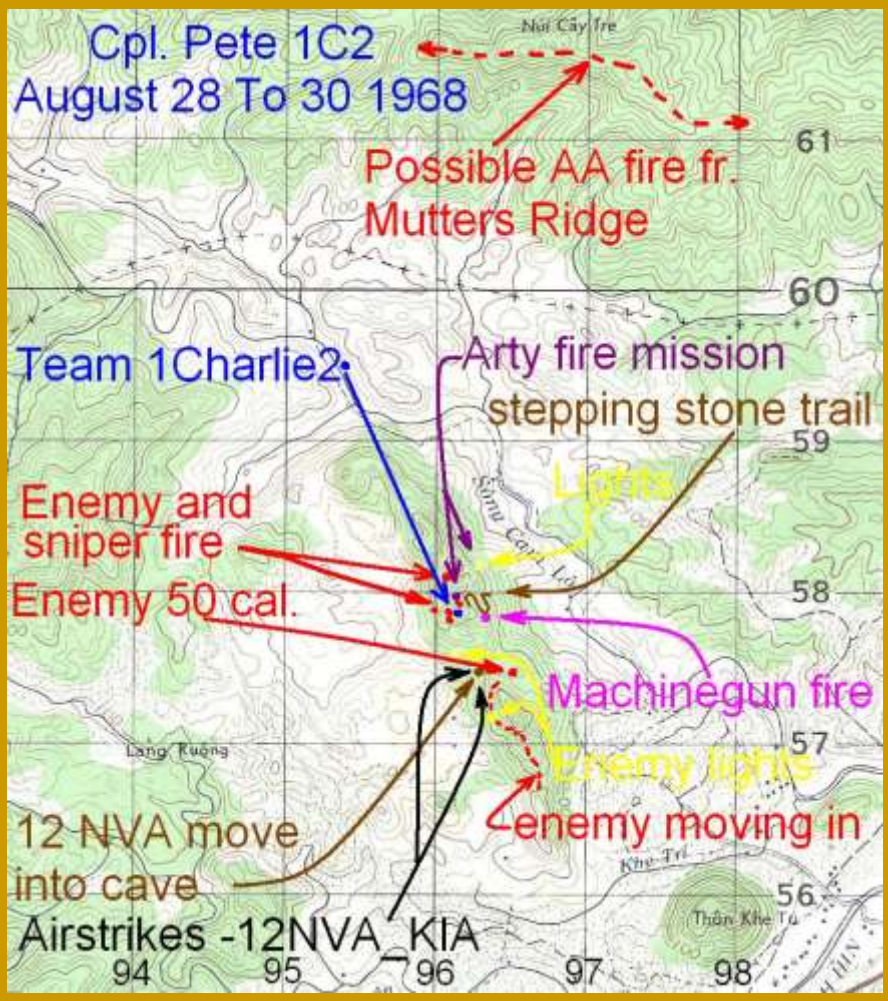


Fred Ostrom and John Romero

Very soon these new members will find themselves holding key positions in the team running missions in the jungles of Vietnam.

Even so our last mission was tough other teams within Charlie Company have missions that are just as tough some in heavy engagements with the NVA. Now we have returned from our mission, we got the word Corporal Pete, One Charlie Two, our neighboring team had a contact on the Razorback, which is a mountain northwest of the

Rock Pile. The contact was intense, but the team held their ground and took a toll on the enemy. The following is the report of that mission.



Recons Battle NVA Atop 'Razorback'; Kill 24 NVA

DONG HA—Six Marines from 3d Reconnaissance Bn. battled an enemy force of undetermined size for 48 hours atop the "Razorback" seven miles north of Vandegrift Combat Base.

The two day battle started Aug. 28 when the Leathernecks were inserted on top of the huge rock formation by helicopter.

Action started soon after the chopper lifted off the 300 foot high mountain. A light enemy machinegun opened up on the small group of Marines from a nearby hilltop.

Marine artillery from nearby Camp Carroll silenced the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) gun position.

As darkness fell on the lonely position, the Marines heard movement below. "They knew we were up there and wanted to get us," recalled Lance Cpl. Robert P. Jones (Route 4, Box 29, Kirbyville, Tex.) the team leader. "We adjusted artillery fire by radio on the positions where the movement was coming from until it stopped."

The enemy made repeated attempts to scale the steep position and dislodge the recon team during the night, resulting in eight enemy killed before daylight.

The team observed 12 NVA running into a cave, and using a grenade launcher kept the enemy pinned inside until a Leatherneck pilot destroyed the cave and its 12 occupants.

The Marines disassembled several Claymore mines to get explosives to destroy trees clearing a landing zone for the resupply helicopter.

Recons Halt Attack...

(Continued From Page 1)

Action continued throughout the day and night with the Marines calling for artillery and air strikes to silence enemy positions that fired at them into the night.

The Marines were helo-lifted out of the position the next afternoon by a Marine transport helicopter which hovered while the Marines jumped aboard from the side of the hill.

The two day action accounted for 24 confirmed enemy killed, two .50 cal light machineguns and a cave destroyed.

C. R. [illegible] 3d MARINE DIVISION

RELEASED BY: CAPT. C.R. ARIOLA/cm

DTG: 010235Z AUGUST 1968

ACTION-IMMEDIATE
INFO ROUTINE

CO
XO
ADJ
S-1
S-2
S-3
S-4
SUP
MT
COMM

RECEIVED
2 SEP 1968
ROG

FM: THIRD RECON BN
TO: CG THIRD MARDIV
CG TWENTY FOURTH CORPS

INFO: FIRST AIR CAV DIV USA
FIRST BDE FIFTH MECH INF USA
TASK FORCE HOTEL
THIRD MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
PROVINCE ADVISOR QUANG TRI
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

BT

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT

3dReconBn S/C No. 4502-68
Copy 1 of 3

1. RECON TEAM: CPL PETE 1G2 (6 MAN) OPO. 926-68
2. DATE INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 281730H/302000H (42 1/2 HOURS)
3. ROUTE: PATROL REMAINED AT (XD961579)
4. TERRAIN: STEEP HILLS AND CLIFFS. NO VEGETATION IS LEFT ON THE RIDGELINE. ON THE NORTHEAST SIDE OF (XD961579) THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME SORT OF A TRAIL BY STEPPING STONES AND LEDGES.
5. HLZ'S: (XD 961579) SITE WILL ACCOMODATE (1) CH-46. RIDGELINE WITH STEEP CLIFFS. BEST APPROACH FROM THE NORTH WITH NO OBSTACLES.

6. ENEMY: 282130I (XD 961579) TEAM IN HARBORSITE HEARD A NOISE AND OBSERVED ONE ENEMY 20 METERS TO THEIR NORTHEAST. TEAM INITIATED SAF RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). TEAM THEN HEARD NOISES 40-50 METERS TO THIER SOUTHWEST AND THREW GRENADES WHICH RESULTED IN A LOUD SCREAM. THE TEAM THEN OBSERVED ANOTHER ENEMY 10-15 METERS TO THE NORTHEAST. TEAM INITIATED SAF RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). APPROX 15 MINUTES LATER THE TEAM SAW A BUSH MOVE AND THE MUZZLE OF AN AK-47 STICK OUT. THE TEAM INITIATED SAF AND THE ENEMY RETURNED FIRE WITH A BURST OF AW FIRE. THE CONTACT RESULTED IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). TEAM THEN HEARD MOVEMENT 25 METERS TO THEIR WEST. 5 MINUTES LATER ANOTHER BUSH MOVED AND TEAM INITIATED CONTACT WITH A GRENADE. RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). THE TEAM THEN HEARD WHAT SOUNDED LIKE A RIFLE FALLING DOWN THE CLIFF. APPROX 60 METERS TOTHE SOUTHWEST. THE TEAM CONTINUED TO HEAR MOVEMENT FROM THIS DIRECTION AND THE TEAM LEADER POSTED TWO MEN AT THIS POSITION TO KEEP SURVEILLANCE. TEAM INITIATED CONTACT AND REQUESTED A FLARESHIP.

G102352SEP A-2 G-3

THE TEAM THEN OBSERVED AN ENEMY MOVING ON THE DECK NEAR A LEDGE. TEAM FIRED A M-79 ROUND RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). THE TEAM THEN HEARD MORE MOVEMENT FROM THIS DIRECTION AND TEAM MADE CONTACT WITH A BURST OF AW FIRE. THE TEAM HEARD A MOAN AND CONTINUED CONTACT WITH GRENADES RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). THE BODY FELL OFF THE CLIFF AND THE TEAM HEARD THE BODY STRIKE THE ROCKS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CLIFF. TEAM THEN OBSERVED ONE ENEMY 15 METERS TO THE NORTHEAST AND INITIATED CONTACT WITH HIM, AND THE ENEMY RAN TOWARD A BUSH BUT HE MISSED THE BUSH AND FELL OFF THE LEDGE. THE ENEMY FELL 40 FT AND THE TEAM CONTINUED FIRING AT HIM RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). THE TEAM HEARD MORE MOVEMENT 15-20 METERS TO THE NORTHEAST AND THE TEAM CALLED ARTILLERY. TEAM OBSERVED ONE ENEMY MOVING BETWEEN THE ROUNDS AND THE TEAM INITIATED CONTACT AND THE ENEMY FELL. IMMEDIATELY AN ARTILLERY ROUND EXPLODED ON HIM RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA (C). MOVEMENT WAS HEARD THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AND THE TEAM CONTINUED TO FIRE H&I'S.

AT THIS TIME SIERRA RELAY REPORTED LIGHTS OR FIRES APPROX 200 METERS SW AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL. THERE WERE ALSO LIGHTS TO THE NE. THE TEAM CHECKED THE AREA WITH A STARLIGHT SCOPE AND CONFIRMED THE LIGHTS. THERE WERE 3-4 LIGHTS AT ONE TIME. THE LIGHTS WOULD COME ON AND OFF IN DIFFERENT PLACES FROM THOSE DIRECTIONS. TEAM CONDUCTED A FIRE MISSION OF 144 ROUNDS WHICH RESULTED IN 2 LOW MUFFLED EXPLOSIONS AND TWO OF THE LIGHTS WENT OUT. ARTILLERY HAD GOOD TARGET COVERAGE. ARTILLERY CONTINUED FIRING THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT.

290230H THE TEAM RECEIVED ROUNDS FROM WHAT SOUNDED LIKE A LIGHT MACHINEGUN 400 METERS EAST OF THE TEAM. THERE WERE TWO BURSTS APPROX 5 MINUTES APART. THE SECOND TIME THE TEAM FIXED THE MACHINEGUN'S POSITION AND ADJUSTED ARTILLERY ON THE WEAPON. ARTILLERY HAD GOOD TARGET COVERAGE AND THE WEAPON WAS SILENCED. NO MORE FIRE WAS RECEIVED FROM THIS POSITION.

290330H WHILE FLARE SHIPS WERE DROPPING FLARES THE TEAM OBSERVED 10-12 ENEMY MOVING INTO A CAVE VIC (XD963575). THE TEAM CONDUCTED A FIRE MISSION OF 8 ROUNDS WITH GOOD TARGET COVERAGE AND UNKNOWN RESULTS. ARTILLERY COULD NOT DO ANY APPARENT DAMAGE TO THE CAVE SO THE TEAM FIRED M-79 ROUNDS INTO THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE. M-79 ROUNDS HAD UNKNOWN RESULTS.

290730H THE TEAM DIRECTED AN AO TO THE CAVE AND THE AO CONDUCTED AN AIRSTRIKE ON THE CAVE VIC (XD963575) AND OTHER CAVES IN THE AREA. THE TEAM MOVED TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIDGE WHILE THE AIRSTRIKES WERE BEING CONDUCTED. THEN TEAM RETURNED TO CHECK THE DAMAGE THEY FOUND THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT OF THE CAVES. CAVES WERE IN THE VIC OF (XD963575).

290900H TEAMRECEIVED SNIPER FIRE FROM 200 METERS TO THE NORTHEAST. THE TEAM DIRECTED AIRSTRIKES VIC (XD961582) WITH OUTSTANDING COVERAGE OF TARGET. ONE CAVE WAS DESTROYED AND 2 OTHERS WERE DAMAGED.

291020H GUNSHIPS CHECKING THE AREA REPORTED 4 ENEMY MOVING FROM EAST TO WEST APPROX 1200 METERS TO THE SOUTHEAST. THE TEAM CONDUCTED A FIRE MISSION OF 75 ROUNDS WITH GOOD COVERAGE OF TARGET. ALL TREES IN THE TARGET AND SURROUNDING AREA WERE DESTROYED. NO OTHER MOVEMENT WAS OBSERVED FROM THIS AREA.

291630H WHILE THE TEAM LEADER WAS TRYING TO HOOK UP THE RESUPPLY FOR EXTRACTION, THE RADIO MAN REPORTED TO HELO'S THAT THEY WERE RECEIVING FIRE. THE TEAM LEADER WHO WAS ON A ROCK LOOKING AT THE CREW CHIEF, LOOKED TO THE SOUTHEAST AND OBSERVED 50 CAL TRACERS FROM (XD965576) AND MACHINE GUN FIRE FROM (XD966576). THE TEAM LEADER WAVED THE HELO OFF BUT THE HELO DID NOT MOVE UNTIL THE TEAM LEADER WAS OFF THE ROCK. TEAM CONDUCTED A FIRE MISSION RESULTING IN ONE 50 CAL POSITION DESTROYED. THE ROUNDS HITTING NEAR THE BUNKER STARTED A SMALL FIRE AND A DIRECT HIT RESULTED IN ANOTHER SMALL FIRE AND CAUSED NUMEROUS MUFFLED EXPLOSIONS. THIS POSITION KEPT BURNING AND EXPLODING THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT.

WHILE THE TEAM WAS ADJUSTING ARTILLERY FIRE THEY OBSERVED A HOOCH WHICH WAS DESTROYED BY THE ARTILLERY ROUNDS VIC (XD963575).

292100H SIERRA RELAY REPORTED LIGHTS VIC (XD964573). THE TEAM CHECKED THE LIGHTS WITH A STARLIGHT SCOPE AND CONDUCTED AN ARTILLERY MISSION ON THEM. DUSTERS ALSO FIRED ON THE LIGHTS. THE MISSION RESULTED IN THREE LIGHTS GOING OUT. THE TEAM CONDUCTED ARTILLERY MISSIONS THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AT LIGHTS TO THE SW AND NE.

292315H WHILE ARTILLERY WAS ON A CHECK FIRE THE TEAM RECEIVED WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO HAVE BEEN 3 ROCKET ROUNDS APPROX 50 METERS SW OF THEIR POSITION. THEY ALSO DETECTED WHAT THEY BELIEVE TO HAVE BEEN 82MM MORTAR ROUNDS TO THE NORTHEAST APPROX 75 METERS OVER THE RIDGELINE.

300100H THE TEAM OBSERVED WHAT LOOKED LIKE AA FIRE DELIVERED AT SPOOKY FROM AN UNDETERMINED COORD NORTH OF MUTTER'S RIDGE. SPOOKY ALSO TOOK FIRE FROM VIC (XD966576). SPOOKY WORKED THIS AREA OVER WITH OUTSTANDING COVERAGE OF TARGET. NO MORE FIRE WAS OBSERVED FROM THIS POSITION.

301000H WHILE THE TEAM WAS BEING EXTRACTED THE HELO RECEIVED SA/AW FIRE FROM 250 METERS TO THE NORTHWEST. THE HELOS RETURNED FIRE AND WAITED FOR 3 TEAM MEMBERS TO GET ON THE HELO. THE TEAM WAS EXTRACTED WITH NO FRIENDLY CASUALTIES.

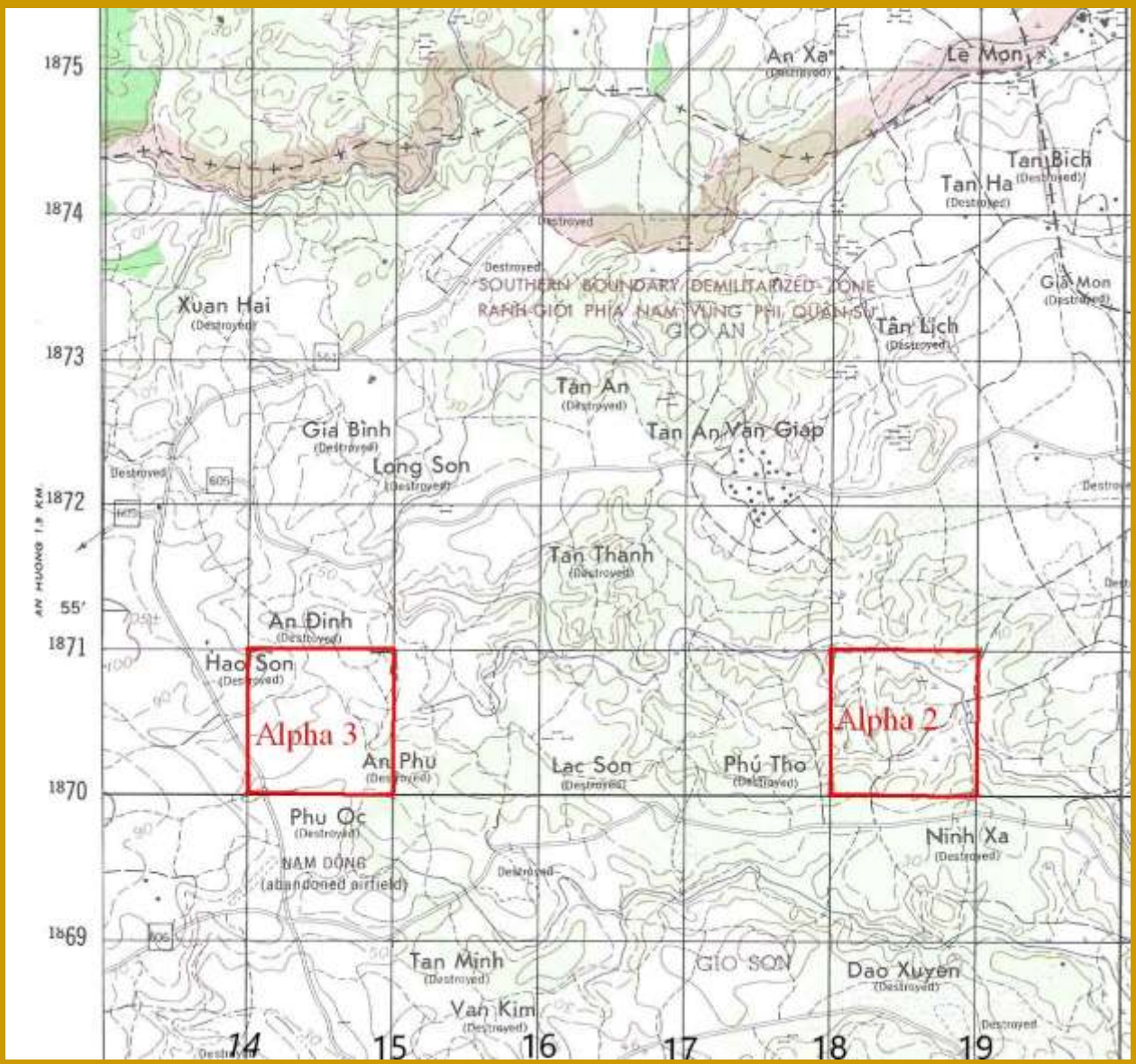


Razorback Ridge

With only a one-day break in the rear, Three Charlie One has been assigned a mission. The new mission will be within the demilitarized zone and will contain the Song Ben Hai River that separates North and South Vietnam. Our mission will be to observe the assigned recon zone as well as the river for enemy moving troops and supplies into the South. This area may have been low rolling hills at one time but with as many B-52 strikes that have taken place in this area, it is flat mass of destruction which resembles the surface of the moon. This mission will require considerable stealth. Team Three Charlie One, will be taken by chopper to Alpha-3 and will walk out of the base attempting to enter the area undetected. Our team's briefing tells us of heavy enemy traffic in the area.



Jerry Beasley holds map of 3Charlie1's next mission out of Alpha 3 close to the DMZ. September 1968



Alpha 3 and Alpha 2 bases three thousand meters from the DMZ



Inbound to fire support base Alpha 3 close to the DMZ. Team will walk out of the base to our recon zone.

PATROL 23: SEPTEMBER 12TH TO 17TH

Three Charlie One has arrived at Alpha three. Once off the chopper we look around the small base and find our way to the main command bunker to coordinate with them for an escort through the mine field. As the team is led through the mine field the Sergeant leading the way has told us the NVA are as thick as flies on a dead water buffalo in this area. He smiles and wishes the team good luck. As we clear the mine field the mission is now underway. Randy Rhoads informs the rear we are Alpha Sierra moving to the zone at this time. Now proceeding within the area, the team finds that the area is blown up to the point that huge bomb craters are just a matter of feet apart and the team is forced to snake our way around them in order to make headway. After only three hours in the zone and less than a hundred meters from the Song Ben Hai River my left hand is in a fist as the team comes to a freezing halt. We have spotted four to six NVA. I can hear the thumping of mortars being fired at Alpha three. The four to six enemy are spotted only meters from the team. We have not been seen and a fire mission is being worked up fast. Randy Rhoads (primary radio man) has requested one round (WP) whiskey papa and effect. Request shot and splash. In just minutes its "Badminton shot out," Randy copies, and then the impact. With an adjustment, it's fire for effect with the enemy position taking several hits. The mortars have stopped. There is a possibility the team made a hit on the mortar position. We are now told to continue mission moving further into the assigned recon zone. It would have been nice to have

checked the position out but the rear echelon feels that proceeding to the river area is more important at this time. Badminton continues its mission.

As Three Charlie One moves deeper into the DMZ, we are is having some serious problems with communications. For some reason we have entered a dead area or there is a problem with the radio. In minutes we try the secondary radio with the same result. The team will move to higher ground to see if communications get better. Once on higher ground, Randy is forced to use a whip antenna and our communication is still very weak and garbled.

As the team moves about the zone attempting to improve our communication situation, it is only getting worse. Now close to the river, the team is told to return to Alpha Three due to our bad radio communication. Badminton is now boot toward Alpha Three as the day is coming to a close. As the sun is setting the team makes it to the edge of the mine field and informs the base of our position. Having to be led back through the mine field, the team waits as our guide makes the link up to enter the small base. Once inside, we will spend the night at the small base, catching a rough-rider back to Quang Tri recon in the morning. Due to the bad communication situation the mission has been canceled.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1968

I have been put on mess duty for the next twenty days. God, I hate this job but at least I'll be able to procure some good food for the guys. I will be working the line and taking care of pots and pans in the evening. I know the time will pass quickly so I might as well get used to it.



MESS HALL

L to R: Paul Hatchet, Angel Reyes, Michael Landreth, John Romero

On the first of October while dropping off a few snacks at 2Charlie3 a neighboring team, they were telling me about their next mission. It will be in the Khe Sanh area. The area has lots of enemy and the chances of contact with the enemy are high. The team will be close to the old

Marine base, southwest from hill 950. The following is a brief report of their mission:

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

ACTION-IMMEDIATE
INFO: ROUTINE

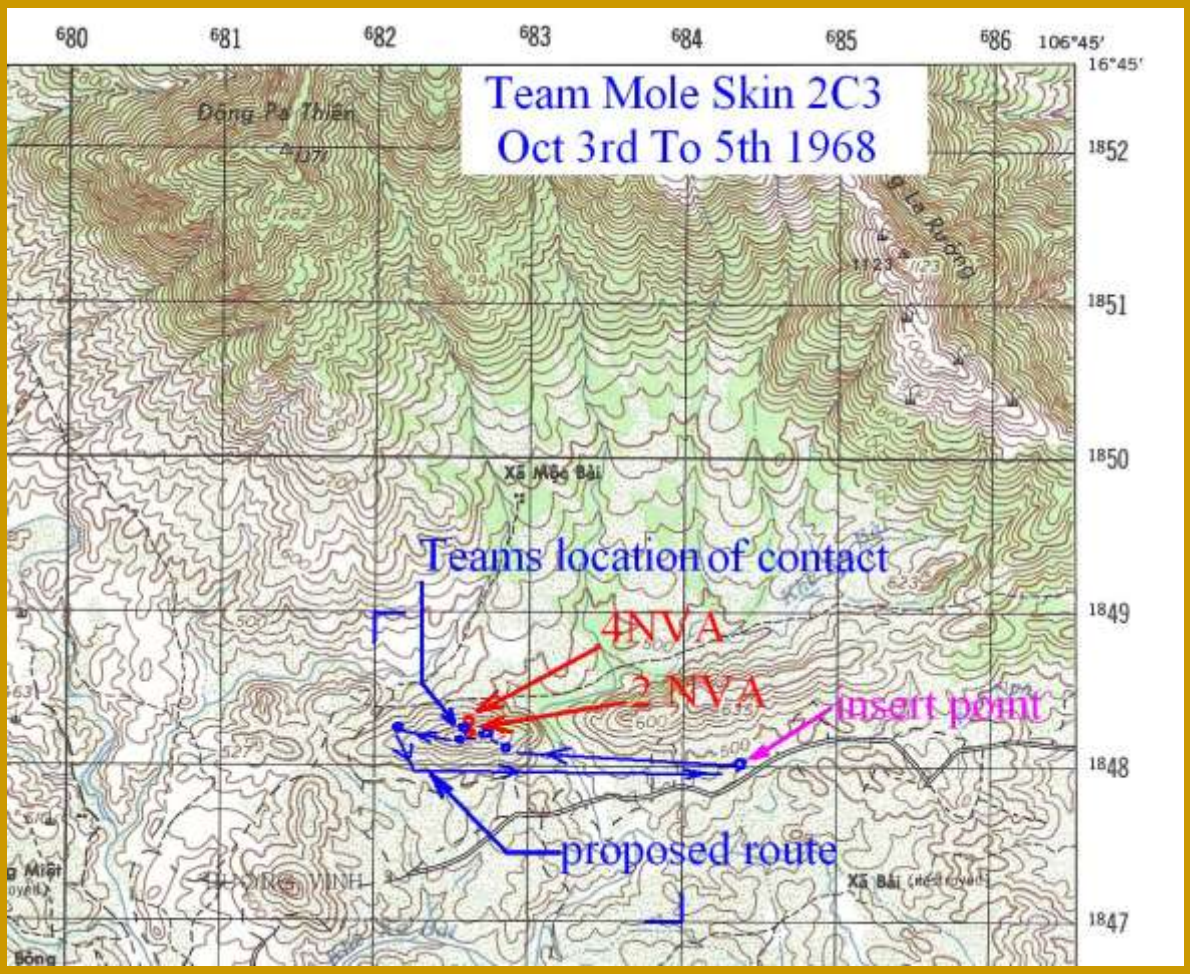
DTG:_____Z OCT 68

FM: THIRD RECON BN
TO: CG THIRD MAR DIV
CG XXIV CORPS

INFO: FIRST AIR CAV DIV USA
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV MECH USA
TASK FORCE HOTEL
NINTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
PROVINCE ADVOSOR QUANG TRI
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT

1. RECON TEAM: MOLE SKIN 2C3 7 MEN OPO 195-D-68
2. DATE INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 031335/051445H (49 HRS)
3. ROUTE: FM (XD844481) TO (XD828482) TO (XD827484) TO (XD822484) TO (XD826483) UL 8249 LR 8447
4. TERRAIN: ELEPHANT GRASS 4-6 FT. CAMOPY 20-35 FT ALONG THE STREAM, STEEP HILLS
5. HLZ'S: ENTIRE GRIP CAN BE USED AS HLZ.
6. ENEMY: 051120H TM AT (XD828482) RECEIVED A BURST OF SMALL ARMS FIRE, TM HEARD VOICES TO THEIR WEST.
051230H TM AT (XD827484) SPOTTED 4 NVA/VC HEADING WEST ON A TRAIL. NVA STARTED MOVING TOWARDS THE TM, AO CAME ON STATION AND THE ENEMY SCATTERED. ENEMY WORE GREEN UTILITIES, HEAVY PACKS AND UNKN TYPE OF WEAPON. AO MADE STRAFING RUNS OVER THE AREA AND TOOK SMALL ARMS FIRE.
051350H TM AT (XD827484) SPOTTED 2 NVA MOVING UP A HILL, TM INITIATED FIRE WITH M-79 AND M-16. TM WORKED UP A FIRE AND RELAYED THIS INFO TO ROMEO TO HAVE IT FIRED AFTER EXTRACTION, EXTRACTION HEL'S COME ON STATION AND EXTRACTED THE TEAM. GUNSHIPS RECEIVED FIRE.
7. OTHER INFO: TM BELEIVES THAT THE ENEMY IN THIS AREA FEELS SECURE.



It is now October 7, 1968 and my job of being on mess duty is at end. What a relief it is to have that over with. I think that job was worse than the honey bowl detail. The only thing that was good about it was the pies.

Three Charlie One is in the bush and won't be back for three to five days. I sit around feeling as if I am accomplishing nothing. The team

next door is going on a radio relay mission on the 10th of October. They will need an extra man so I will be going with them. Our mission will be predominantly as a relay but we will also OP the area from our high vantage point. The mission will be on hill 824 Whiskey Relay above the Da Krong River to the south and the Song Quang Tri River to the north.

Steve Matheson, patrol leader of 3Charlie2 will be in charge of this mission. Steve is known to be a great team leader and I feel confident we will accomplish our mission. This mission will start on October 10, 1968 and end on October 20th.



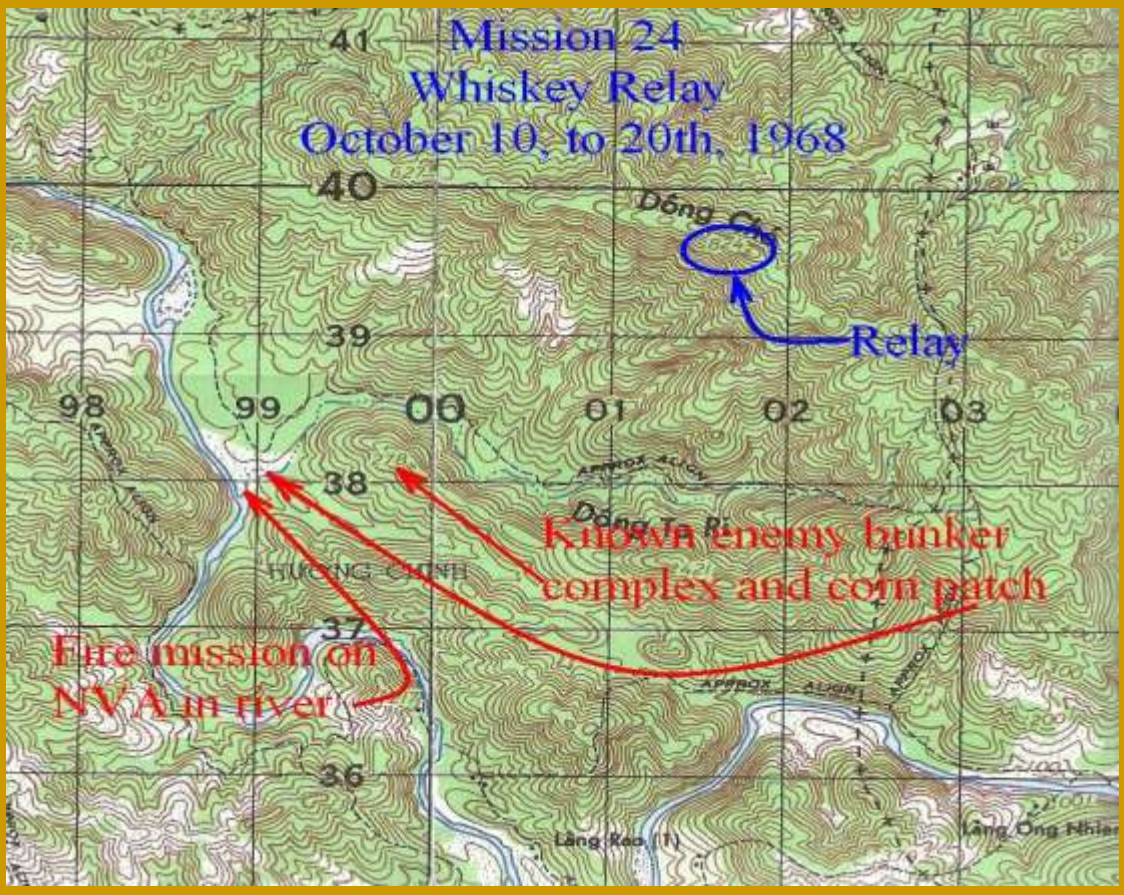
Steve Matheson and Mike Green

MISSION 24, WHISKEY RADIO RELAY

October 10th to October 20th

It is October 10, 1968 as we load our equipment and personal gear on the bird for transport to hill 824 known as Whiskey radio relay. Steve Matheson's team is being reinforced with a marine unit on the hill at this time along with our eight Recon Marines. In a very short time, our team will be airborne and our mission will be underway. Upon our arrival we find thirty-five Marine grunts at the position with a defensive

perimeter already in place. They have set up wire around the site and have dug in with the intent of staying. With the grunts already on Hill 824, our job of setting up is made much easier and the extra manpower gives us a more secure feeling.





Juan Gaucin

With the supplies needed now removed from the bird, the team sets up. There is a bunker in the center of the position in which our eight-man team will set up our communication center. With radios in place and antennas set up, we are in business. Steve has set up radio watches and with the number of teammates on hand, the job is a breeze. Since it is a twenty-four hour a day job, the grunts are taking up the slack of the perimeter watch, everything is moving along very nicely. We are

well equipped on the hill. We have thousands of rounds of ammo, an M-60 machine gun, plenty of grenades and M-79s with ample supply of rounds. Our combined manpower strength with the grunts is 40+ strong and we feel pretty confident we can hold off a ground attack. The only thing that gives me an uneasy feeling is the team is not exactly on the top of Hill 824 but on a finger right off the top of the hill. Hill 824 is really about two hundred meters northwest of our position and somewhat above us. Steve realizes this and sets up on-calls in case a fire mission is needed in the areas that look to be positions from where the enemy can attack us.



Juan Gaucin

On the second day, NVA have been spotted in the river valley below our position taking baths. They are close to hill 278 a known enemy location. In no time, there is a fire mission set up and the area is pounded with heavy arty fire resulting in secondary explosions. That's pay back.

The northwest side of our location is a sheer drop off. We start to hear movement in this area so I pull the pin on a CS (gas) and let it go. As the gas grenade goes down to the jungle below, we listen up for any enemy coughing but none is heard. As time passes the wind from the valley below moves over our position and it brings with it some of the tear gas. Recon Marines always carry gas masks, it's just part of our gear and I must say, it not only has saved my ass once but the pouch holding the gas mask makes for a nice pillow when in a harbor site. Some of the grunts were pissed because they didn't have gas-masks. I have to say there was a whole lot of coughing going on till the air cleared. I felt bad but going to the bush without teargas and gas masks for a Recon Marine would be as bad as leaving your rifle in the rear. It is a vital piece of our equipment and is especially needed when trying to break a contact with a superior enemy force.

After eight days on the relay, we get bad news. Choppers are on their way to take the grunts off the hill. They are needed elsewhere. As the grunts leave, we reassess our defensive perimeter strategy. The perimeter is too big for the eight-man recon team to cover so we close in the perimeter and concentrate our forces around the main bunker.

It has been two hours since the departure of the grunts and movement has picked up around our position. After firing some M-79

rounds and lobbing several grenades, the movement has for the moment, stopped.

With the reduction in our forces, Steve has also adjusted the on-calls surrounding the team's position so they are within one hundred fifty meters. We are ready for anything that may take place. The grunts have done a pretty good job of fortifying the perimeter. We set up a two-man watch and wait for any of the trip flares to be set off around our perimeter. As the evening falls on the team's position so does the rain.

As the rain continues, we continue to relay information for recon teams that are deep in enemy held areas. Their survival depends on us and we are their only lifeline for artillery and air support.

It has rained for days, not letting up one bit. Today is October 20, 1968, the day we were to be extracted. It will not happen for all the choppers are on weather hold meaning all teams out in the field cannot be extracted until the weather clears and we also are in the same situation.

Four more days pass without incident at our location. It is about 0930 hours and the rain stopped as quickly as it came. Within an hour the heat causes the jungle to steam as the fog rolls from the jungle floor below over the mountain tops. By 1000 hours the word has come over the radio, we will be taken off the hill with a (hand off) flip flop (a replacement team will be brought in). As our team packs its personal belongings, we continue to monitor the radios in support of the teams in the bush waiting for the afternoon flip flop.

On the afternoon of October 24, 1968, we are taken off hill 824, Whiskey relay and taken back to Quang Tri Recon.

Once in the rear, the days are busy. There always seems to be something to do which is good because it makes the time go by faster. Once back, I have talked to the First Sergeant concerning extending for six more months in the Nam. He told me he would have to check on it and get back to me. He also asked me if I was crazy wanting to stay. I just told him this was my job and this was what I knew.

November 26, 1968, services will be held for Ron Lowry today. He was one of many Charlie Company Marines killed this year. There were many other Recon Marines lost throughout the other companies of Third Reconnaissance Battalion and they all will be greatly missed. All were the finest men anyone could have known and none of them will ever be forgotten by the men they served with.

It is December 1, 1968, and I have not heard any word about my extension. My thirteen-month tour is at a close and I am considered to be short (the term used in Vietnam for servicemen that only had a very short time left in country). The guy's want even let me go on patrol. They say I'm too short. (No time left in the Nam)

Robert Jenkins has taken over the point position as I wait for the word from the First Sergeant about the extension. I hope to hear something soon. I kind of wanted it to be a surprise to the team that I will be extending.

It is December 7, 1968, and I get the word from the First Sergeant, he tells me there will be no extension for me to stay in the team. Man, it was almost like a kick in the teeth. He has told me I made twenty-four patrols and twenty as point man and that was enough. I had done my job and I was going home. I asked him if I could wait till the guys got in from patrol to say my good-byes and he said okay.

Once the team returned from patrol, I said my farewells. I will really miss these guys. The men I have worked with in team Three Charlie One were the best, not only as teammates but also as friends. I will never forget any of these men and will worry about them every day. They have watched my back as I theirs. They have taught me how to stay alive in this world of death. It has been a pleasure to be point man for the team members of Marble Champ, Three Charlie One. I will depart the Nam on December 13, 1968 for the world.

Below are statistics of missions carried out by Recon teams in a five-month period.

3D RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION
11 JULY 1968-12 DECEMBER 1968

	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
No. of Patrols	133	147	143	165	158	105*	851
Average Duration	2.13	2.45	2.36	3.19	8.60	3.89	3.77
Average Size	6.09	6.61	6.72	7.22	7.10	6.50	6.72
No. of Sightings	45	54	78	71	55	20	323
No. of Enemy Sighted	288	778	508	289	314	114	2291
No. of Contacts	20	52	52	34	31	22	211
No. of Fire Missions	16	28	39	64	64	22	233
No. Rounds Fired	416	1203	914	1742	1363	249	5887
No. of Air Strikes	5	14	5	24	3	5	56
Enemy KIA (C)	22	63	102	25	23	13	248
Enemy Captured	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Weapons Captured	2	5	8	0	7	1	23
Friendly KIA	4	1	5	1	3	1	15
Friendly WIA	26	5	20	4	6	8	69

* Includes 31 teams deployed in the field as of 12 December 1968

Chart provided by LtCol Donald R. Berg USMC (Ret).

DECEMBER 13, 1968

After saying my final farewell to the team, I depart for Da Nang. It is hard to believe I'm on my way home. Just two days ago we were taking rockets in the company area.



As I sit at the Da Nang terminal waiting for my flight out, nothing has changed. Incoming troops still find a spot on the ground waiting to be assigned a unit. Even the noise is the same as I hear the constant rumble of jets taking off and I know they are loaded with bombs. The war and dying goes on.

On the 13th, I leave Vietnam for Okinawa. After only three days in Okinawa, I am airborne and heading back to the good old USA.

At 1145 hours on the 16th of December, 1968, due to some mechanical problems we are forced to land in Los Angeles, California. After a somewhat rough landing, the GI's cheers of joy roar throughout the plane. We are home, back in the real world. As we depart the aircraft to the terminal, a couple of guys and I are in the lead as we hit the terminal doors. Once through the doors we are met by a group of demonstrators. Man, they were yelling, calling us names and carrying signs saying get out of Vietnam. A woman ran up to me cursing me out inches from my face and spat in my face. Before I could make a move, a guy next to me hit the bitch so hard it laid her jaw on her neck as she and her sign slid across the floor. That shut the bastards up. Their group parted a path for us and we moved through. If I had had my rifle, I may have done something later I would have regretted.

Now while waiting on another plane to take me home, I couldn't believe what had happened at the terminal just a short time ago. These protesters know nothing of the brave men that I had served with and of our suffering in war.

It is quiet as I sit on the plane waiting for it to take off. I don't want to talk to anyone and I am really mad at the reception we received upon our return to the States. I am thinking to myself that if anyone starts it up with me, I'll take 'em down like in the Nam. I am not afraid.

At 2330 hours on the December 16, 1968, I am in Fort Smith Arkansas and home. Was the war over for me or has another one started?

I am home, really home! The kid has made it back to the world. My family of course is very happy and the food is out of this world. There are no more cans or bags to eat out of and in the morning the coffee is out of a real cup not a B-3 can. Christmas is very soon and my mother is so happy I am back she's beside herself. She's running around getting everything ready.

My sleep is fair; maybe it's too quiet. When talking to the family, it's as if no one understands what I say. When I say I'm going to crash and take in some Z's, it means I am going to sleep or rest but unfortunately my Vietnam lingo is not easily understood by my family. My grandmother had asked if I ever found my friend Charlie and I just told her, "As a matter of a fact I did."

After going into town and it appears everyone has long "hippie" like hair. Maybe the world is not for me. It seems like all the people I knew want to know if I smoked any good weed over there and if I brought any back. I just tell them that in my unit, if you were caught smoking any of that shit my patrol leader would have cut your throat. I have been asked by a few people how it was in the Nam but have told them very little. I don't feel I am ready to share Vietnam with anyone just yet. It would only be a war story to them and probably mean nothing. It would be like telling a fishing story to someone who has never been fishing. Anyway, how do you tell someone your job is to seek out human beings and kill them? If it were not for my family, I would think that this is not the same place I came from just over a year ago. Since I left, the American people have completely taken on a negative view of not only the war but the soldiers as well. Their impressions are that we have brutally killed women and children and they don't realize that we

have been fighting a tenacious battle with North Vietnamese army soldiers that are disciplined and very well supplied.

My leave is coming to a close and on the 15th of January 1969 I will be going to my new duty station on the East Coast. My new base will be Camp LeJeune, North Carolina where I will be joining the 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion. I'm sure this will be a major change from the Nam.

It was nice to spend New Year's in a warm bed instead of a cold wet jungle floor but the time has come to depart. I will leave on January 15, 1969 arriving on the 17th at my new base and I have said my good-byes to my family.

JANUARY 17, 1969

Upon arrival at Camp LeJeune, I make my way to Onslow Beach where the 2nd Recon Battalion is located. Once checked in, I am ready for duty.

Throughout January and February, the routine seems to be typical stateside standard guard duty or some type of training. I can tell I am no stateside Marine. I think about the guys all the time. Some days when it's just me on the beach I can close my eyes and I am back there. I can see myself walking the jungles in search of the enemy.

The big thing here is going for a run on the beach. My Company Commander is Lieutenant Chapman, whose father is the Commandant of the Marine Corps. I don't know if he has spent time in the Nam but he is definitely Recon Hard. Every day this man would take the whole company on a five-mile run up and down the beach. We start out on the wet sand and slowly move to the dunes. I knew on the first run never to let him get any further than a couple of feet away from me. Usually he would kick everyone's ass, but when he would stop and turn around at the end of the run, I always made a point to be right in his face. I would have died before I let him beat me.

FEBUARY 10, 1969

I have gone to the First Sergeant and have requested to go back to Vietnam. Not one day goes by where I don't think about the guys I left behind. I feel the duty here is important but I am just not a stateside Marine. I am a combat Recon Marine who is now out of his element. The Nam is where I can do some good. I know my job and I know the area. By going back, I feel I may save lives even if it costs me my own.

The First Sergeant said he would work on it and let me know something soon.

FEBRUARY 15, 1969

I have heard nothing from the Top (First Sergeant) about going back. I hate to ask him repeatedly. I've bugged him about it every time I see him and I think he's getting pissed. At the end of the day, I was just sitting on my foot locker looking into space when the CO walked by. He stopped and asked me if anything was wrong. I told him no sir, just waiting on the word from the First Sergeant about going back to the Nam. He came into my area and told me he didn't know I wanted to go back but he'd find out something in the morning and let me know. I thanked him and he left.

FEBUARY 16, 1969

The CO came in early. Soon after his arrival I was told to report to his office. Once inside I was told to sit down. The CO asked if I was crazy wanting to go back. I told him, no sir, I wasn't crazy and I just wanted to do my job of being a combat Recon Marine. It is what I do best. He told me he had looked over my record book and couldn't believe I wanted to go back for another year. I looked him right in the eye and told him, "Sir, I am a Recon Marine trained for combat and I can best serve the Corps by going back to Vietnam." The next day the First Sergeant was mad as hell but I had my orders, it was back to the Nam. The First Sergeant told me I was not to leave until February 20th to start my leave so its pack my gear and wait. Later on, that afternoon Lt. Chapman walked up to me and asked why I was still here. I told him what the First Shirt said and the CO said, "Go home Marine, I'll take care of the First Sergeant."

I was on my way home for a short leave prior to going back to Vietnam. I would be with my family until the end of the February after which, I would depart to California and then on to Vietnam.

With my early departure I was able to get home within a day or two, which was a surprise to my family. Once there, I told my mother my decision of returning to Vietnam. She is a woman of small stature but of great inner strength and has always been there for me and upheld my decisions.

My time is short and I have enjoyed my days at home. I have spent most of my time with my mother. I know she is worried about my return but I have told her I will be okay. I guess telling a mother not to worry would be like telling the sun not to shine on a beautiful summer day.

MARCH 1, 1969

Again, I must say my good-byes as I depart for California. I feel I am doing the right thing. All I know, is most people in the US at this point in the war don't give a shit about the fighting men in the Nam. Only the families with someone there really care.

MARCH 3, 1969

I am in California and have checked in. I have been told to board a bus that will take me to where I will be staying until I depart for Vietnam. Checking in late, I find my rack and go to sleep.

MARCH 4, 1969

My God, I can't believe it. I have woken up in a nest of young Marines so green their skin is almost the same color as their uniforms. And to top it off, I have been told I will be going through staging training again. I've got to find a way out of here and fast. I am only wasting time here.

On the 5th of March I ask to speak with the First Sergeant to inform him of my situation. If this doesn't work, I will go to the CO.

I have spoken with the First Sergeant telling him of my problem. He has looked at my S.R.B. (Service Record Book) and has told me he doesn't know how I got into staging training battalion but would do what he can to get me on my way. He did make the comment from the looks of my S.R.B. I should be doing the training. I thanked him and went back to the area.

In the days I have been here, it is the same way as when I went through the last time, prior to going to Vietnam. I have heard the young troops talk their shit on how they're going to kick Charlie's ass, yes kick ass and take names. I haven't told any of them I had been to the Nam. There is no need. It would be nothing but war stories to them. It would mean nothing to tell them of the brave men I have fought beside or the men I have seen wounded, lying in pain from an enemy contact or in the hospital in Da Nang and Japan. They could never understand what pain I have felt to see these men suffer. I dare not tell these young men about fear and how it is to be so afraid you can barely control your body and mind. Most of them will find out soon enough for themselves. Not all will come home alive. Some may wind up back here just as I have, after experiencing the Nam.

Some of the guys have asked me what I will be doing once I get to Vietnam. When I tell them, I am a Recon Marine they laugh and say, shit man, I don't want any part of those crazy mothers. I'll stick with the grunts.

There are a few that think they are bad asses. All I hear is bullshit coming out of them. They sure talk the talk. There is one little guy next to me who's quiet. He has told me he is afraid. I have told him afraid is okay and to stay afraid, but also keep your eyes and ears open and do what you're told when you get there. He looked at me and said, you've been there haven't you Smitty. I told him yes and smiled, put my finger to my lips and said, it doesn't mean anything, you'll be okay.

I feel as if I have been here a lifetime, facing every delay possible. It is nearing the end of the month and I have finally gotten the word that I leave in two days.

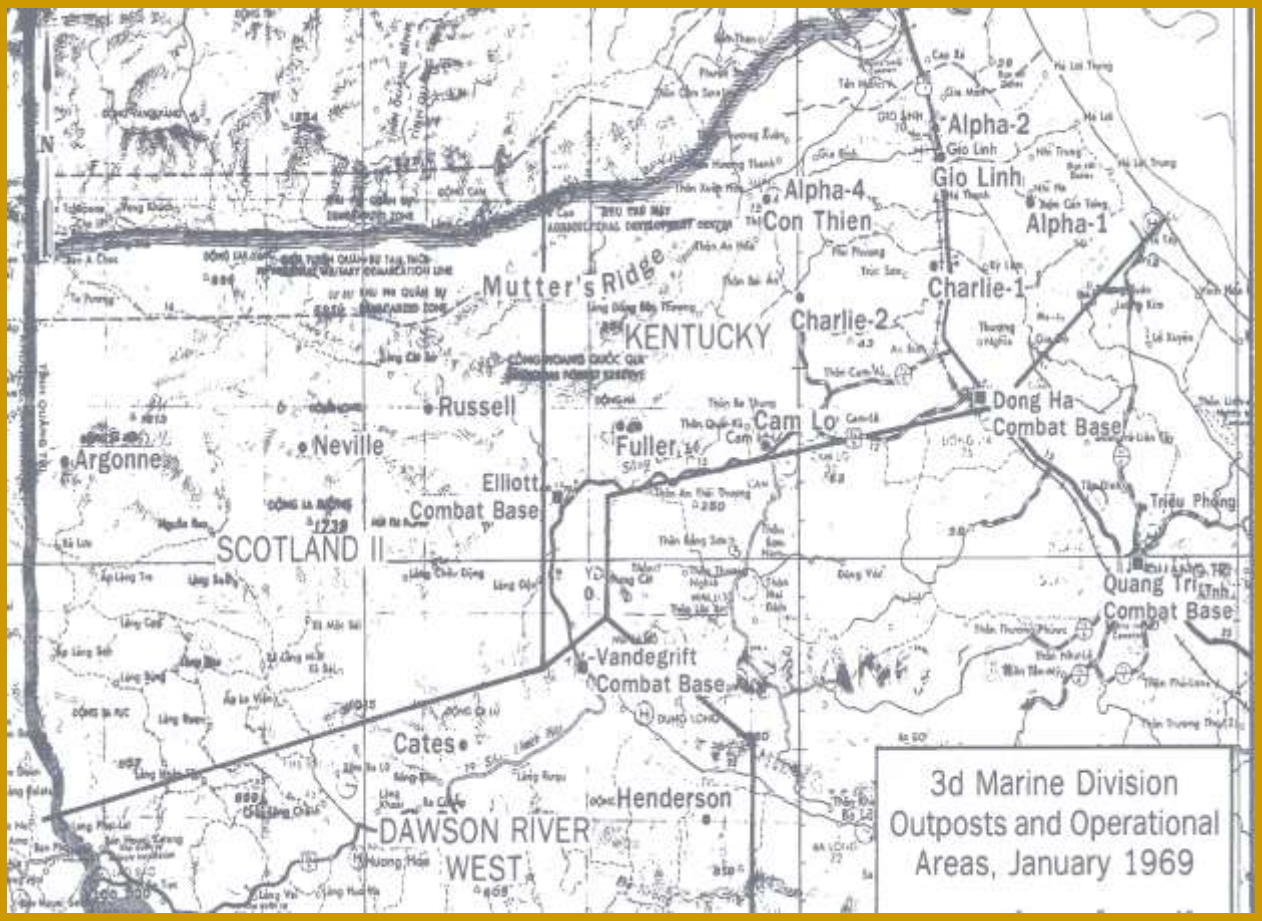
It is March 29, 1969 and it is early in the morning. I have packed my gear and I am ready. My uniform is pressed and ribbons are in place as I depart. As I am leaving, the company is in its morning formation. I pass by the company and I am seen by the First Sergeant. In front of the whole company, he turns and says there goes a man on his second tour to the Nam. God, the word was out. I stopped for a second, looked over the company and in a way I felt good. All eyes were on me. The bad asses now knew who walked the walk.



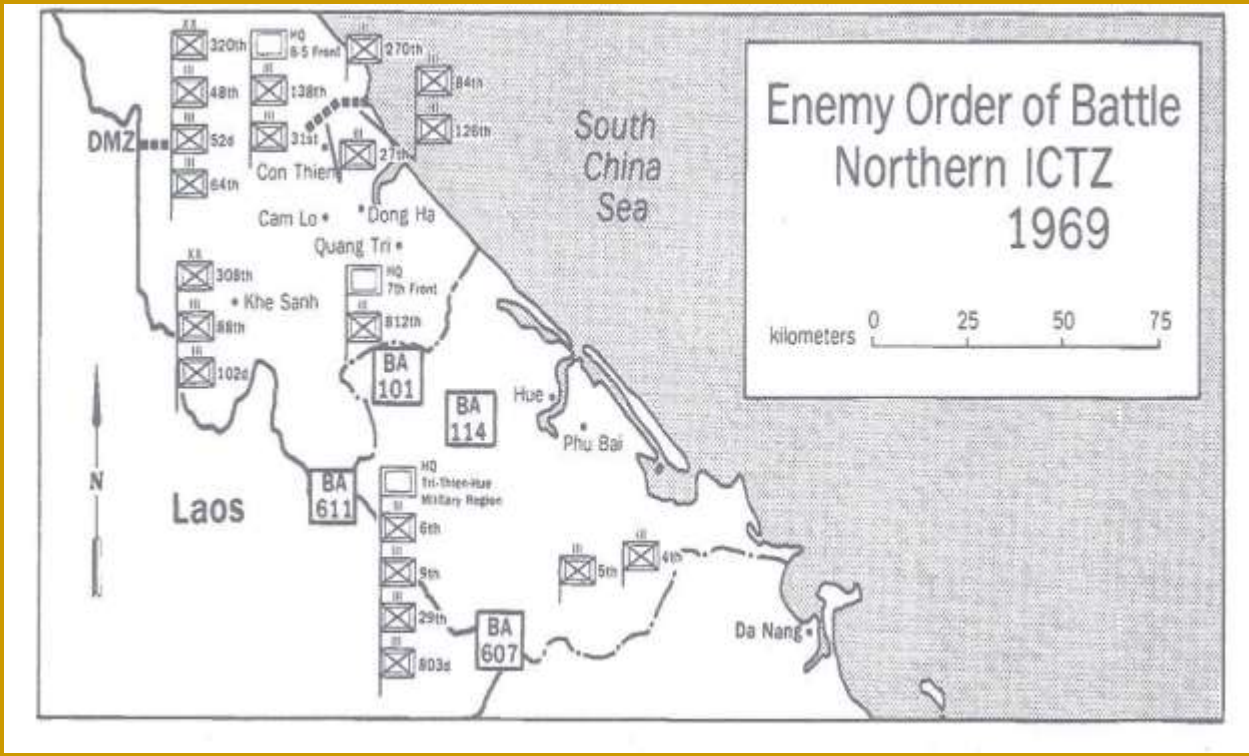
PART FOUR

It is now into April and the month has been consumed with working parties and delays in Okinawa. I think I could have hitchhiked over to Nam faster on my own. Nevertheless, at the end of April 1969, I have made it back in country. Nothing has changed. It still looks and smells the same as when I left.

I have had a major setback. I have been assigned to the First Marine Division by mistake. It has taken me four days of convincing everyone which included having to speak to a Full Bird Colonel, that my fullest potential could be best used back in the 3rd Recon Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, I Corps. It worked out and I will be heading North to Dang Ha very soon.



Map from Marine Corps Archives of I Corps area of responsibility as well as Marine outpost.



MAY 1, 1969

Today I will depart to Dong Ha where I will temporarily be assigned to a joint service group. Our job will be to do B-52 damage assessments. We will also cover the far western borders in search of enemy supply routes. After two weeks with the joint service unit, we were successful in finding several important supply routes along with enemy units along the western borders of Vietnam. Intensive B-52 bombings continue with hopes of slowing enemy filtering in from the Laos.

With only two weeks remaining in May, I return to Quang Tri joining 3rd Recon Battalion. Once in the Battalion area I will be placed in Bravo Company, becoming a member of team, call sign Marshall Hall 1-B-2. The team members of Marshall Hall are very squared away. Some of the guys are somewhat new in country but nevertheless know their jobs. Running point is a dog handler and I will be trading positions with

him while running point. From talking to the team members, it sounds as if they were just put together in the last few months. I am sure everything will work out. I am just happy to be back in Recon doing what I feel is my job.

Once set up in the team and company, I go over to Charlie Company. I know most of the old teammates are gone but Robert Jenkins, Dewayne Burnett, Fred Ostrom, Roger Runyon, and Daniel Tirado should still be there. I know it will be great to see these guys and find out what's been going on for the last few months. It seems like I have been gone for a lifetime and I can't wait to see them all.

Once in the area I walk into the hooch to find only one man I did not know and he has told me the team is in the bush. After a recon of the company area, I find my old friend Jim Young who has also returned for a second tour in his same old team Ringlet 3Charlie2.



Jim Young and James Smith

Jim gives me bad news about the team. It seems the team hit the shit in March on an old fire base while working with team Dock Leaf, 2Charlie1 and both teams took heavy losses. Also, Daniel Tirado was killed one week ago on the 7th of May. Hearing this, it was as if I had lost my own life.

I was pissed to the point of almost losing it. After hearing what he knew about the loss of the team I wanted revenge for the lives of my teammates.

With a further recon of the area, I find Jerry Beasley working in the scuba locker on a six-month extension. Jerry has told me the same news that Jim Young had told me. Then a feeling overcame me that maybe if I had not left, I could have somehow helped and prevented this tragedy.

Jim and Jerry told me, that on March 5, 1969 while on a mission with team Dock Leaf 2Charlie1, the team was taken under heavy enemy fire in the early morning hours by a reinforced platoon of NVA regulars. Robert Jenkins and Fred Ostrom were manning an M-60 caliber machine gun in defense of the perimeter along with other team mates. The team's position was taken under heavy fire with small arms and ChiCom grenades. With a grenade landing within killing range of Robert and Fred, Robert threw himself over Fred shielding him from the exploding enemy blast taking most of the impact resulting in his death and Fred being badly wounded.

After talking to team members that were on the mission, I was told that on that mission of Fire Base Argonne there were many heroes of the day resulting in awards and medals for the brave men within the team. Robert Jenkins had been put up for the Medal of Honor, Steve Lowery, the Navy Cross.

I feel deeply that what transpired on March 5, 1969 has to be told because it exemplifies how a group of young soldiers valiantly held the hill and fought off intense enemy attacks. It is an example of the dedication these men in the recon family had to one another.

The following are some of the details that I found out of what transpired before and during these missions.

Fire Base Argonne was an old artillery fire base considered to be a strategic location for the U.S. and NVA forces. It was located on a Mountain 1308 meters high, in the X-ray Delta (XD67/58 grid box) one and one half, klicks, “fifteen hundred meters”, east of Laos and two klicks, southwest from Dong Sa’ Mui Mountain, in the upper northwestern corner of South Vietnam.

Argonne, had been built in November 1968 by the Second Battalion Fourth Marines, 2/4 and abandoned by the Marines 14 December 1968. It was overlooking portions of the Ho Che Minh Trail, which was a vital supply route for troops and equipment coming from the north.

The Recon battalion’s mission to Argonne was considered vital in that the U.S. forces wanted to reopen the outpost to support troops in the area and someone had to go in first. The battalion had designated four recon teams to reopening and securing Fire Base Argonne. At which time, would be relieved by the infantry.

Prior to Dock Leaf’s March 3rd to the 5th 1969 mission, there were known to have been two attempts to put Recon teams on Fire Base Argonne resulting in both teams being aborted, one mission due to enemy ground fire and the second, NVA troops were sun bathing in the LZ.

Concerning the troops in the open sun bathing, Sgt. Darrell Eriksen, patrol leader and Richard “Doc” Bradford, Navy Corpsman, were two, of the seven-man recon team that was being inserted on Argonne that day. The teams insert helicopter headed for Argonne, flying low

through the jungle valley at tree top level, to keep the noise of the bird down, not to alert the enemy in the area. As they neared Argonne and the Landing Zone, Darrell and Doc concentrating on the LZ spotted NVA in open wearing no shirts. Seeing this with the aircraft still on the inbound to land, Darrell and Doc made every attempt to warn the pilots including pounding the backs of the pilot's seats with their rifle butts, and pointing to the enemy in the open. The mission was aborted and the team was returned to Quang Tri.

Nevertheless, the location was to be opened,

FIRE BASE ARGONNE

By now it was well known the enemy had many active troops in the area and it was considered to be a hot location. In the Charlie company area, it was discussed whether there should be another attempt to put a team on the hill and a request was put out for volunteers. Volunteers were found in the team members of Dock Leaf 2Charlie1 and Harbor Queen 3Charlie1.

Steve Lowery, patrol leader of team Dock Leaf, consulted with the company commander and he stated that he would agree to go on the mission, and asked for four additional recon marines and an M-60 caliber machine gun to support the mission.

Team Dock Leaf along with members of Three Charlie One we're to be inserted on March 3, 1969 by CH-46 helicopters on old Fire Base Argonne.

The team's mission would be to check the area for mines and enemy booby traps in the immediate area. They would also set up an observation post on top of the hill and call in any information on enemy activity in the surrounding area.

The mission was to last for three weeks. With the team preparing for the mission, cases of ammunition and grenades were allotted in case the team was taken under heavy enemy attack.

Team Dock Leaf consisted of; Cpl. Steve Lowery, Patrol Leader, Platoon Commander, 2nd Lieutenant David Ferguson, Assistant Patrol Leader, HM2 Doc Richard Bradford (Navy Corpsman) and Sergeant Darrell Eriksen, Platoon Sergeant. Other team members of Dock Leaf were HM3 Larry Turner (Navy Corpsman), Peter Dewilde, M-79 man, Jerome J. Jackson and Eddie Bridges. Members of Three Charlie One accompanying Dock Leaf on this mission were; Fred Ostrom, Larry Harrod, Robert Jenkins and Daniel Tirado.

Once on the bird, the heavily supplied team, was successfully inserted onto Fire Base Argonne without incident. The team will remain there three weeks, until relieved by a company of "infantry Marines". For recon to stay in a location for three weeks, other than a relay wasn't what recon did. It was just too dangerous.

March 3, 1969

Now on top of the mountain, the team found the area had no cover and set up a 360-degree defensive perimeter, in one of the three abandoned 105 artillery pits. As the day progressed the team checked the area on top of the hill and occasionally spotted some enemy a short distance down the hill in the tree line. One NVA body was found that

was killed before the team's arrival by arty or air strikes. Enemy sightings were sporadic with glimpses of enemy in groups of two to three. By the afternoon the team had taken enemy fire, pulling back to the top of the hill.

As darkness fell on the team, they were forced to call H&I fire to hold the enemy movement back. The H&I fire continued as sightings of enemy persisted. Then it suddenly happened! CONTACT, CONTACT Dock Leaf has made contact with the NVA and is taking heavy automatic fire.

Steve along with team mates returned fire in defense of their position. With the team's arty support coming from Fire Support Base Alpine, Steve called artillery support around the team in an attempt to halt the attack. With 155's impacting around the base of the hill's perimeter just meters from the team, it somewhat slowed the enemy's assault.

As the NVA continued and intensified their assault of the hill, Steve requested for Puff to come on station. Once Puff arrived, he laid down a base of fire in support of the team and held the enemy back. After Puff departed, the NVA continued to probe the team's position but refrained from an all-out attack.

March 4, 1969

With the coming of the next morning, the team is still within their 360-degree defensive perimeter in the old 105 artillery pits. Steve mobilized his men by working on defenses such as digging foxholes, filling old artillery boxes and sandbags with dirt and stacking them up

for cover. Nothing was left out. Anything that was within reach that could afford any protection was put in place.

From the previous night's experience, it was obvious that the enemy would probably try to hit them again.

Steve divides the team into three small groups rather than have them concentrated and more vulnerable. Steve, Turner, Jackson and Dewilde, were at the top of the hill. In another position to the northwest were, Sergeant Erikson, Larry Harrod. Robert Jenkins and Fred Ostrom with Jenkins and Ostrom manning the M-60 facing to the west. Lieutenant Ferguson, HM2 Doc Bradford, Daniel Tirado, and Eddie Bridges manned the third position, U-shaped fighting holes to the north. These two small U-shaped positions were the most forward listening posts. If there was a sighting or enemy noise, the team member on watch in that position would return and inform the rest of the team of the situation.

Team members would take turns manning these positions in these small holes. During the night of the 4th, Dewilde was in the hole in front of Steve's team and Bridges was in the other hole. The team had claymores set out in areas that they felt were most susceptible to the approach of enemy.

That night there was a full moon and it lit up the hilltop which was an advantage to the team as well as the enemy as they were able to have better visual capability.

As the night progressed, the team again heard the enemy's probing of their perimeter.

On the morning of March 5, 1969 still two hours from full light, team members strained their eyes as they scanned the area. Then without any notice, the team was hit with CS gas from the attacking NVA as enemy assaulted the team's position. Grenade explosions started to ring out within the team's perimeter as well as heavy enemy small arms fire. The NVA made their way up the fingers of hill 1308 to the team's position.

Robert Jenkins and Fred Ostrom's position along with other team mates were hit hard with ChiCom grenades. Fred was hit by grenade shrapnel on the first volley of incoming grenades. He laid wounded where he slept. Jenkins immediately had woken up jumping in his position firing his machine gun. As soon as he noticed Fred, there were two more grenades landed right into the location where Jenkins and Ostrom were. Jenkins threw himself on top of Fred in an effort to shield him from the explosions resulting in Robert's death and Fred being seriously wounded again.

Under heavy enemy fire, "Doc" Richard Bradford disregarded his own safety and moved to their aid only to find that there was no possible help for Robert after removing Robert's gas mask and finding fatal head and neck wounds. "Doc" Bradford then found Fred Ostrom to be very badly wounded and in great pain. Still under heavy enemy fire Doc gave him morphine to help ease his pain, dressing his wounds.

With the enemy now feet from the team's position grenades are thrown by the dozens to repel the assaulting force. With the assault still in progress, Peter Dewilde was taken under fire and killed. The Lieutenant's position was also hit very hard resulting in the death of Lieutenant Ferguson.

As enemy assaults continued, the team now had three KIA's with others wounded and desperately trying to fend off the enemy's vicious attack.

As the NVA advanced, Steve Lowery was wounded as ChiCom grenades landed in his location blowing him out of his position and resulting in Steve receiving serious wounds. Barely able to regain himself, he was again wounded in the legs by enemy AK-47 fire. As enemy closed in on his position Steve lobs several grenades, killing several advancing enemies slowing the assault.

Eriksen, Harrod and Doc Bradford were also hit. Eriksen, had an enemy ChiCom land at his feet and the resulting explosion threw him into the air, but Eriksen managed to survive the blast despite being seriously wounded. Then Eddie Bridges and Tirado also were wounded which brought the team's casualties now to 3 killed and 7 wounded as the heavy firefight still ensued.

An NVA managed to enter into the perimeter takes aim at Fred Ostrom. Seeing this, despite his wounds Eddie Bridges moved from his position placing himself in the line of enemy fire, killing that NVA soldier with a burst from his M-16, saving Fred's life.

Steve Lowery, even though seriously wounded, continued to call in artillery support, bring the 155MM artillery rounds as close as 20 meters (60 feet, danger close) from the teams' position repelling the enemy's assault. Tirado, firing the M-79, Eriksen and Harrod along with teammates returned fire in attempts to halt the advancing enemy force.

Doc Turner and Doc Bradford still under enemy fire continued to aid the wounded while also returning fire.

With J.J. Jackson and Doc Turner being the only team members not wounded, the surviving team members stood united as they made every effort to repel the enemy force.

As 155MM artillery from Fire Base Alpine impacted just meters from the team's position, team members managed to hold off the assaulting enemy.

As daylight approached, an OV-10 air observer came on station as well as supporting helicopters.

Once on station gunships laid down suppressive fire around the team's position as two CH-46 helicopters managed to take out all the dead and wounded in spite of the enemy opening up with mortars.

Once all the team members were on board the helicopters and out of the zone, fixed-wing aircraft made air strikes with high explosives and napalm destroying whatever supplies had been left by the team on top of the hill.

As a result of the fight for Argonne that day in March 1969, Robert Jenkins received the Medal of Honor, Steve Lowery the Navy Cross, "Doc" Richard Bradford, Darrell Eriksen and Peter Dewilde received the Silver Star, Peter posthumously. As well, a total of ten Purple Hearts were awarded for wounds received by team members. All team members stood as one on that night remaining loyal to each other and exemplified the Marine Corps creed of Semper Fidelis.

The following is the brief report of that mission:

DRAFTED BY
CSC S-2
CAO

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 060517 Z MAR69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHS

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV
CG TASK FORCE HOTEL
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH)
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
NINTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN
THIRD FORCE RECON CO

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT-N(U)

1. RECON TEAM: DOCKLEAF (2C1) (12 MEN) OPO 109-D 69
2. DATE INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 031630H/050600H MAR69 (38 HRS)

3. ROUTE: SECURE FSB ARGONNE XD677573
4. TERRAIN: N/A

5. HLZ'S: N/A
6. ENEMY: 031700H TM ON INITIAL SEARCH OF FSB ARGONNE FOUND ONE TWO MONTH OLD NVA BODY, FOUR AK-47'S (UNSERVICEABLE), ONE RPD, CLOTHING ON NVA BODY APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN NEW, NVA KILLED BY ARTY OR A/S.

032100H TM REC'D 5-10 SECOND BURST OF AWF CONTAINING TRACER AMMO AND ONE CHI-COM GRENADE AT 30-75 METERS FM NORTHEAST, TM RET'D SAF, THREW GRENADES, CALLED ARTY AND SPOOKY MADE RUN, NEG OBS RESULTS. 032300H TM HAD MOVEMENT TO NORTHEAST, FIRED H&I AND ADJUSTED ON-CALLS, MOVEMENT CEASED. 032300H TM OBS ONE NVA AND HEARD MOVEMENT OF 5-10 MORE COME THROUGH WIRE 150 METERS TO THE WEST, H&I'S AND ON-CALLS FIRED WITH NEGATIVE OBS RESULTS. 032340H TM OBS ONE NVA 30 METERS TO NORTHEAST, H&I'S FIRED, NEG RESULTS. 041100H TM OBS LIGHTS AT 4000 MILS APPROX 5-6000 METERS AND MORE LIGHTS AT 4400 MILS AT UNK DISTANCE, NEGATIVE ACTION. 041930H TM HEARD MOVEMENT ON WEST FINGER AT 150 METERS, NVA/VC MOVING THROUGH WIRE, NEG ACTION. 050130H T[illegible] OUT POST TO SOUTHWEST OBS ONE NVA WATCHING TEAM'S POSITION FROM [redacted] 050[illegible] ACTION.

2063

DECLASSIFIED

300 METERS TO NORTHEAST, NEGATIVE ACTION. 050508H TM
SAF, AWF GRENADES AND MORTARS FM NORTHEAST. ON

ACT TM REC'D A CS AGENT CAUSING 1ST DEGREE BURNS ON
AND BATERING OF EYES CONNECTED WITH GROUND ASSAULT FM GAS

TM SUSTAINED THREE KIA'S FROM GRENADES DROPPED IN HOLES
NVA. TM RET'D SAF, GRENADES, CALLED F/M, REQ AO, GUNSHIPS

Y EXTRACT. TRIP FLARES AT 40 METERS FM TM ALL DET NATED
ON CALL'S OF 175MM FIRED 1000 METERS TO NORTH RESULTED

DARY EXPLOSIONS. TM OBS ESTIMATED 40 NVA DURING CONTACT
C) 15 METERS FM TM APPEARED TO BE WEARING NEW

PONCHO, TENNIS SHOES, LONG SLEEVE SHIRT, ALL ENEMY
TO BE IN GOOD CONDITION. INITIAL CONTACT TERMINATED

WHEN ENEMY WITHDREW APPROX 25 METERS AND CONT'D
AND AWF. 050709H TM EXTRACTED WITH HELO'S TAKING

NADES. TM UNABLE TO RETRIEVE 7 M-16'S, 1 M-79 (UNSERVICEABLE,
DESTROYED ON INITIAL CONTACT, AND ONE PRC-93 ALONG WITH

AMMO. ALL MARKED BY AIR PANEL AND AO INFORMED TO RUN A/S.
POINT CONTACT ONE NVA KIA(C).

OPO 190-69
CONFIDENTIAL

62 RELEASED BY R. H. Perry TIME 051605 H MAR69

G-2 G 3/030

ARGONNE


Fire Base Argonne
Grid location XD676573
March 5, 1969
Enemy assaults routes
Enemy contact point
Location that Team Dock Leaf 2Charlie1 and comrades of 3Charlie1 fought a battle of immense magnitude, standing united as one.





Robert Jenkins

Robert Jenkins Private First Class, U.S. Marine Corps

While serving with 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, 3d Marine Division (Rein), FMF at Fire Support Base Argonne, Republic of Vietnam, March 5, 1969. Citation: For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a machine gunner with Company C, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, in connection with operations against enemy forces. Early in the morning Pfc. Jenkins' 12-man reconnaissance team was occupying a defensive position at Fire Support Base Argonne south of the Demilitarized Zone. Suddenly, the marines were assaulted by a North Vietnamese Army platoon employing mortars, automatic weapons, and hand grenades. Reacting instantly, Pfc.

Jenkins and another marine quickly moved into a 2-man fighting emplacement, and as they boldly delivered accurate machine gun fire against the enemy, a North Vietnamese soldier threw a hand grenade into the friendly emplacement, fully realizing the inevitable results of his action, Pfc. Jenkins quickly seized his comrade, and pushing the man to the ground, he leaped on top of the marine to shield him from the explosion. Absorbing the full impact of the detonation, Pfc. Jenkins was seriously injured and subsequently succumbed to his wounds. His courage, inspiring valor and selfless devotion to duty saved a fellow marine from serious injury or possible death and up held the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the U. S. Navel Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.



Team Leader: Steve Lowery



Corporal Steven M. Lowery

For extraordinary heroism while serving as a patrol leader with Company C, Third Reconnaissance Battalion, Third Marine Division, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. Early on the morning of 5 March 1969, Corporal Lowery's twelve-man reconnaissance patrol was occupying a defensive position at Fire Support Base Argonne south of the Demilitarized Zone. Suddenly, the Marines were assaulted by a North Vietnamese Army platoon employing mortars, hand grenades, and automatic weapons. In the initial moments of the fire fight, Corporal Lowery was seriously wounded in both legs by the intense enemy fire. Steadfastly remaining in his hazardous position, he boldly delivered accurate return fire and hurled grenades at the advancing enemy. When two hostile soldiers approached his position in an attempt to penetrate the Marine perimeter, Corporal Lowery calmly lobbed three hand grenades outside of his emplacement, killing several of the enemy and causing the others to retreat. Although suffering extensive pain and weakness from his wounds, he then commenced directing artillery fire upon the hostile force to within 20 meters of friendly lines and skillfully readjusted his defenses. When helicopters arrived to extract his team, he skillfully directed supporting gunships against the North Vietnamese unit and ensured that all other wounded Marines were aboard the extraction aircraft before allowing himself to be carried to the helicopter. His bold initiative and resolute determination inspired all who observed him and were instrumental in his unit's accounting for twenty North Vietnamese soldiers killed. By his courage, aggressive fighting spirit, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of great personal danger, Corporal Lowery upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.



2Lt. David Ferguson



Fred Ostrom Robert Jenkins Larry Harrod



Doc turner

Combat Navy Corpsman



Danial Tirado

The battle for Argonne was not over. There would be other attempts to take the Fire Base and re-open it.

On March 20, 1969, as part of the Operation Purple Martin, the First Battalion Forth Marines moved to reoccupy Fire Support Base Argonne.

A recon team from Alpha Company 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion was to lead the way into the landing zone landing on the summit of Hill 1308, Fire Base Argonne. They were to land first to check out and secure the LZ.

As a five-man team, 3Alpha1, call sign “Frost Burg” departs from the recon area, they are en-route to the landing zone. Using an Army UH-1E helicopter, tail number 68-15304, Call sign; Kingman, “Company B 101 AVN”, to carry the team into the zone. As the bird was on the inbound

to the landing zone, the bird is hit with a controlled blast within the zone. Just 3 or 4 feet over the landing zone, WO1 David C Vaugh was killed and his Aircraft Commander, CW2 Thomas G. Armer, wounded causing the aircraft to crash in the landing zone under heavy enemy mortar, and small arms fire.

The team leader of 3-ALPHA-1 Frost Burg, Cpl. James Taylor, said;

The bird was entering the zone, and at 3 or 4 feet over the zone the chopper was split in two pieces by a great explosion. The enemy had the LZ booby-trapped with a controlled detonated mine. After the explosion the head of the bird went down with all of us still in it, while the ass end folded back nearby. The team was just behind the cockpit, and it was pulverized by enemy fire. Taylor said he could remember hitting the ground and the front of the bird was skidding around with the rotors still spinning.

It was them the team jumped out and set up some kind of quick positions under fire. The NVA were hitting us hard as the team and downed bird took heavy automatic weapons fire as well as mortars for about 25 minutes. It was then the NVA attacked in force with heavy enemy fire getting as close as ten feet of the team. Taylor said, the Huey M-60 gunner, was working out blasting away at the NVA, as the shell casings from his M-60 were hot and landing on my back. Taylor said, I normally carried a shotgun but this time I had and M-16, but the damn thing jammed. The gunner handed me his 16, and I started using it, and I know I hit six of the NVA holding the enemy back. On the mountain there were a lot of old marine fighting holes around and the NVA were using ‘em.

Because of the rotors on the chopper were still turning, all we could use was our small arms. The rotors were rotating directly over our heads preventing us from throwing grenades.

Once I managed to get hold of a radio, I requested Puff to get out here and blast the area. In minutes Puff was there. He started working over the area and he was very close, to us. As soon as Puff was done fixed wing was in bound and blowing the area up.

The Pilot of the Huey had been killed in the initial blast that shattered the chopper, and co-pilot, wounded on the entry to the LZ. Taylor and his team had been perched on the edge of the bird, ready to jump and run, on landing. With the first shot fired by the enemy, Taylor was hit in the left arm.

Just before the extract, with air support from above, Taylor and one of the gunners helped carry the two to the rescue 46. The bird was taking heavy fire, and once the gunner pulled the co-pilot on the bird, I was returning fire, when I turned the bird was lifting off. Everyone was on board but me, with the bird off the ground. As team mates reach over the tail gate of the CH-46, I reached out to them as they grabbed me pulling me in as the bird lifted out of the hot LZ.

CREW

WO1 David C. Vaughn, Pilot, Killed-in-Action

Company “B” 101 AVN, 101st Airborne Division

CWO2 Copilot Thomas G. Arner, Aircraft Commander, Wounder-in-Action

Crew Chief, C.E. Sablam, Wounded-in-Action

Door Gunner, G. Haley

Once the recon team and crew of the bird are out of harm's way, things were not over yet.

Company D, 1st Battalion 4th Marines, landed nearby and moved to secure Argonne. Fighting against entrenched NVA in bunkers, which resulted in the loss of six Marines, and 15 NVA killed. The following morning, an NVA mortar attack hit the Marines command post killing the Battalion Commander, LtCol George Sargent and three other Marines, additional mortar fire hit as the wounded were being evacuated resulting in a further three marines killed. Company "C" was ordered to move to Argonne while Company "A" swept west of Argonne to silence the NVA mortars. On March 28th Company "A" seized Hill 1154, one and a half klicks, (1500 meters) northwest of Argonne destroying the NVA mortar positions.

To follow the final battle for Argonne and the 4th Marines, in a hard hitting decription of events can be found in a Novel by Karl Marlantes, called:

"THE MATTERHORN" It is a must read.


61
60
59
58
57
56
55
54
53
665
666
667
668
669
670
671
672
Hill 1308
Fire Base Argonna
Hill 1154
4th Marines take
enemy position

Below is the report of the Frost Burg mission.

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFTED BY: [redacted]
SEC S-2 PH 3D RECON BN
CWO [redacted] PES

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 221001Z MAR69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHS
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV — COPY TO:
CG TASK FORCE HOTEL — G-2
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) — G-3
THIRD MARINES — G5V
FOURTH MARINES
FIFTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
HQ THIRD MAMC
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN.
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON SPOT REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: FROST BURG (3A1) (5 MEN) OPO 142-D 69
200930H AT XD676714 TM ON TWO HELO'S, ONE HELO SET IN LZ,

3-4 ' FM GROUND, COMMAND DETONATED MINE EXPLODED, HELO LANDED
ROCKING BACK AND FORTH, AT THIS TIME HELO REC'D HEAVY AWF

KILLING THE PILOT AND WOUNDING THE CO-PILOT, THE TM EVACUATED
THE HELO AND SET UP 360o TO RETURN FIRE, TM REC'D HEAVY AWF &

MORTAR ROUNDS FOR APPROX 35 MINUTES THEN EN ASSAULTED TM'S
POS, TM REPULSED THE EN ATTACK (EN CAME TO WITHIN 20' OF TM)

EN WITHDREW LEAVING THREE EN KIA(C), TM CONT'D TO RECEIVE
HEAVY AWF, EN ASSAULTED AGAIN, HOWEVER, THIS TIME TO A LESSER

DEGREE, AFTER AGAIN REPULSING THE TM REC'D HEAVY AWF UNTIL MED-
EVAC HELO ARRIVED, TM EXTRACTED AT 200 01OH, TM PRIOR TO LEAVING

HELO ATTEMPTED TO SHUT OFF HELO BUT THE HELO CO-PILOT WAS UNABLE
TO TELL THEM HOW TO DO IT, TM TOOK CO-PILOT FM HELO, TM WAS

UNABLE TO GET TO THE HELOS FOR APPROX 20 MINUTES, TM HAD AO ON
STATION WITH THREE FIGHTERS F/W AND GUNSHIPS, TM REC'D CLOSE AIR

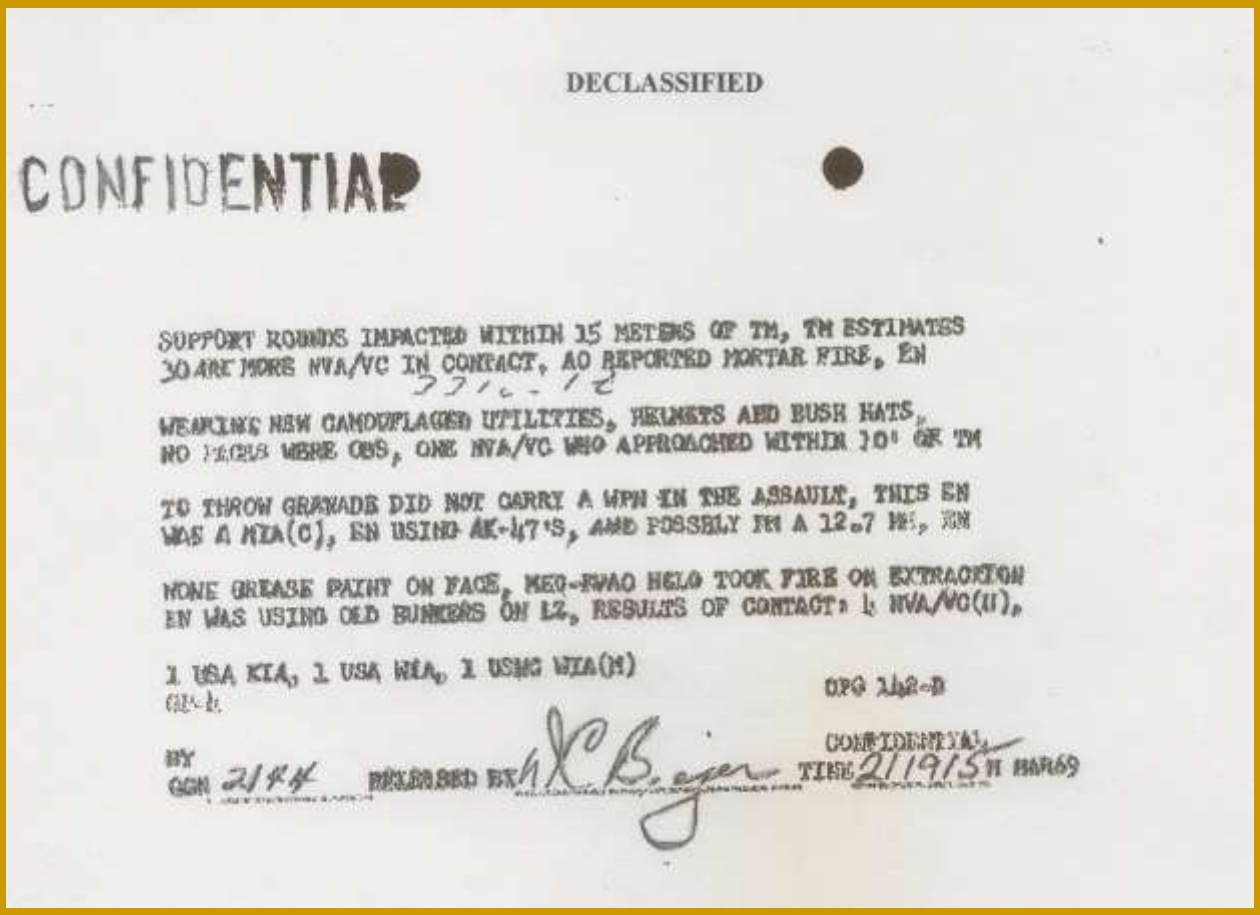
SUPPORT FM R/W AND GUNSHIPS THE ENTIRE PERIOD ON GROUND.

PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES CONFIDENTIAL PES

G-2
2 of 3

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED



DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

SUPPORT ROUNDS IMPACTED WITHIN 15 METERS OF TM, TM ESTIMATES
30 ARE MORE NVA/VC IN CONTACT, AO REPORTED MORTAR FIRE, EN
WEARING NEW CAMOUFLAGED UTILITIES, HELMETS AND BUSH HATS,
NO PACKS WERE OBS, ONE NVA/VC WHO APPROACHED WITHIN 10' OF TM
TO THROW GRANADE DID NOT CARRY A WPN IN THE ASSAULT, THIS EN
WAS A KIA(C), EN USING AK-47'S, AND POSSIBLY MG A 12.7 MG, EN
NONE GREASE PAINT ON FACE, MED-EVAC HELO TOOK FIRE ON EXTRACTION
EN WAS USING OLD BUNKERS ON LZ, RESULTS OF CONTACT: 4 NVA/VC(K),
1 USA KIA, 1 USA WIA, 1 USMC WIA(M)
OPO 142-D
CONFIDENTIAL
BY
CGN 2144 RELEASED BY K C Bayer TIME 211915H MAR69

OpO 142-D-69 (3A1) 200930H MARCH 69 (221001Z). Helo setting in LZ was damaged by a Command Detonated Mine, resulting in 1 USMC KIA and 1 USMC WIA. Team disembarked helo, and received heavy SAF and AWF and mortars. Team returned fire. Team twice repulsed enemy assault of 30 VC/NVA. Fixed-wing and gunships supported team. Team extracted. Results: 4 VC/NVA KIA(C), 1 USA KIA, 1 USA WIA (E), 1 USMC WIA (M).

Operations around Argonne continued into April, 1969.

Jerry Beasley also tells me that Daniel Tirado was killed but on a different mission.

Daniel, assigned to team Air Minded (Three Charlie One), was on a mission west of Vandergrift on May 7, 1969. Danny along with four other team members, were ambushed and overwhelmed by enemy forces. The team consisted of Corporal Andy Wise, Lance Corporal Norman VanCor, Lt. John Shinault, Lance Corporal James McAfee and my old team mate Daniel Tirado.

After a night of rain, and the teams last night in the recon zone, they stand fast in their harbor site preparing to move to the LZ about 300 meters away. Still early morning in the site, the team take's a heavy burst of enemy fire. Instantly the team returns fire. In seconds the fire has stopped, its quiet. Obviously, it was a hit and run, but no one is hurt. Norman has called in the contact and the team is told to move to a more defendable position. With the LZ 300 meters away, the team leader makes the decision to move in that direction. The team had moved out only a short distance, in seconds they took a burst of heavy enemy gun fire in an ambush by an estimated 10 to 15 NVA, resulting in the initial deaths of Lt. John Shinault and Daniel Tirado. McAfee and Wise were wounded very badly. After confirming the Lieutenant and Danny had been killed, bandages were placed on McAfee and Wise, but they were in serious pain with abdominal wounds and needed to be evacuated as soon as possible.

Norman VanCor, the only team member not wounded was now fighting to save his remaining teammates and himself. Using his radio, he is able to inform the rear of the situation, get a fire mission in

support of the team as well as air support, a reaction force and emergency extract while fighting off advancing enemy.

Under heavy enemy small arms fire, VanCor managed to fight off single-handedly the advancing enemy while making every effort to aid his wounded comrades. To make matters worse, the rear has ordered Norman to stay at his location until support arrived. The insane part was, VanCor was told the rescue could take hours.

Knowing to stay in this location would be sure death, VanCor makes the decision to make every effort to save his remaining surviving team mates and self. VanCor, under enemy fire makes two trips along an unprotected ridge line, over two hundred meters, as he carried each wounded to the closest landing zone and most secure location to defend.

With cloud cover low and the enemy close, the choppers experienced difficulty locating the team. As the pilots came in low, they were able to spot VanCor's air panel. As the bird sets in the zone, Norman runs to the gunner getting his help to retrieve the wounded. Once on board the chopper and out of the zone, it was a flight to Delta Med to save the wounded.

It was to my understanding, the initial contact and number of NVA in the area, we're so overwhelming that Danny and Lt. Shinault's bodies were irretrievable at that time.

A reaction was sent in to recover the bodies of Lt. John Shinault and Danny Tirado. The battalion was at a great loss.

Lance Corporal Norman VanCor was written up for the Congressional Medal of Honor but received the Navy Cross for heroism while on this

mission. If not for Norman's actions the entire team would have been wiped out.

The support and heroism of Norman on this mission was above and beyond the call of duty. The award in this case should have been the Medal of Honor but regulations require two eye witnesses of the event. The remaining two team members were in shock and their wounds were of such a severity that the presentation was the Navy Cross. Nevertheless, it is heroes like Norman VanCor that make up this small elite unit.

Enemy contacts of this severity are at times out of the realm of explanation. If one could relate to the horrors of being on the threshold of death, fighting against overwhelming odds for your life, it could only be comprehended by a "Combat Soldier".





Norman VanCor

Navy Cross

Lance Corporal Norman VanCor United States Marine Corps

CITATION:

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to Lance Corporal Norman W. Vancor (MCSN: 2418325), United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism while serving as a Radio Operator with Company C, Third Reconnaissance Battalion, THIRD Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in connection with combat operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 7 May 1969, while Lance Corporal Vancor's five-man reconnaissance team was observing hostile movement in an area northwest of the Dong Ha Combat Base, the Marines came under a heavy volume of enemy small-arms fire and sustained two casualties. The team leader directed a withdrawal toward a pre-selected helicopter landing zone three hundred meters distant and as the men proceeded toward the designated location they again came under intense small-arms fire from North Vietnamese Army soldiers, mortally wounding two Marines and seriously injuring two others. Apparently believing that they had annihilated the friendly team, the enemy soldiers left their concealed positions and advanced toward the casualties. Lance Corporal Vancor, the only uninjured member of the reconnaissance patrol, boldly engaged the North Vietnamese, killing one and forcing the others to withdraw into the underbrush. He then administered first aid to his companions and contacted nearby aircraft to brief them on the current situation. Realizing that the critical conditions of the two men would not permit awaiting arrival of a reaction force, he made two hazardous trips along an unprotected ridgeline through two hundred meters of extremely hostile territory, successfully carrying his injured comrades to the landing site. Undaunted by intense enemy fire, he guided the aircraft into the position and directed the safe extraction of his patrol. His heroic actions and calm presence of mind during a critical situation inspired all who observed him and saved the lives of two Marines. By his courage, selfless concern for his fellowmen, and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of grave personal danger, Lance Corporal Vancor upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.



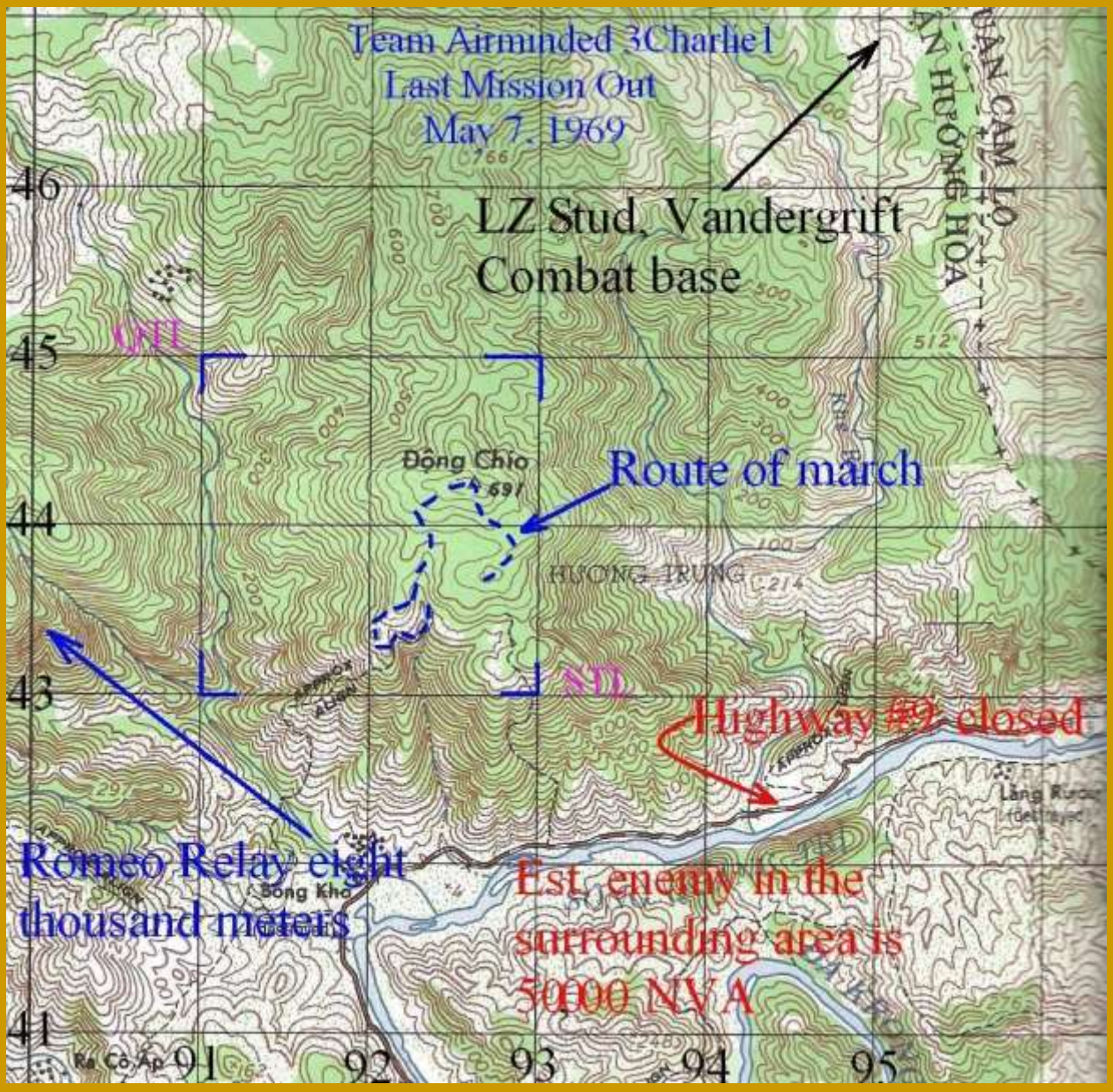


May 7, 1969
Recon Marines remembered

Call Sign: Airminded
Unit Designation: 3C1
Time of Departure: 0700

Cpl.	Wise	PL
LCpl.	VanCor	Pri Radio
LCpl.	McAffee	M 79
Pfc.	Tirado	APL-Doc
Lt.	Shinault	Scout

Team Airminded, (3Charlie1) was taken under fire in a ambush on a mission west-southwest of Vandergrift combat base resulting in the death of Lt. John Shinault and Danial Tirado. As well, two others were wounded, Cpl. Wise and L/Cpl McAfee. Norman VanCor received the Navy Cross for saving the lives of the remaining wounded team members.


Team Airminded 3Charlie1
Last Mission Out
May 7, 1969
LZ Stud, Vandergrift
Combat base
QTI
Động Chio
691
Route of march
HUONG TRUNG
214
NTI
Highway #9 closed
Romeo Relay eight
thousand meters
Est. enemy in the
surrounding area is
50,000 NVA
46
45
44
43
41
91
92
93
94
95

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

DTG/CITE/ROUTING 080531 Z MAY 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV
TO: CG XXIV CORPS FWD
CG III MAF DEF

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV
CG TASK FORCE HOTEL
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH)
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
NINTH MARINES
TWENTY-SIXTH MARINES
HQ THIRD NVNC
SR. PROVINCE ADVISOR QUANG TRI
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
CSV

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON SPOT REPORT MADE IN LIEU OF PATROL REPORT (U)

RECON TEAM: AIRMINDED 303 (5 MEN) OPO-338-D-69
070900 E TEAM AT (XD 881586) ONE TEAM MEMBER OBSERVED ONE VC/NVA, ON THE TR-
AIL TO THE TEAMS SOUTH. ABOUT TWO MINUTES LATER THE TEAM RECEIVED A HEAVY VOLUME OF SMALL ARMS FIRE FROM THEIR NORTH, AT A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 25m.

TEAM RETURNED FIRE, AND AT THIS TIME HAD TWO USMC WIA. TEAM THEN MOVED TO THE SOUTH ABOUT 30m ON THE TRAIL. AT THIS TIME, THE TEAM RECEIVED

ANOTHER HEAVY VOLUME OF FIRE FROM THEIR SOUTH SOUTHWEST. TEAM RETURNED FIRE, AND THEN THE FIRING CEASED. SEVERAL SECONDS LATER THE TEAMS RADIO

MAN OBSERVED ONE VC/NVA ABOUT TEN METERS AWAY. RADIO MAN INITIATED CON-
TACT RESULTING IN ONE ENEMY KIA. TEAM THEN MOVED TO LZ, AND WAITED ABOUT

15 MINUTES, AND WERE EXTRACTED WITH NEGATIVE INCIDENTS. TEAM MEMBER IS UNABLE TO ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF ENEMY ENGAGED. THE ENEMY OBSERVED WAS

WEARING A PITH HELMET, GREEN UTILITIES (APPEARED TO BE CLEAN) AND AN UNKN-
OWN SERVICE WEAPON. RESULT OF CONTACT, TWO USMC KIA, TWO USMC WIA, AND ONE

ENEMY KIA. AS A RESULT OF CONTACT ONE TEAM MEMBER WAS UNHURT, AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MED-EVACING THE WOUNDED.
OPO:

OPO-338-D-69

BT CONFIDENTIAL
CCN 1121 RELEASED BY A H Long TIME 0804152 MAY 69
G-2

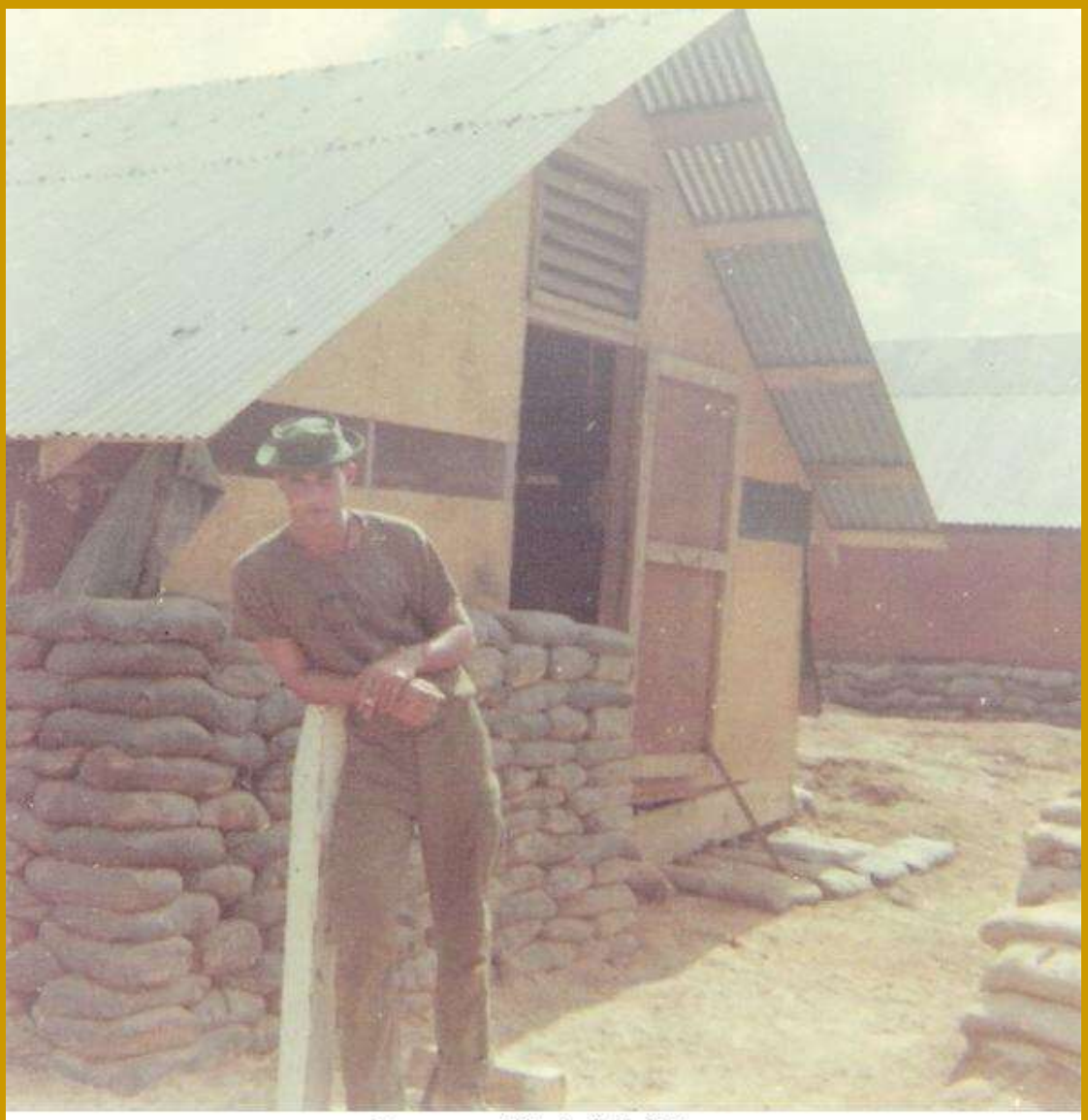
CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED



Daniel Tirado and Larry Harrod

Quang Tri Vietnam 1969



Quang Tri 1969
Daniel Tirado



Robert Jenkins Daniel Tirado



Larry Harrod and Steve Lowery



Peter Dewilde



Fred Ostrom and John Romero

There was no more 3Charlie1, Death had taken my friends and my team. I stood there and experienced the greatest loss of my life. All

these months I had wanted to come back and it turned out I had been too late. I had failed in my attempt to return to save the lives of my friends. I feel so alone and despise the enemy for what they have done.

Robert, whom I ran patrols with was a young man from Interlachen, Florida. He was like a brother. In the rear, he and I had our small area set up so we were able to sit and talk during our time off. We would have lengthy conversations about all the fun we would have once we returned back home to the world. Most of the time Robert was quiet and I remember he was quite a good artist. He had drawn a large picture of Jesus on an old c-rat box. This picture hung at the head of his rack. I will miss Robert as well as Larry, Daniel and Fred, and all the team members of 3Charlie1. For the rest of my life, they will always be in my thoughts.

MAY 29, 1969

After several days in the company area, we get a warning order. Team Marshall Hall will be going to the Khe Sanh area. The mission will be to run a regular stingray recon patrol. The team's zone is located at the northwest edge of Vietnam. We will be three klicks east of Laos and one klick (klick =1,000 meters) east of Argonne. Reports of the area tell the team there are heavy enemy forces in and around the area.

I have been on patrols in this area and I know the mountains around Khe Sanh are very thick jungle, making navigation in the area tough. As far as enemy, there are company size units of enemy forces moving throughout the area. We will depart on May 30, 1969 and will return on the 3rd of June. Our insert will be by Huey Slick.

It's a tight squeeze on the slick for the team and team members on the outboard sides are totally exposed to any enemy fire on the inbound. With little room in the Huey, we just sit in the door with our legs hanging out of the bird scanning for enemy movement. Huey Slicks are more maneuverable and quicker getting in and out of an LZ than the bigger and more cumbersome CH-46s.

1st PATROL

MAY 30, 1967 TO JUNE 3, 1969

It was early morning as team Marshall Hall 1B2 moves to the chopper pad to await our insert. Once at the pad, we are not alone. There are several other teams waiting to be inserted. As the morning inserts continue, Marshall Hall is up next to be inserted. Once on the bird, all team members take their positions as the bird lifts to the sky. In a short time, we will be over the zone and the mission will be underway.

While circling the assigned area, team members observe the landing zone below as the gunships prep the area for our entry. I feel as if we are packed in this bird like sardines. Three teammates are on the right side of the bird, three are on the left while the secondary radio man and dog handler, with dog are in the middle. The rest of the crew is the two pilots and door gunners, one on each side. These crews know all too well how easy it is for the enemy to take them out with an RPG or small arms on an insert or extract. Yet these guys get you in and out of the zone, continuously putting their lives on the line every day.

As the LZ below is worked over by gunships, the PL monitors what is going on with the use of an extra headset in the bird. As the PL lifts the

headset off his head, the bird rolls to the left and is dropping to the zone below. All team members have their eyes scanning the area for anything out of order. With the bird moving into the zone, we drop below the mountain ridge to a finger just off the ridge above. Once we get in zone, we'll have to find cover quickly.

I've had dreams of an RPG heading right for me on an insert such as this one and now I am reminded of this dream.

As the slick sets in the zone, all team members are off the bird and in a three-sixty. The slick pulls out of the zone and we move out with the dog and handler taking the lead. At our present position, team Marshall Hall has nowhere to go but up the finger to the ridge. The team moves upward and it takes about a half a day before we reach the top.

We feel we have reached the top of the ridge with no detection. Once on the ridge, we find a very well used trail and will very carefully follow it. The jungle is so thick that the team may make too much noise breaking through the bush paralleling the trail. Taking a trail is the worst of all options but sometimes, as in this case, it becomes necessary. I am on the point, close to the lead man, watching his every move, shadowing him and prepared to cover him on a point-to-point contact. All other team mates follow while intensively looking and listening.

Now into the late afternoon the team hears shots fired in the distance and finds an old enemy hooch and OP site. The team also hears at a distance trees falling at various times. This tells the team that there is probably enemy bunker construction underway. After moving well within the recon zone, the team stops for evening chow.

In this team as well as other teams there will be no cooking of our food due to enemy in the area. After chow the team moves out and continues patrolling the zone.

We have moved several hundred meters as the day closes early inside the dense jungle. The Patrol Leader selects a harbor site that will give the best cover and concealment for the team. Once a site is chosen, the team will move in just before dark. The site is the best we can ask for to monitor a trail a short distance from our location. If there is any movement, we may be able to hear it. With on-calls set and claymores out, we are in for the night.

With the team's night transpiring without incident, it is just before light as the team moves out a short distance of about 300 meters to eat morning chow. Again, there will be no food heated due to our belief of the enemy being close within the area of operation. After chow, team Marshall Hall will move to the edge of the tree line on the ridge. At this point we will be able to observe our zone as well as the Khe Sanh valley in hopes of making an enemy sighting. The early morning hours are spent observing from one OP site and then later in the afternoon, we move around our recon zone. Late in the day the team will locate another OP site. Last night, while in the harbor site, we heard the sound of chopping just a few hundred meters from our position. We feel it may be coming from one of the fingers branching off the ridge. As the patrol continues the team has found more bunkers and hooches. We believe there may be more bunkers being constructed in the area and the chopping is made by the NVA as they are constructing these bunkers. Sound echoes in the mountains making it difficult to pinpoint the chopping location. Marshall Hall will continue to investigate the area attempting to locate the enemy position.

Four days have passed and considering the sides of the ridge are at better than a 45 degree angle the team is confined to the massive ridge line and the fingers that branch off it. We have covered most of the RZ and soon the day will close. Tomorrow is the team's last day in the zone and we will be extracted sometime in the late morning hours. For now, it's OP the area, wait for the day to end then find a harbor site for the night.

With the day at an end, the team locates a good site for the night and we move in under the cover of darkness. Throughout the night the chopping sound is heard and sounds like it is close by. Even though sound carries throughout the valleys there is no doubt it is only a few hundred meters away.

It is about 0330 hours as the team is awakened by an explosion 30 feet from the harbor site. My first thought is that we are under an attack as all team members bring their weapons to the ready. After the explosion, it is quiet. There is nothing - no more explosions or gun fire. Would you believe it was the dog? I would never have thought the four-legged fuzzy son-of-a-bitch had it in him but he has chewed on one of the hell-boxes that lead to a Claymore and set it off. (Hell-box is a "Trigger assembly to remotely detonate the claymore unit") How he managed to get the hell-box off safe, we do not know. All I know, is with as many enemy in the area, we couldn't get more attention if we had just been laughing around a big bonfire. The sound has let every gook in the area know something is in need of investigation. There is a good chance we may have visitors.

Just before first light, the team moves out of the area. Still within the thick jungle the team moves toward the west end of the ridge in hopes

of shooting an azimuth on terrain features in the Khe Sanh valley. The ridge is winding, making it difficult in finding our location. We will be forced to move off the ridge into the elephant grass in hopes of a better view of the area. Once out of the jungle the team moves down a finger across a saddle to a small knoll.

It is not the location we needed and cannot spot the terrain features to pinpoint our position. The radio man requests an AO (Air Observer) to assist the team. Before the AO is on station, Marshall Hall hears movement above the team on the ridge. With the AO now coming on station, he reports NVA are moving down the ridge towards the team's location. The AO makes a pass over the team and he opens fire on the ridge above. His best approach is from south to north over the team's head to repel the enemy force. As the OV-10 makes an inbound run opening fire, the ridge lights up with return fire as he pulls to the sky. With two runs made by the AO, the team has sighted the enemy above us to the north side of our position. The AO has informed the team the enemy is less than 100 meters, and fixed-wing is on the way. They will suppress the force enabling the team's extraction.

The NVA are now in sight and moving down the finger through the trees toward the team. We have only spotted a small group at this time as the AO makes his runs on the target. "Contact, Contact Marshall Hall." We are taking light enemy fire as the team holds fast waiting to get a better shot on an enemy target. The team knows the enemy will have to move across the saddle to reach the team. With a sighting of three or four enemy in a group, the team returns fire attempting to hold them at bay. As the enemy continues to move toward the team, the fixed-wing come on station. The AO informs the team to get our heads down and that he's coming in to mark the target for the fixed-

wing. He drops out of the sky, pointing his craft right at the team and fires a white phosphorous rocket.

Son-of-a-bitch, the rocket has hit a tree that towered over the team's position and sent white phosphorous falling onto the team members. The only way this stuff can be put out is by smothering it with mud. Otherwise, it will burn right through you. In seconds the PL and team mates pull their canteens of water out making mud to aid Marshall Hall's teammates. In those few seconds, team members are taken care of but not in enough time to call for a check fire, for the first jet is now on his inbound run.

As the jets drops out of the sky, I along with the other team members know that a check fire will not come in time. The first jet is on us punching off four 500-pound low drag snakes-eyes. All I could say as I watched the bombs wiggle their way to the target was, "THEY'RE SHORT." Miraculously, they land less than 50 meters in front of the team exploding in a deep ravine. After the massive explosion, shrapnel whistles inches over the team's heads. I hear a thump as a smoking part of one of the bombs hits the ground about six inches from my face. After the first inbound run I am almost deaf due to the loud explosions. Once the jet had delivered his bombs, pulling to the sky, the blast of the jet engines crack like thunder.

Looking to the south, the second bomber is on us as the radio man frantically informs the AO the bombs are short and to check fire. It's too late! The second jet punches off two canisters of napalm. I can see the shiny canisters tumble end over end. I have found peace within myself as I watch my fiery death approach. All I can say is, "SHIT!" I don't close my eyes but watch as the canisters tumble to the target. I can

remember not being able to hear a sound. It was as if my body and mind shut down and my soul was ready to rush out of me, leaving my vulnerable body to take the blast. I couldn't believe it. Again, the napalm miraculously floats over the team's heads landing less than 100 feet behind the team, engulfing the advancing NVA while being danger close to the team. The explosion is immense and the heat is unbearable even stealing your breath away.

With the team members somewhat singed, I look up to see the NVA taking the blast of the fire bombs. As we somewhat regain our senses from the massive blasts, I know the enemy are done for. I along with teammates return fire at what's left of the enemy.

With the AO now adjusted on the target, run after run is made on the enemy force. Helicopter gunships arrive and take over as the jets pull out of the area. As the gunships hover, covering the team, the slick makes his inbound. Once the bird is in the zone the gun fire is so massive, we tremble from the close impact of the gunship's rockets. The earth shakes with every impact as teammates make a run for the bird. The door gunners sweep the area with M-60 machine gun fire as they cover the team's escape. The last man in is the primary radio man. As he reaches for anything, he could get hold of to get in the bird, the PL and I hold out our hands to pull him aboard but his hand slips catching the barrel of my M-16 but he manages to pull himself on the bird as it lifts to the sky.

The enemy were close today. I feel we were lucky to have made it out of that situation. Nevertheless, we were all on the bird but the radio man had left his hand-print on the barrel of my rifle. The barrel was so hot from the number of rounds I had fired that it took the skin

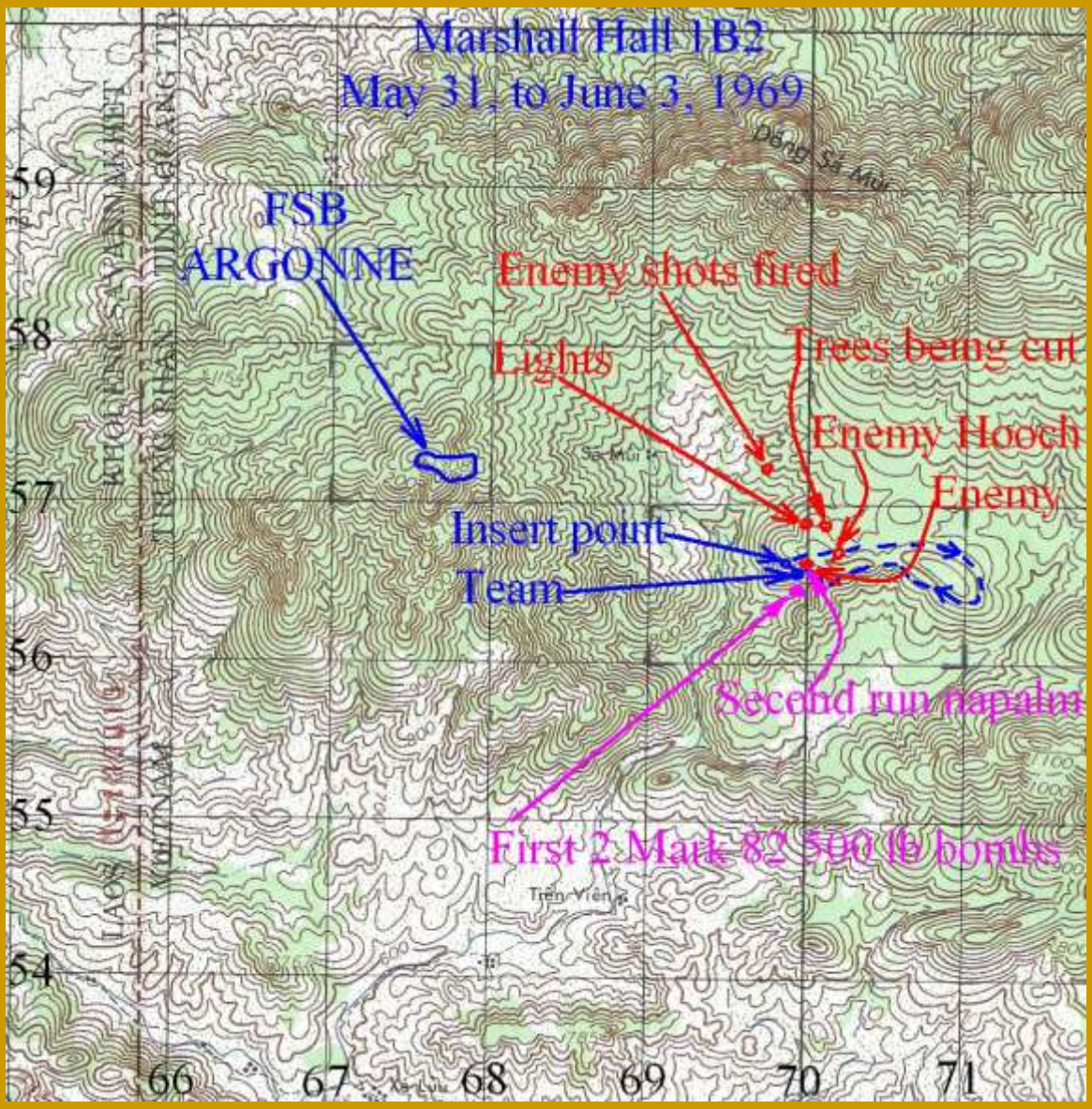
off his hand once he grabbed it. Now on the slick, (helicopter) we are out of the zone and returning to Quang Tri. Burns on the radioman's hands are taken care of as all team mates are checked for burns and that includes the dog. Once in the rear all team members will be checked medically. Now high in the sky, away from the danger, the team breathes easy. We made it but we are drained emotionally and mentally.

Close air support of this nature is horrific. The explosions of several Mark 82, 500 pound-bombs and BLU-27 Napalm at 100 feet danger close range are so intense that it is forever in one's mind.

With the beat of the rotors, I peer down at the jungle below thinking about the enemy we fight. They have no helicopters for medivac's, little medication and even less food. But their dedication and comradeship exemplify their will to fight, as they are continuously under the pressures of war and the jungle elements as we are. The Espirit de Corps that I share with my comrades, they also share amongst themselves. Nevertheless, we each believe in our cause. As combat soldiers, we will have to do things we've never done to understand realities we've never seen.

Nevertheless, we are all alive and out of the zone. Team Marshall Hall will be taken back to Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing.

The following is the report of that mission;


Marshall Hall 1B2
May 31, to June 3, 1969
FSB
ARGONNE
Enemy shots fired
Lights
Trees being cut
Enemy Hooch
Enemy
Insert point
Team
Second run napalm
First 2 Mark 82 500 lb bombs
59
58
57
56
55
54
66
67
68
69
70
71

f. Opo 407-D-69 (1B2) 031500H June 69 (050511Z). Team observed several old bunkers and hooches. Throughout the patrol team heard trees falling in the vicinity of XD 702567 and in all directions from teams position. 022015H team saw flashlights to their east at XD 701568. 031200H Team had movement to their northeast about 75 meters away. AO came on station and expended ordnance at XD 701569. Fixed wing came on station and ran one air strike with unknown results. 031415H team saw one (1) VC/NVA run across a trail at XD 699568. Enemy wore dark green utilities, team could not observe weapons or equipment. 031500H gunship made rocket run as team was being extracted.

DECLASSIFIED

1B2 Marshal
Jun 69

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFTED BY:DJF:DWG
SEC S-2 PH 3D REC 2
CWO

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 050511Z JUN69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (REIN)
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEE
CG TASK FORCE HOTEL VCB
FIRST BDE FIFTH MEF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
NINTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: MARSHALL HALL (1B2) (8 MEN) OPO 407-D 69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 301020H MAY69/031500H JUN69 (101 HRS) (101

(101

3. ROUTE: FM XD699567 TO XD709565 TO XD698567 TO XD699567
4. TER AIN: STEEP HILLS IN NORTHERN PORTION OF RZ, MODERATE

ROLLING HILLS IN SOUTHERN PORTION, HIGH (SINGLE) CANOPY IN NORTHERN RZ, LOW ELEPHANT GRASS IN SOUTHERN RZ, MODERATE UNDERBRUSH.

RATE OF MOV'T RAPID ON TRAILS, POOR COVER & CONCEALMENT, OP SITES GOOD ALONG RIDGELINE RUNNING WEST TO EAST FROM XD698567

TO XD710565 OBS TO THE SOUTH, WATER SOURCES AS ON MAP, NUMEROUS TRAILS ALONG RIDGELINE FROM XD698567 TO XD710565, RDGS WEST TO

EAST, TRAILS SLIGHTLY OVERGROWN SHOWED NO RECENT ACTIVITY, 2½ TO 1 FT. WIDE.

5. HLZ'S: XD699567 SITE WILL ACCOMMODATE ONE CH-46, SITE IS A FINGER WITH LOW ELEPHANT GRASS TO THREE FT., BEST APPROACH

IS WEST TO EAST, SMALL TREES TO NORTH MAY IMPEDE LANDING.
6. ENEMY: 301030H TM AT XD700567 SPOTTED OLD BUNKER AND HOOCH

WITH AN OP SITE IN A TREE, OP SITE FAIRLY NEW, NEG ACTION. 301135H TM AT XD701567 HEARD TWO RIFLE SHOTS TO THE NORTHWEST AT

APPROX XD697574. 301353H TM AT XD701567 HEARD TREES FALLING AT XD702567, TM HEARD TREES FALLING EVERYDAY AT VARIOUS TIMES IN

 CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

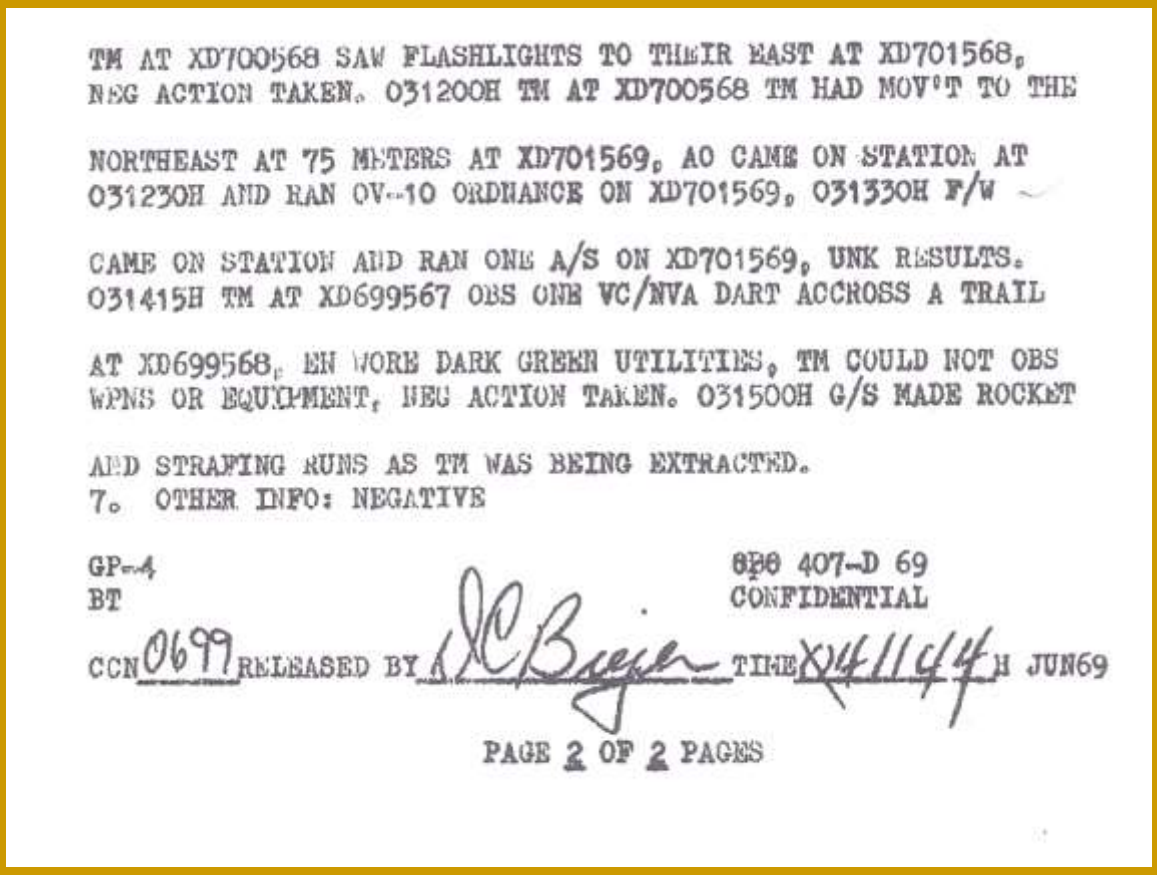
EVERY DIRECTION. 301445H TM AT XD702566 OBS ONE HOOCH 10X5X3 FT. AND ONE BUNKER BUILT INTO THE GROUND, BUNKER APPEARED TO HAVE

BEEN USED WITHIN LAST TWO WEEKS, HOOCH WAS OLD. 301950H TM AT XD702565 HEARD ONE SHOT TO THE SOUTHEAST, TM COULD NOT

ESTIMATE THE DISTANCE. 311110H TM AT XD705565 OBS ONE PUNJI PIT 3X3X3 FT. COVERED WITH LEAVES AND BAMBOO, PIT APPEARED

AT LEAST ONE MONTH OLD AND WAS SITUATED ON A TRAIL. 311125H TM AT XD705567 OBS TWO HOOCHES AND ONE BUNKER, ONE HOOCH

CONTAINED A TUNNEL WHICH ZIGZAGGED TO A LENGTH OF 18 FT., HOOCHES WERE BUILT INTO THE GROUND, NO RECENT USE. 022015H



TM AT XD700568 SAW FLASHLIGHTS TO THEIR EAST AT XD701568,
NEG ACTION TAKEN. 031200H TM AT XD700568 TM HAD MOV'T TO THE

NORTHEAST AT 75 METERS AT XD701569, AO CAME ON STATION AT
031230H AND RAN OV-10 ORDNANCE ON XD701569, 031330H F/W

CAME ON STATION AND RAN ONE A/S ON XD701569, UNK RESULTS.
031415H TM AT XD699567 OBS ONE VC/NVA DART ACCROSS A TRAIL

AT XD699568, EN WORE DARK GREEN UTILITIES, TM COULD NOT OBS
WPNS OR EQUIPMENT, NEG ACTION TAKEN. 031500H G/S MADE ROCKET

AND STRAFING RUNS AS TM WAS BEING EXTRACTED.
7. OTHER INFO: NEGATIVE

GP-4
BT

8B0 407-D 69
CONFIDENTIAL

CCN 0699 RELEASED BY J C Bueger TIME 041144H JUN69

PAGE 2 OF 2 PAGES

It's nice to get back to our base camp and take some time to write home. After the last mission anywhere would be great.

We were lucky but there were others not so lucky. The Battalion is at a great loss. On June 4, 1969 Three Delta Three, team "Flight Time" were all killed. Team members were, Douglas W. Wellman, Harold A. Skaggs, William A. Buck, Robert L. Pearcy, 1st Lt. Michael M. O'Connor, and Douglas W. Barnitz. The word is it was a fight to the last man standing. With the enemy on a step up, more teams are making enemy contacts more often. The men of this team, this brotherhood, will always remain in our minds and our hearts.

The following is the report of that mission;



DRAFTED BY:NFB:DWG
SEC S-2 PH 3D RECN 2
CWO PUT

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 050507Z JUN69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (REIN) DNB
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PNB

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEE
CG TASK FORCE HOTEL VCB
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV VCB
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
NINTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
SPOT REPORT FROM EXTRACTION TEAM FOR FLIGHT TIME

EXTRACTION TM LANDED AT 040600H TM FOUND THE SIX KIA'S AT XD848390 NEAR HILL #471, FIVE MEMBERS OF TM WERE IN A TRENCH

AND THE SIXTH WAS APPROX 10 METERS DOWN THE HILL, ON SITE INVESTIGATION INDICATES EN CAME UP THE NORTHEAST SIDE OF THE HILL

THROUGH THE HIGH ELEPHANT GRASS, REMNANTS OF EN ORDNANCE INDICATE TM REC'D RPG'S, SATCHEL CHARGES, CHI-COM BANGLOR

TORPEDOS, AND SAF. THE AREA WAS COVERED BY POWDER BURNS FROM EXPLOSIVES, REACTION TM LEADER STATED THAT THE MARKS ON THE

GROUND AND THE WAY THE EQUIPMENT WAS SCATTERED THE TM MUST HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN HAND TO HAND COMBAT, THE FOLLOWING WEAPONS

COULD NOT BE FOUND: 4/M-16 ASSAULT RIFLES, 1/M-79 AND 1/45 CAL. PISTOL. TM'S WEB GEAR, AMMO AND GRENADES WERE FOUND, TM MEMBERS

WERE WITHOUT SHIRTS AND ONE HAD ONE BOOT MISSING, THE BODIES WERE RIDDLED BY SAF AND TORN BY EXPLOSIVES, APPROX 15 METERS NORTH

SEVERAL PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS WERE FOUND WRITTEN IN ENGLISH, AN AMERICAN PAPER BACK BOOK WITH VIETNAMESE WRITING THROUGHOUT THE

PAGES WAS FOUND NEAR THE TM'S BODIES, TM HAD TWO RADIOS (ONE WAS DAMAGED) EXTRACTION TM FOUND THE FOLLOWING EN GEAR:

3/NVA PACKS, 1/RPG WITH FOUR RDS, ASSORTED MESS AND MEDICAL GEAR, ASSORTED CLOTHING, AND ONE PIECE OF PARACHUTE.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED



JUNE, 1969

Today services were held for team members of Alpha and Echo Company that had given their lives in the service of their country and comrades.

In Alpha Company, Ronald W. McLean was killed June 8, 1969 while assisting a fellow Recon Marine when his reconnaissance team was assaulted by a large enemy force 11 miles northwest of Vandergrift Combat Base.

Corporal George F. Landi was critically wounded by an unknown size enemy force while on patrol with his Recon team, three miles west of Con Thien on June 2, 1969. Medivaced to the USS Repose, George died

on June 8, 1969. George, who had served in Charlie Company in ’68, was a great guy in or out of the bush. I will miss you George.

Michael E. Hicks was killed 2 miles west of Con Thien on June 8, 1969 as his Recon team was assaulted by a large enemy force.

In Echo Company, Paul M. Bowlin was killed in action on June 8, 1969. The courage, dedication, professionalism and comradeship shown by these men exemplifies the character of men who served in Third Recon.

In a letter I had written to my Dad, I had tried to tell him about the brave men whom I served with. Having been a World War II Vet in combat, I knew he would understand what I was trying to say. If the peace marchers back home only knew what was really going on here, and how brave and dedicated these guys are they would be ashamed of themselves. Damn them all!

After returning from the last mission, the team members and I have had a little time off to take it easy.

Today is June 11, 1969 and I have been in the active Marine Corps two years today. Also, this month I have been promoted to E-4. I now will receive $201.00 dollars with combat pay each month. It doesn’t seem hardly enough to kill or be killed for. Even so, there just isn’t much around here to spend money on which leaves plenty to send home to my mother.

SECOND MISSION WITH TEAM MARSHALL HALL 1B2

The mission is to be a regular recon mission. We are to check out our assigned recon zone determining if the area is being used by enemy

troops. Marshall Hall's briefing tells the team there have been several enemy sightings in the area as well as contacts.

This mission will be in what is referred to as the backyard, just west of Quang Tri. The area is low rolling hills covered with low elephant grass with areas of thick trees. Team Marshall Hall will depart on June 12, 1969 and return on June 14, 1969.

On the morning of June 12th, I along with team members move to the chopper pad and prepare to depart on CH-46 helicopters for our mission. Once at the pad, all team members make last minute inspections of their gear. With inserts now underway we sit, waiting our turn for insertion. There are several teams being inserted today.

Now on the bird all team members take their positions as we lift to the sky moving toward the insert point. Soon we are over the zone and all team members scan the area below. While circling the zone I can see the gunships as they prep the area for our insertion. It's a thumb's up from the crew chief as team members are ready. As we stand peering out the small round windows in the bird, we are inbound. As always once inserted into the LZ, team members form a 360 and scan the area for any enemy activity. As the bird pulls out of the zone the team leader is getting his bearing. Once sure of our position, I take the lead as the patrol leader points the direction. The mission is now underway. Once well away from our insert point, the dog handler and his dog take the lead as team Marshall Hall moves within our assigned RZ. The team was inserted southwest of Camp Carroll and will move some nine thousand meters SE, then head north to our extract point. The track will take the team very close to an area where over a year ago team members of 3 Charlie 1 and I located the 27th Independent Battalion's bunker

complex. We are now in search of any signs of the enemy that may be in the area. While moving in this area I keep a close check of team members at my rear as well as the point man and dog to my front. This is my second mission with the team and they all appear to have their shit together as they move with stealth.

With a large portion of the RZ covered, the team leader has decided to move to an OP site that will give the team good concealment enabling us to observe our recon zone for any possible enemy activity. Now in the location, team members alternate observing the area while others eat chow. As I sit in the OP observing the area and my team mates, my mind goes back to my old team Marble Champ and how I was so attached to those guys. I almost feel as if I should not let this happen again. It's not good to be too attached to people in the Nam. It seems something always goes wrong and they're dead. These guys are great and even though this is our second patrol together there is nothing I wouldn't do for them.

The patrol leader has spotted a location that will be a good harbor site for the night. We will observe the area before moving in under the cover of darkness. Once in the night's harbor site, claymores are set out and watches set up. With on-calls set at 400 meters the team calls it a day.

The second day is consumed with checking the area out and setting up OP's.

As our second night again has gone without incident Marshall Hall moves from the night's site under the cover of darkness to a location still within the team's on-calls for morning chow. Again, as team members observe the area, others eat chow.

Once finished, the PL plots a course to investigate more of the team's recon zone. I take the early morning lead and within an hour will alternate with the dog handler. Now that I'm at second point, the team will move to an observation point with good concealment to scan the area. The team leader calls a break on the military crest of a hill. Two men are sent a few meters to the top of the hill to make sure someone doesn't just walk over the top and shoot us while the rest of the team members scan the remaining area. Once the break is over, the team members from above slide on their bellies to avoid being spotted as the team prepares to move out.

As I take the lead, I continue to move around the military crest planning to move just out of sight around the hill and across a saddle to the next hill and so on.

As I round the hill, I get sight of a gook. Shit! It was four, no it's seven and they're moving straight toward the team. With team members advised of the approaching enemy we immediately set up a hasty ambush. With the team still not observed, I keep my eye on the enemy's every move. There is very little cover so the team could have been spotted early. It was good for the team we made use of what concealment we had and were on the shadow side of the ridge. I had told the PL to let me fire first to set the ambush off.

The radio man now informs the rear that Marshall Hall has seven VC/NVA moving toward our position and contact is imminent. They are at 20 meters. I can see now the fifth and seventh man appear to have weapons, but I can't tell about the rest. As they move closer towards us, all team members are at the ready. I know I have to take out the last

guy in hopes it will throw them off line. With the rest of the team concentrating on the column it was almost time.

As I move my selector to semi-fire, I aim in. My heart is beating hard as I follow my target. The enemy is now only feet away. Then someone opens fire. I come to my knees opening fire hitting the last man as the fifth and sixth drop to the ground pulling him off the other side of the hill and into the bush out of sight. I come to my feet as the team members continue firing at the enemy.

The first four are pinned down and are forced to surrender. The dog handler is still firing as I move toward the enemy. I am yelling to cease fire but the dog handler keeps firing hitting the fourth man. I run over and tell him to stop firing. They have surrendered and have their hands up.

The last man hit, isn't bad, a minor leg wound. As we separate the prisoners, tying their hands, the radio man has informed the rear (headquarters) of our catch, requesting an AO, gunships and extraction. We have four prisoners with choppers are on the way. After searching the enemy, the team has found 1,000's of Piaster's (Vietnamese money) and an NVA unit inscription. As teammates scan the area, we are all at the ready. We have only seen seven but they could be point for a larger force. Now in a three-sixty, the team waits the arrival of the extract birds.

With gunships now overhead, the CH-46's moves closer to our position. As the 46 makes his inbound approach, gunships open fire around the team to suppress any possible enemy activity. The extract goes without incident and we return to Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing with the catch of the day. The team was taken out on the

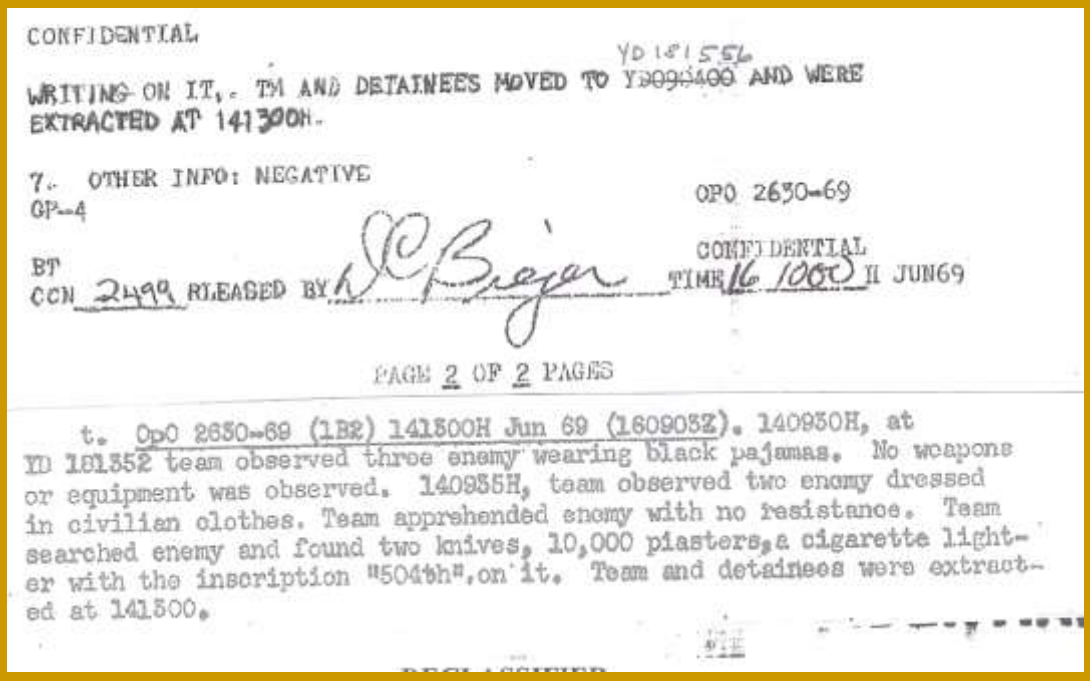
14th with the POW's. It was a short mission but it was good to know that the team worked very well under such stress. These guys were great. I know now if we get in any more shit, these guys know their jobs and I have full confidence in them.

The following is the report of that mission:

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: MARSHALL HALL (1B2) (6 MEN) OPO 2630-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 120930H/141300H JUN69 (52 HRS)
3. ROUTE: PM YD085560 TO YD175634 TO YD185565
4. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS, 4-5 FT. GRASS, UNLIMITED RATE OF MOV'T, POOR COVER & CONCEALMENT, ANY HIGH GROUND IS SUITABLE FOR OP SITE. WATER SOURCES ARE PLENTIFUL IN RZ. NUMEROUS TRAILS IN RZ (TANK TRAILS) 1-8 FT. WIDE.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD180557 WILL ACCOMMODATE THREE CH-46'S, SITE IS A HILLTOP W/LOW GRASS, BEST APPROACH IS 360°, NO APPROACH OBSTACLES. SITE AT YD180546 WILL ACCOMMODATE THREE CH-46'S, SITE IS A HILLTOP W/LOW GRASS, BEST APPROACH 360°, NO OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: 140930H TM AT YD181352 OBS THREE EN AT YD174532 WEARING YD174536 BLACK PJ'S, TM COULD NOT DISTINGUISH WPNS OR GEAR, EN MOVED NORTHWEST TO SOUTHEAST, NEG ACTION TAKEN. 140935H TM AT SAME POS OBS TWO VC/NVA APPROX 30 METERS TO TM'S WEST, EN WORE CIVILIAN CLOTHING, TM APPREHENDED EN W/NO RESISTANCE. TM SEARCHED THE EN AND FOUND THE FOLLOWING: TWO KNIVES, 10,000 PIASTERS, ONE CIGARETTE LIGHTER W/THE INSCRIPTION "504TH" ON IT, A CANTEEN W/VIETNAMESE

G-2 G-3/GSV/cac



CONFIDENTIAL

WRITING ON IT. - TM AND DETAINEES MOVED TO YD 181556 AND WERE EXTRACTED AT 141300H.

7. OTHER INFO: NEGATIVE
GP-4

OPO 2630-69

BT
CCN 2499 RLEASED BY J C Brazer CONFIDENTIAL TIME 16 1000 H JUN69

PAGE 2 OF 2 PAGES

t. OpO 2630-69 (1BR) 141500H Jun 69 (160905Z). 140950H, at YD 181352 team observed three enemy wearing black pajamas. No weapons or equipment was observed. 140955H, team observed two enemy dressed in civilian clothes. Team apprehended enemy with no resistance. Team searched enemy and found two knives, 10,000 piasters, a cigarette lighter with the inscription "504th", on it. Team and detainees were extracted at 141500.

After I regained my composure from the mission, I started checking the recon base area to see if there was anyone else that I knew from my last tour.

Back in the Charlie Company area, I ran into my old friend Jim Young again and found out he is getting out of the bush and being transferred to Hide and Slide. That's what every bush Marine calls H&S Company ("Headquarters & Supply"). I guess most ground pounders think Hide and Slide is full of office pogs that don't do shit. Well, to be honest most of the office pogs I've known have not only done time in the bush, but have been in the shit and many have been wounded. There is no skating in this place for anyone. If you're not in the bush then you're in the rear getting occasionally shelled by the enemy. Every night you go to sleep around here could be your last. You never know when one of these incoming enemy artillery rounds or rockets could take out your hooch, with everyone in it.

As a combat soldier, most feel there may have been yesterday, but there may be no tomorrows. For the Recon Marine, in the I Corps, you only live for the moment.

My friend Jim Young has without a doubt earned his right to get out of the bush. He is a damn good Recon Marine who put his time in. Even without him saying a word, I know a lot of things have changed. All the old team mates are either too short to go out into the bush or have been wounded or killed and are back in the world. Sometimes I wonder if I'll make it out of here alive.

JUNE 20, 1969

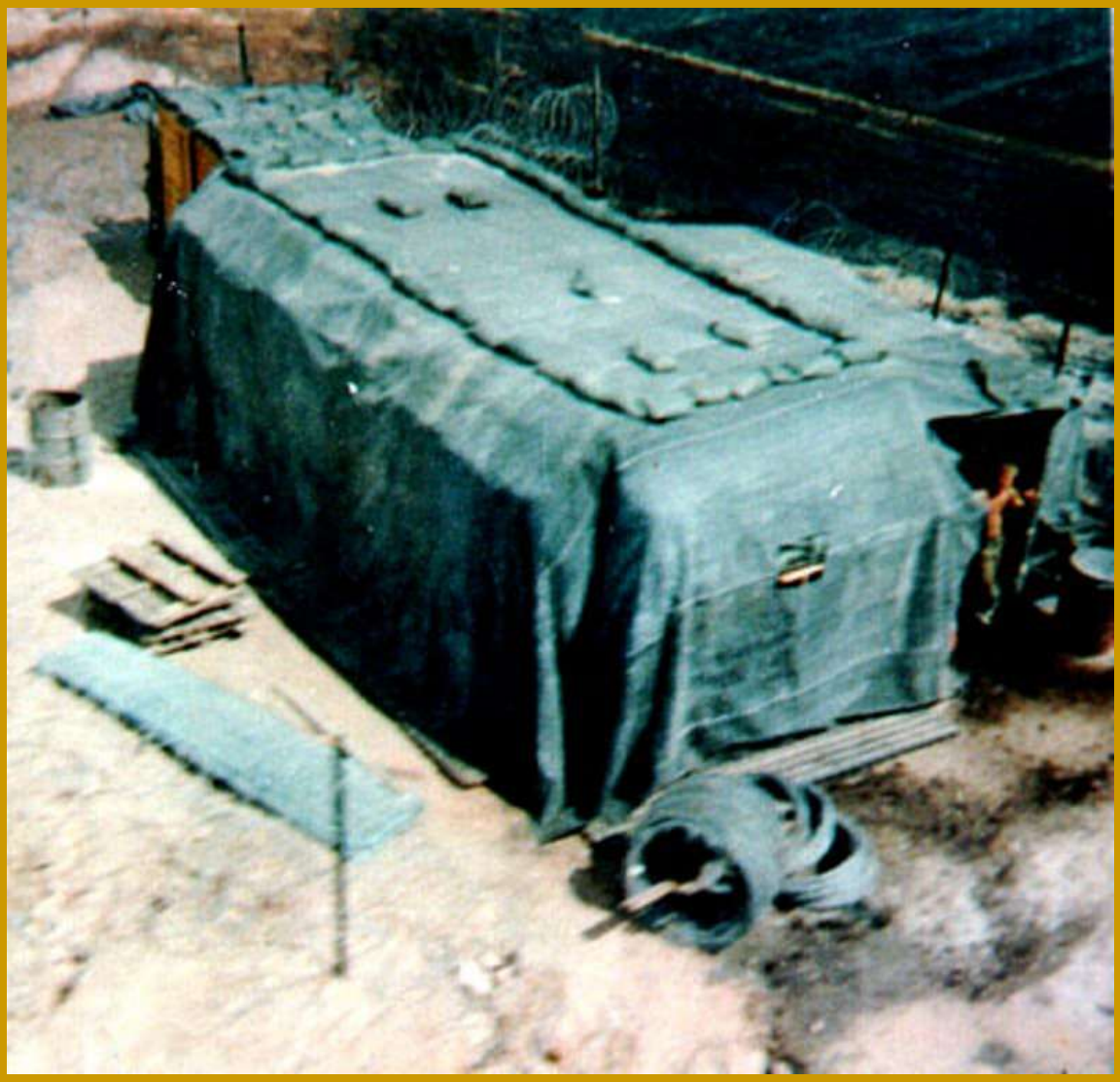
I have been called to the company office to see the CO. Once inside I am told that I am out of the bush. When I ask for the reason, I am told I have put in more than my share of time in the jungles and it has been requested that I report to the COC (Center of Communications) to start duty there. I told the CO I hoped I didn't do anything wrong. He said no, and that I was an outstanding bush Marine but was to report to H&S to work in the COC. He told me I will be missed and wished me good luck on my new job.

Man, I couldn't believe it, Hide and Slide. Maybe I'm ready to get out of the bush. In my short time back in the Nam, I felt I had the shit kicked out of me. No matter how lucky you are, eventually the roll of your dice was going to come up snake eyes. There is no doubt I have had a run of good luck. I've had my share of close calls like all Recon Marines. I guess I was just in the right place at the right time. I will miss the guys in Marshall Hall and the job of being a bush Marine. I almost feel as if I'm bailing out on them. I guess I did get emotionally attached

to the guys. After a short time, they become your blood brothers. I always put my team members first.

For the remainder of June, I worked in the COC. I think my old friend Jim Young who had been transferred here earlier, had a hand in getting me transferred to this company. I guess, had he not taken this action, I probably would not be here. I probably owe him my life or at least my sanity.

The Center of Communications



Jim is teaching me the routine within the COC and my job will be to plot the teams in the bush on the maps once they are inserted on a mission.

JULY 1969

During this month there is a lot of work to be done in and around the COC area. We have had to reinforce the company bunkers with more sandbags due to the fact that we have been getting hit by enemy rockets. We have also installed new maps for tracking the teams in the bush. Jim Young is teaching me the ins and outs of setting up the teams on the maps. Every hour on the hour there are new coordinates of the team locations to be plotted. It is very important to plot each team's movement while on patrol. If a team was overrun, lost communications with the rear or needed a reaction force, their last known position report is where we can start looking for them. They have to be kept up at all times.

Artillery is also plotted but on other maps. It shows not only the team's support but lists the range that the artillery can fire, the size of the artillery they are using, their call signs and locations. Other maps list friendly units that might be operating close to the team's recon zone.

There are many more things I have to learn while in the COC and it will take time.

Within the COC there are radio operators that monitor the radios 24 hours a day, assisting the teams in the bush. Many teams are so far out in the jungles of Vietnam that radio relays are required due to the limited range of the radios and sometimes the topography of the terrain.

AUGUST 1969

The days around here start just before first light. Recon teams in the bush are starting to boot out of their harbor sites and teams in the battalion area are moving to the recon helicopter pad to standby for inserts.

Today is August 1, 1969. The day starts off with all inserts and extracts going without any problems. I guess I can't think of a better way to start the month out.

Today I will help with improving our capabilities of reception of the teams in the bush. Two new 2niner2 antennas have been put up that will improve radio reception. One of the antennas is larger in size than the 2niner2 and will give us better capability of being able to hear the teams in the bush, if weather permits. Radios used in the jungles (PRC-25 and 77) have a three-foot tape antenna with a longer whip antenna that can be added. These whip antennas are mainly used when in an OP site or problems with communications arise while on patrol. The whip antennas are not any good when the team is moving through the jungles due to not being flexible and their length.

The COC is headed up by our XO of the battalion Major Edward V. Badolato. Gunnery Sgt. David Goolden is the NCOIC and he makes sure the operation at the COC runs smoothly. As the morning inserts are completed, Jim Young watches over me as I plot the locations of the teams that are in their respective zones and throughout the day as their route of movement is plotted.



Major Edward Badolato

All is going well and the day is almost at a close. Once all teams are in their harbor sites, final plotting of all friendlies on the map ends the day's work. I find myself wanting to stick around in case teams have any problems during the night. I know there's not much I could do by being in the COC but feel there might be something I can help with in case a team gets in trouble.

AUGUST 2, 1969

0600 Hours: The day is at a start as teams are being inserted and extracted. As I plot the inserts, just being able to listen takes me back. It's almost as if I am with the teams over the zone, watching the gunships prep the LZ before the insert. I can see the thumbs up as each team mate prepares to go in. As the bird sets in the zone, I am there as they wait those few seconds to make sure there is no enemy fire taken, then they're off the bird and in a three-sixty as the point man waits for his PL to give him the word to move.

At 0800 hours, team call sign Flight Time is in bound to the zone. They are in the northwestern region of Nam. With the bird in the zone, the team is off the bird and the mission is now underway. Then it came, "Contact, Contact, Flight Time Contact." Just meters from the insert point the team meets an enemy force and is now taking heavy automatic machine gun fire. Flight Time has requested the return of the gunships. If it is not possible to break enemy contact the team will have to be taken out. As the gunships return to the team's location, they re-established communications with the Recon Marines. Helicopter strafing runs are now being made around the team and with every key of the handset, heavy gunfire can be heard. Enemy troops are close to the team as the gunships make all attempts to hold the enemy at bay and extract the team. Again, with every key of the handset the battle rages on as the bird starts inbound for the team. Damn, those chopper pilots and crews are brave men. Realizing the danger around the zone below the bird lands in the LZ to extract the team. With only door gunners to cover the team's break for the bird, gunships circle above to aid in the extraction. The radio is quiet. Then it's a sigh of relief, "Romeo, Romeo / Flight Time, be advised we are on the birds and out

of the zone with all team members Alpha Sierra." The team is out at 0930 hours and will be returned to Quang Tri for debriefing.

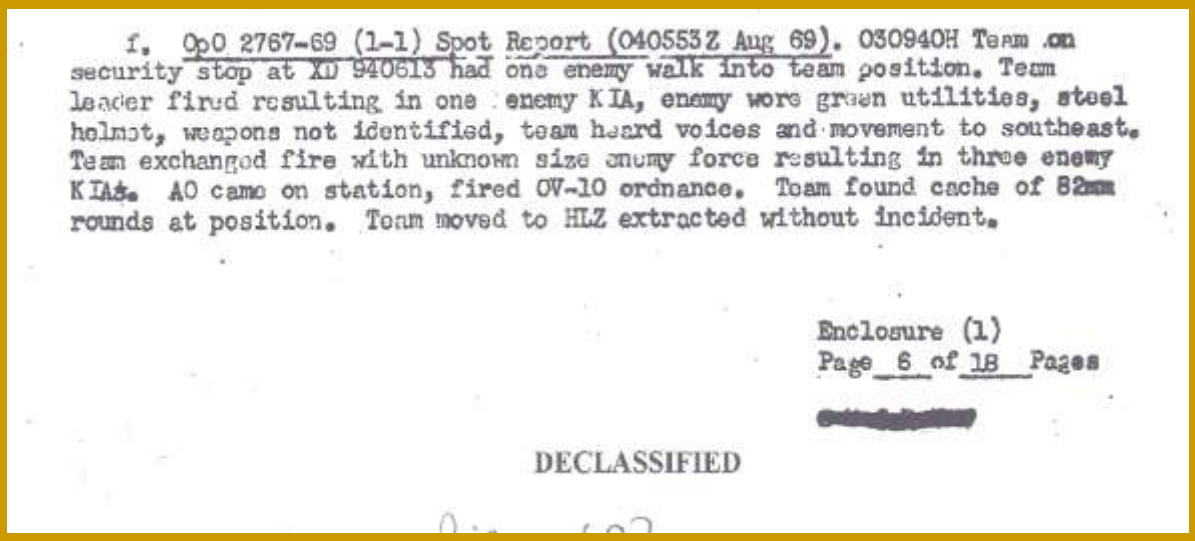
AUGUST 3, 1969

The day was off to a good start with all inserts and extracts complete. All teams are Alpha Sierra within their assigned recon zones at this time.

0940 hours; "Contact, Contact, Contact, April Showers 1-1, Contact." The team has made contact with one NVA while the team stopped for a security stop. The team now has movement at approximately 20 meters as the team makes contact with 3 to 5 NVA. I know that on any contact the first few seconds there can be hundreds of rounds of small arms fire exchanged. With this amount of initial fire anything can happen. April Showers 1-1 a Force team has informed us that their situation is tense and has requested gunships and an extraction at this time. The team has one NVA KIA and still in contact. With birds on the way, April Showers has confirmed they have made two more enemy kills and have managed to pull back to a more defendable position. Now within their tight three-sixty the team stands together repelling the NVA. As gunships come on station, the birds drop out of the sky to tree top level putting themselves in jeopardy to support the team members of April Showers. The gunships lay down a massive amount of minigun fire as slicks drop into the zone while the team battles the enemy force. With only door gunners to support the team once in the zone, the team makes it to the bird as team mates along with door gunners and gunships shoot their way out of the hot LZ. The radio is momentarily silent as we hold our breath on word of the situation. They're out! The team is out of the zone with all team mates on the

bird. No one was killed. The team was taken out at grid XD940613 and will be returned to Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing.

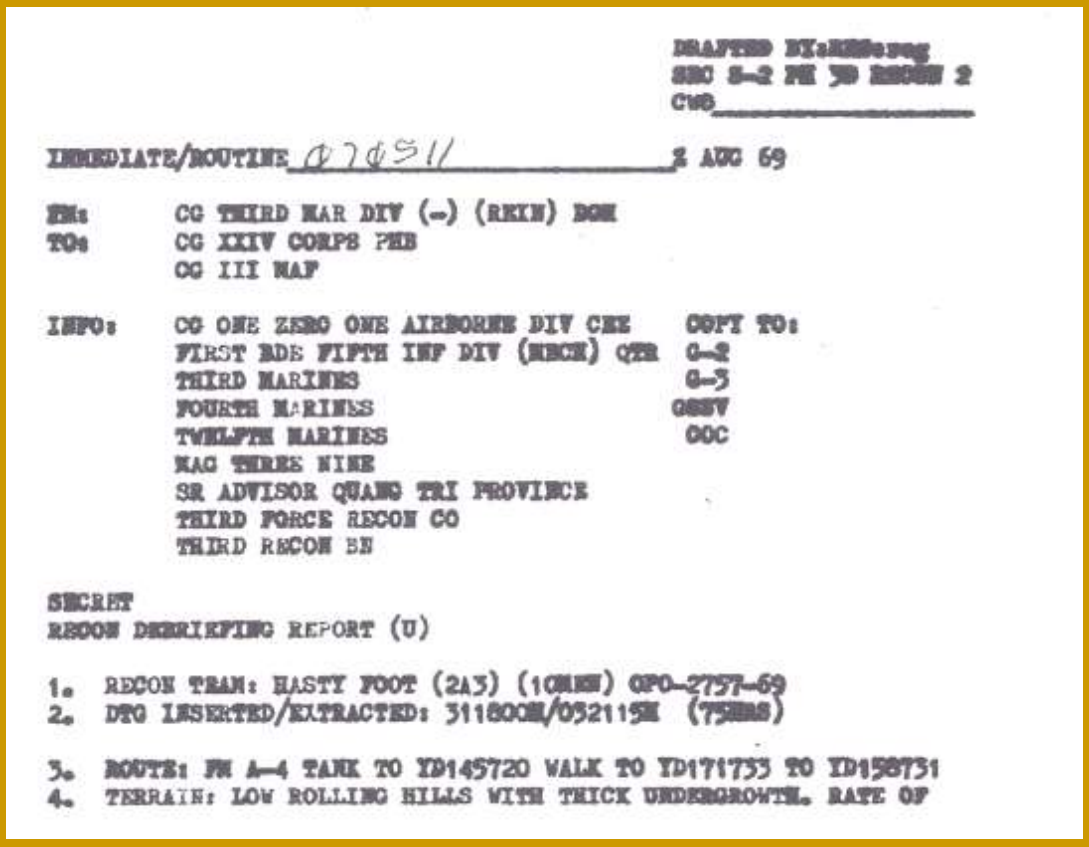
The following is the report of that mission:



f. OpO 2767-69 (1-1) Spot Report (040553Z Aug 69). 030940H Team on security stop at XD 940613 had one enemy walk into team position. Team leader fired resulting in one enemy KIA, enemy wore green utilities, steel helmet, weapons not identified, team heard voices and movement to southeast. Team exchanged fire with unknown size enemy force resulting in three enemy KIAs. AO came on station, fired OV-10 ordnance. Team found cache of 82mm rounds at position. Team moved to HLZ extracted without incident.

Enclosure (1)
Page 6 of 18 Pages

DECLASSIFIED



DRAFTED BY:
SEC S-2 FM 3D RECON 2
CWO

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 07651 2 AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGM
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CHE — COPY TO:
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR — G-2
THIRD MARINES — G-3
FOURTH MARINES — OBSV
TWELFTH MARINES — COC
MAG THREE NINE
SR ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

SECRET
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: HASTY FOOT (2A3) (1CHIEU) OPO-2757-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 311800H/032115H (75MBS)

3. ROUTE: FM A-4 TANK TO YD145720 WALK TO YD171733 TO YD158731
4. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS WITH THICK UNDERGROWTH. RATE OF

MOVEMENT 100-200 METERS PER HOUR, GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT. OP SITE AT YD164736 OBSERVE 180 DEGREES TO NORTH EAST. STREAMS IN AREA

ARE DRY, WATER AVAILABLE IN BOMB CRATERS. TEAM FOUND TRAIL AT YD158730, TRAIL RUNS ESE TO WNW. TRAIL IS THREE FEET WIDE, FOOTPRINTS

OF 15 NVA/VC WEARING BOOTS HEADING TOWARD QIO LINH. TRAIL AT YD169739 RUNS N-S AND IS ABOUT 1 FOOT WIDE. TRAIL AT YD164732

RUNS N-S, IS ONE FOOT WIDE AND SHOWSSIGNS OF RECENT TRAFFIC IN BOTH DIRECTIONS. PRINTS OF BOOTS, SANDALS, AND TENNIS SHOES

WERE ON THIS TRAIL.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD158731 WILL ACCOMMODATE FIVE CH-46'S. SITE

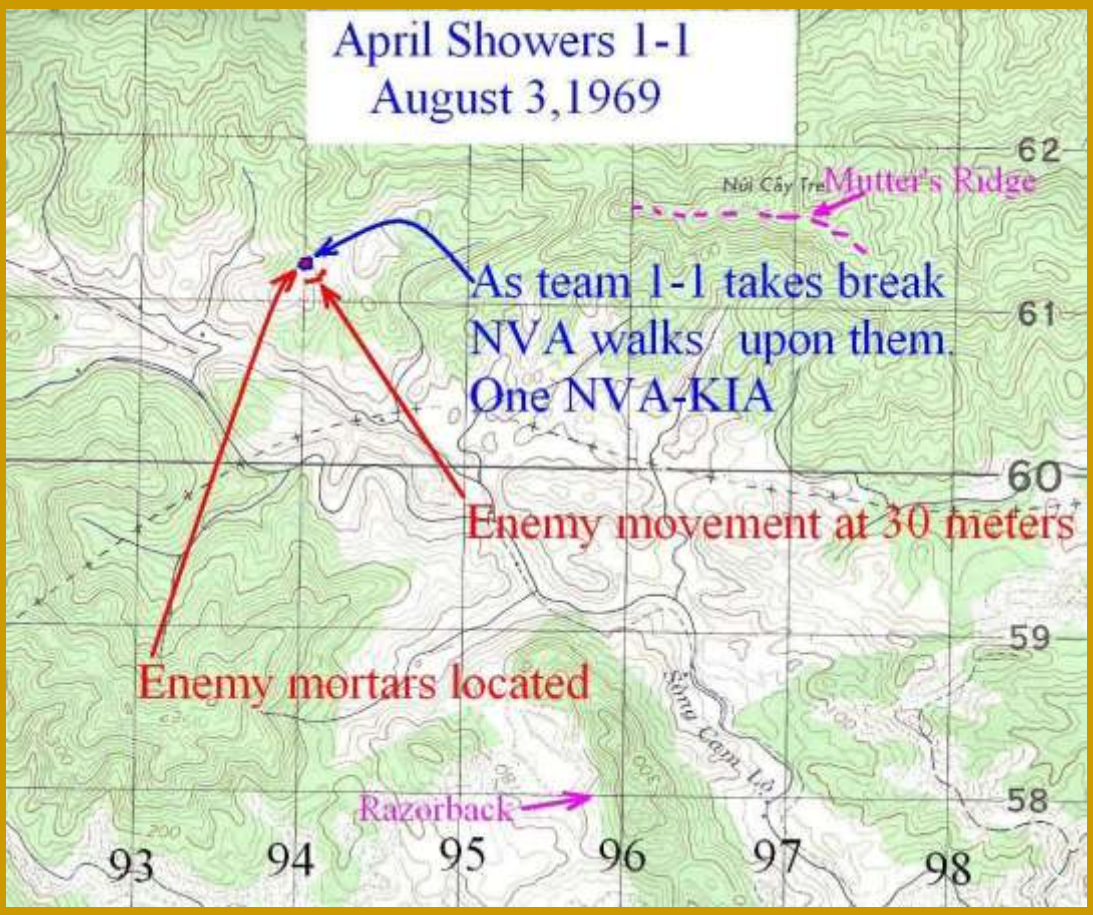
IS A RICE PADDY, A PROACH FROM EAST OR WEST WITH NO OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: AT 031945H TEAM AT YD158731 CAME IN CONTACT WITH 15

NVA/VC. TEAM AND NVA/VC EXCHANGED HEAVY SMALL ARMS FIRE AND GRENADES, RESULTING IN 2 USMC WIA, 1 KCS WIA AND 3 NVA/VC KIA. ENEMY WAS

10-15 METERS TO THE TEAMS EAST. ENEMY WORE BUSH COVERS AND CAMOUFLAGE UTILITIES . WEAPONS WERE UNOBSERVED. TEAM EXTRACTED AT 032115H.

7. OTHER INFO: 031800H TEAM AT YD164736. TEAM ON FREQUENCY 55.70

PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES

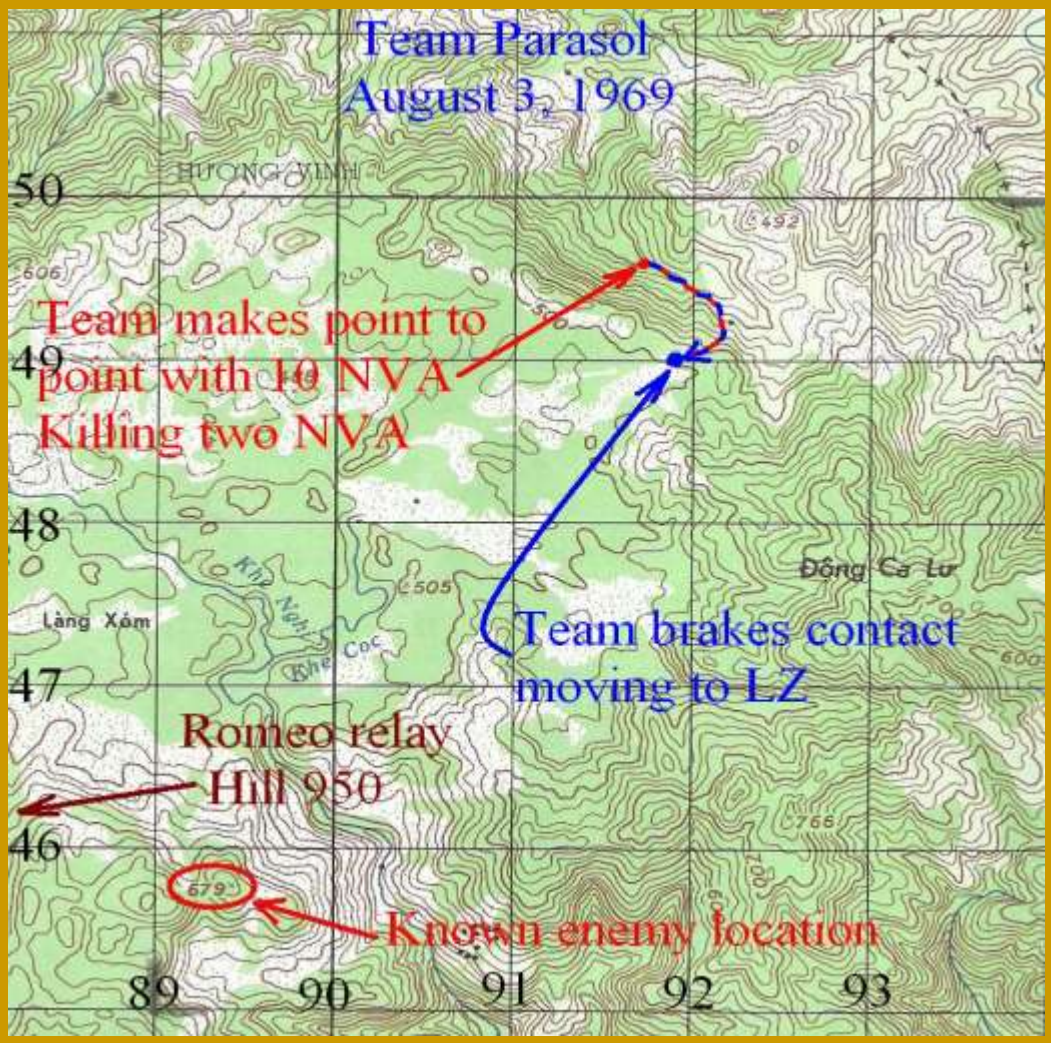


The day is far from an end but at this time all teams are secure. A team's situation in the bush can change from all secure to a raging firefight in a matter of seconds.

1040 Hours; "Contact, Contact Parasol Contact." It's a point-to-point with 8 to 10 NVA. On the initial contact Parasol has killed two NVA but is still in contact at this time. As the team lays down a heavy base of fire into the enemy position only feet away, Parasol is shooting their way out of the contact. Now advising the rear the enemy contact has been broken, the team is now booting to a more defendable position. With an AO and gunships on their way to the contact site, it is decided to extract the team. The mission has to be aborted because the team's

position has been compromised. As the team boots to a good location which will be used as an LZ, the team sets up a three-sixty as the AO and gunships move in over the team's position. With heavy fire support from the birds above, the extract choppers waste no time as the situation below is quickly briefed to them. The extract bird succeeds in taking the team out with all team members alpha sierra. Team Parasol was taken out at 1145 hours at grid XD919490 and returned to the Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing.

The following is the recon zone of team Parasol:



As the day continues, all teams in the bush are alpha sierra at 1300 hours.

Major Badolato, our Battalion XO has asked if I will start briefing the Battalion Commander of the day's events. I have told him there will be no problem in taking care of the job.

My new job requires a small map. It will be as informative as the larger maps in the COC and will hold all the important information needed to keep the CO up to date on all teams out in the bush. It will show date and time of insert, grid inserted, length of mission and the team's route of travel while in the zone. It will also label each team's call sign and size. I am able to show any sightings made by teams and the grid locations of each sighting. This is followed by what action was taken, if any. If contact was made, who made it and if the team was able to break contact and continue the mission. If the team was extracted, information about team member's status was also included. It was also important to use overlays to brief the Colonel on the team's radio relays, their locations and all teams support data. The overlays provided the range of the team's support, where it was located and the type of guns used such as 155s, 175s, 8 inch, 4 deuces, 81 MM mortars or 105s. Information also included was each artillery unit's call sign and number of guns in the battery. It was very important not to leave anything out. At times, if higher ups came to the evening briefings it was my job to fill them in as accurately as possible. With all details covered there will be no questions. My job starts tonight.

It is 2000 hours and the briefing went very well. The Colonel had very few questions but the ones he did have, I furnished him with the answers. It has been a long day but I'll get used to it. This job requires a

lot of effort toward detail and I find myself at times double checking my maps to make sure everything is in perfect order.

The night is quiet as I catch a whisper out of one of the squawk boxes hooked up to the radios. The time is 2105 hours, the team is Hasty Foot 2A3 and they are located within the demilitarized zone. The whispers have informed us the team has movement around their perimeter and is requesting to fire they're on calls. The team relays that there may be a possibility that the enemy might just be moving through the area and may pass by them without the team being spotted.

2110 hours; Hasty Foot has reported the movement has now picked up and the team feels the enemy is aware of their presence and is trying to locate their exact position. Movement is now at 15 meters and closing. As I listen on a handset, the team has indicated the enemy is now too close for on calls. With the enemy now within feet of the team, a hell box (claymore detonator) is armed.

While I listen to the team's conversation, I am saying to myself, don't start shooting yet. If you do, they will have you for sure. Just wait till they are standing on your Claymore's and let them have it. Then use your grenades.

2115 hours; The team blows a Claymore, it happens. "Contact, Contact, Contact, Hasty Foot Contact." The contact is strong as the enemy is advancing toward the team's location. Hasty Foot is now advising they are taking ChiCom's at this time. Be advised we have two WIA's, one of which is seriously wounded. Hasty Foot is returning grenades at this time as the enemy continues to probe the team. Gunships and medevac birds are now on the way to the team's position. With the exchange of grenades with the advancing enemy

forces, Hasty Foot 2A3 requests on calls to be fired. In seconds it's, "Hasty Foot shot out, copy, Hasty Foot splash." With the key of the team's radio handset depressed, the volley can be heard on impact. The team comes back with "drop 100, Fire for effect!" Another volley is inbound. Hasty Foot drops another 100, fire for effect. As the 155's rumble on impact, again it's drop 100 fire for effect. The team has had heavy small arms fire and ChiCom's but the enemy may have pulled back. With 155's landing at 150 feet or less from your position the enemy has little staying power. The impact of just one 155MM artillery shell is devastating, let alone six at a time. At this time the enemy still may not be able to pinpoint the team. The ChiCom's may have been a lucky throw yet the team waits for the enemy's next move. With three fire for effects on the enemy position around the team, enemy ChiCom's have stopped. Hasty Foot with two WIA's now has communications with the gunship and extract birds, over-head. With gunships making gun runs around the team, extract birds stand by to make their approach into the hot zone. As the gunships suppress enemy fire for the team, the extract bird sets in the zone as the team with wounded make their way to the awaiting bird. Again, there is silence as we wait for the word. They're on the chopper and out of the zone. With the team taking enemy fire coming out of the LZ, no one else is hurt. Wounded teammates will be taken to Quang Tri for medical care. Once dropped off at the hospital, remaining team members will be returned to the Recon area for debriefing. Team Hasty Foot 2A3 was taken out at 2130 hours, August 3, 1969.

DRAFTED BY: [redacted]
SEC S-2 FM 3D RECON 2
CWO_____

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 070511 2 AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DON
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CHE COPY TO:
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR G-2
THIRD MARINES G-3
FOURTH MARINES G3SV
TWELFTH MARINES CGC
MAG THREE NINE
SR ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

SECRET
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: HASTY FOOT (2A3) (1CMEM) OPO-2757-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 311800H/052115H (75HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM A-4 TANK TO YD145720 WALK TO YD171733 TO YD158731
4. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS WITH THICK UNDERGROWTH. RATE OF

MOVEMENT 100-200 METERS PER HOUR, GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT. OP SITE AT YD164736 OBSERVE 180 DEGREES TO NORTH EAST. STREAMS IN AREA

ARE DRY, WATER AVAILABLE IN BOMB CRATERS. TEAM FOUND TRAIL AT YD158730, TRAIL RUNS ESE TO WNW. TRAIL IS THREE FEET WIDE, FOOTPRINTS

OF 15 NVA/VC WEARING BOOTS HEADING TOWARD QIO LINH. TRAIL AT YD169739 RUNS N-S AND IS ABOUT 1 FOOT WIDE. TRAIL AT YD164732

RUNS N-S, IS ONE FOOT WIDE AND SHOWED SIGNS OF RECENT TRAFFIC IN BOTH DIRECTIONS. PRINTS OF BOOTS, SANDALS, AND TENNIS SHOES

WERE ON THIS TRAIL.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD158731 WILL ACCOMMODATE FIVE CH-46'S. SITE

IS A RICE PADDY, A PROACH FROM EAST OR WEST WITH NO OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: AT 031945H TEAM AT YD158731 CAME IN CONTACT WITH 15

NVA/VC. TEAM AND NVA/VC EXCHANGED HEAVY SMALL ARMS FIRE AND GRENADES, RESULTING IN 2 USMC WIA, 1 KCS WIA AND 3 NVA/VC KIA. ENEMY WAS

10-15 METERS TO THE TEAMS EAST. ENEMY WORE BUSH COVERS AND CAMOUFLAGE UTILITIES . WEAPONS WERE UNOBSERVED. TEAM EXTRACTED AT 052115H.

7. OTHER INFO: 031800H TEAM AT YD164736. TEAM ON FREQUENCY 55.70

PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES

SECRET

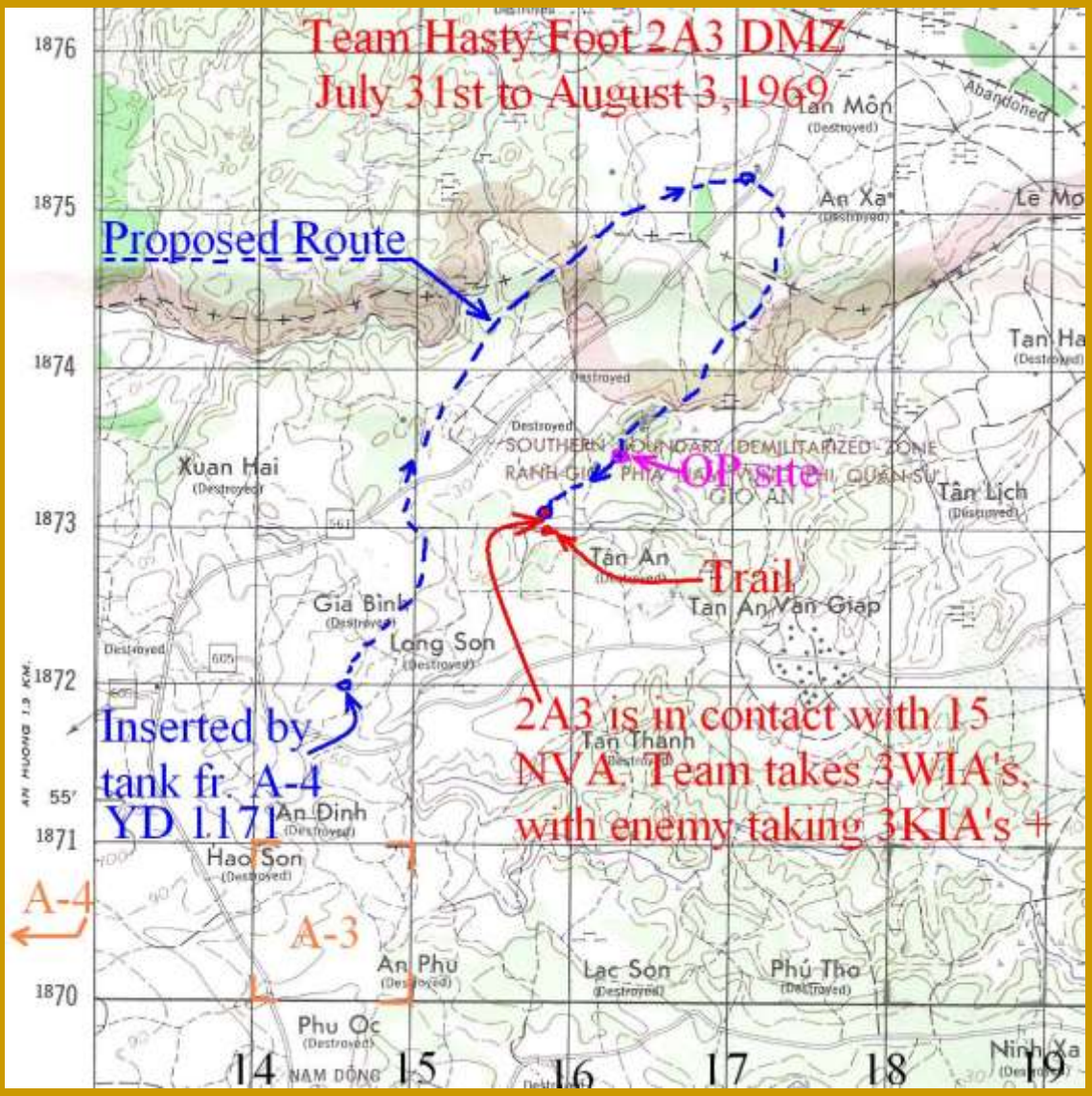
MONITORED ENEMY. TEAM KCS STATED THE ENEMY SAID THEY WOULD BE MOVING SOUTH. NO OTHER INFO AVAILABLE.

GP-4
BT

OPO-2757-69
SECRET

CCN_____RELEASED BY_____TIME_____ AUG 69

1.OpO 2757-69 (2A3) 311800H Jul 69 (070511Z Aug 69). 031945H At YD 158731 team made contact with fifteen enemy. Team fired small arms and M-26 grenades, resulting in two USMC WIA, one KCS WIA, three enemy KIA. Enemy was 10-15 meters east of team, enemy wore bush covers and camouflage utilities.



AUGUST 4, 1969

As the morning inserts are off to a start, there are no problems as the teams are inserted into their assigned recon zones. The time is 1035 hours and all teams are alpha sierra. Recon, has been given the word, we will be moving out of this area in which we use as home base to a new location. Our new area is somewhat close to our present position. Our move is necessary because it was determined that we are too close to the ammunition dump. Recon will move company by company until the unit has totally relocated.

The day has moved very fast with all teams in the bush having few problems. It's good to have an easy day. It takes away some of the tension.

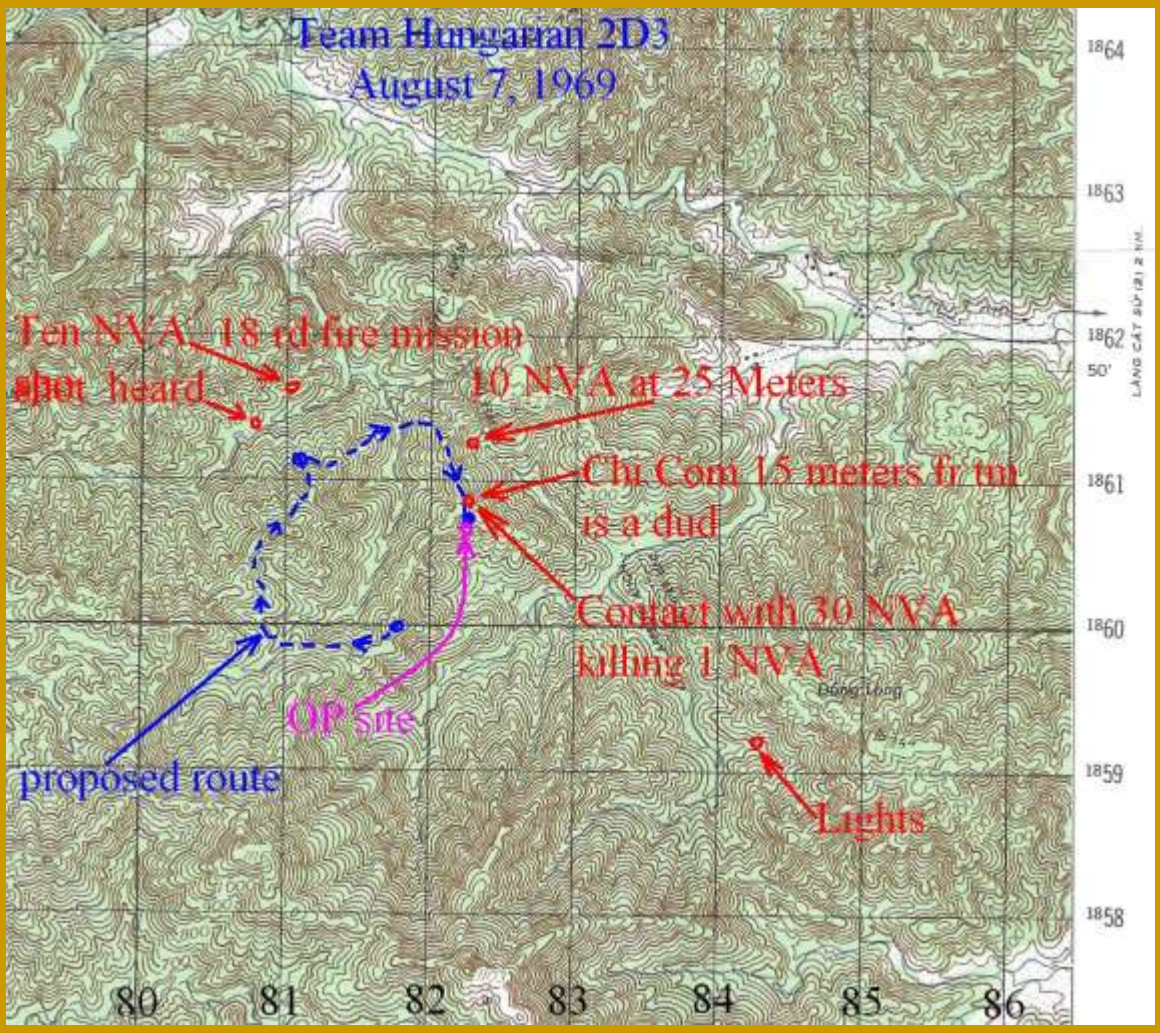
As the day comes to a close, teams are all secure and have moved into their harbor sites.

AUGUST 7, 1969

The last few days have been very busy with the morning team plots on the maps and trying to help in the new area during the day as well. Inserts and extracts have gone as normal with teams having no problems in the bush. The time seems to be flying by with our busy schedule. After noon chow, I will have to get back to the COC and see what is going on. The night's briefing will be here before I know it.

1230 Hours; "Contact, Contact, Hungarian Contact" blasts over the radio. Hungarian 2D3 has made contact with approximately 30 NVA and are now in a fierce exchange of heavy small arms and machine gun fire. Hungarian has now advised the rear the team has made one confirmed enemy kill but unable to retrieve his body. With the request of

gunships, an AO and extract birds, team Hungarian lays down a heavy base of fire on the enemy just meters from the team. The team has received a ChiCom close to the team's position but it was a dud. As the contact lightens the team has managed to break contact with M-79 and M-26 grenades, enabling the team to scramble to a more defendable position. With an AO now on station he makes gun and rocket runs in aid of the team. Now with fixed-wing working the area over the team prepares for an extract. As the gunships come back on station and the jets depart, the team is in the process of directing the craft above the enemy's location. Gunships now at tree top level pepper the enemy's position with 7.62 as the team stands to fight. The gunships continue to support the team and 46's prepare to go inbound to extract Hungarian. All ears wait for the outcome as the 46 makes an approach to the team's location. As the gunships lay down a massive amount of minigun fire in support of the inbound extract bird, the bird sets in the zone. Then it's quiet. We all hold our breath waiting for the message we most wanted to hear. Then it comes. The bird is pulling out of the zone. Hungarian 2D3 and the chopper have taken no enemy fire on the extract and they're out of the LZ with all alpha sierra. With the team now out of the zone, all team members will be brought back to Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing. Team Hungarian was extracted at 1630 hours.


Team Hungarian 2D3
August 7, 1969
Ten NVA, 18 rd fire mission
shot heard
10 NVA at 25 Meters
Chi Com 15 meters fr tm
is a dud
Contact with 30 NVA
killing 1 NVA
OP Site
proposed route
Lights
1864
1863
1862
1861
1860
1859
1858
80
81
82
83
84
85
86

DRAFTED BY:LTJ:DWG
SEC S-2 PH 30 R&C 2
C&O_____

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 140501Z AUG69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG CMD FORD ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEL
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELITH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.
THIRD RECON BN.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: HUNGARIAN (2D3) (6 MEN) OPO 588-D-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 050900H/071800H AUG69 (48 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM XD818600 TO XD811611 TO XD822608
4. TERRAIN: STEEP, DOUBLE CANOPY, MODERATE UNDERGROWTH, EXCELLENT

COVER & CONCEALMENT, OP SITE AT XD823607 OBS TO THE EAST & WEST.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT XD822608 WILL ACCOMMODATE ONE CH-46. SITE IS

A HILLTOP W/ONE FT. STUMPS. APPROACH TO THE SOUTH. NO OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: 051135H AT XD808615 TM HEARD ONE ROUND FROM A SMALL

CALIBER WEAPON. 060815H AT XD810617 TM OBS TEN NVA/VC. EN WORE
GREEN UTILITIES, UNOBS GEAR OR WEAPONS. TM CALLED A F/M (18 RDS)

RESULTING IN ONE SECONDARY EXPLOSION. 062000H UNTIL 070400H AT
XD844594 TM OBS TWO FLASH LIGHTS AND ONE CARBIDE LIGHT. TM CALLED

A F/M (120 RDS) AND THE LIGHT WENT OUT. 070330H AT XD844594 TM
OB ONE LIGHT. TM CALLED A F/M (5 RDS) AND THE LIGHT WENT OUT.

071[illegible] AT XD823613 TM HEARD MOV'T OF AN ESTIMATED 5-10 NVA/VC
25 METERS TO TM'S NORTH. AT 071315H AT XD824609 TM REC'D ONE DUD

CHI-COM GRANADE WHICH IMPACTED 15 METERS FROM TM'S POS. 071400H AT
XD821609 TM REC'D A HEAVY VOLUME OF SAF FROM XD824609. TM RET'D FIRE.

TM STRUCTLS APPROX 30 NVA/VC. AT THIS TIME AO CAME ON STATION AND
MADE ROCKET & STRAFING RUNS. F/W ON STATION RAN TWO FLIGHTS TO TM'S

G2

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

NORTH. 071530H AT XD822608 TM KILLED ONE NVA/VC WHO RAN FROM
HIS POSITION AS F/W MADE RUNS. AO & F/W CONT'D TO WORK OUT TO TM'S

NORTH. 071630H TRANSPORT HELOS CAME ON STATION AND ATTEMPTED TO
EXTRACT TM. TRANSPORTS REC'D SAF FROM XD825607. F/W MADE ADDITIONAL

RUNS AND AT 071700H TM WAS EXTRACTED FROM XD825607 W/NEG INCIDENTS.
7. OTHER INFO: TRAIL AT XD818600 RUNS TO XD822609. SHOWS NO

SIGNS OF RECENT USE.
GP=1

OPO 588-D-69

BT
CCN 2075 RELEASED BY [signature] CONFIDENTIAL TIME 1314-10 H AUG69

The rest of the day has gone without incident and all teams are secure at this time. With the Colonel's briefing finished, I call it a day at 2137 hour.

AUGUST 8, 1969

Today was not a bad day. In fact, the day went very well. All teams were inserted and extracted with few problems. There have been a few sightings but no contacts with the working teams in the bush.

Tonight, there will be a USO show in the company area. The name of the band is "The Green Machine." Of course, these people are in the Marine Corps but the show will be very welcomed. We don't get anybody like Bob Hope in the Northern I Corps area. Our base is somewhat secure but I don't think Bob Hope or any of the big-name entertainers will be making a trip to our area. At any time during day or night, we could be under a rocket or artillery attack. I can't imagine Bob coming here and getting his ass blown off for a few laughs. They like to say they went to the war zone to entertain the troops in combat zones but I say bullshit. They may entertain in the south but it takes a brave individual to visit this far north.

USO PICTURE:



USO show in Quang Tri recon area on August 8, 1969. The group's name is the "Green Machine". After attending the show, I felt the name should have been changed to "Two Lovely Melons".

I have received a letter from my old friend Mike Green. He is not only back in the world but out of the crotch (a term of endearment for the Marine Corps) living the easy life. No more bullets or rockets to dodge. There are many days my mind drifts back to all the guys. I sure miss

them. It seems like yesterday we were all together. I guess those guys were the best friends I ever had. My dad used to tell me that I would be lucky if I had one good friend in my life. Those guys were always there and as dependable as the air you breathe.

AUGUST 9, 1969

After a check in at the COC, it's off to the new area to work on our future COC. Today we will install large maps needed to plot teams in the bush.

1300 hours; At the present time all teams in the bush are secure. There have been no sightings or contacts.

The work on the COC has been stepped up and I can see some long work days ahead. If our luck holds out with the teams in the bush not hitting the shit, our plan is to be in the new COC in five days. That means we must bust our asses to get in on time. With the day closing, all teams are secure and I am beat.

AUGUST 11, 1969

Our hard work has paid off and we have moved into the new COC. I must say it is outstanding. The new set up is very well organized. The radio operators have their area with the bunker set up into sections. The map work is the best I have ever seen. Over the maps, Plexiglas has been installed. At the bottom of the maps, we have florescent lights, once turned on, force the light to travel through the Plexiglas. When grease pencils are used in different colors to highlight the teams in the bush, every detail is enhanced. Gunnery Sgt. David Goolden our NCOIC of the COC bunker designed the maps with the Plexiglas. It is without a doubt a well set up war room.

I can't believe the move went so smoothly. With the use of the small briefing map, all teams have been plotted with no one lost. It took 37 hours of ass busting work but we're in and the job is underway. I guess the best part was during the last few days when all teams were inserted and extracted without any problems. There have been few contacts or sightings thank God.

In the last few weeks there has been talk that there will be a troop pullback. I don't know for sure but it looks like some of our companies may be departing as part of the pull out. Charlie Company Recon will be one of the companies departing the Nam and will be moving to Okinawa. I guess my heart will always be with Charlie Company. It's where my roots are and the memory of the bravest men I have ever known.

As the day comes to a close, I am off early. I know everyone needs the break but it is good to have some time to myself. It's a beautiful sunset tonight in the Nam. As I watch it for a few minutes, it takes me away from the death and destruction in this country. It's as if you're in a trance and your mind and body have gone to another place. For a few minutes my mind is tranquil and I feel like I have drifted back home to be with my loved ones only to be jerked back to the land of hellfire by the sounds of an Arc Light in the distant mountainous area. I have seen these Arc Lights firsthand. They are devastating as hundreds of bombs fall out of the bellies of B-52 bombers. Death walks the point, gathering the souls of the dead.

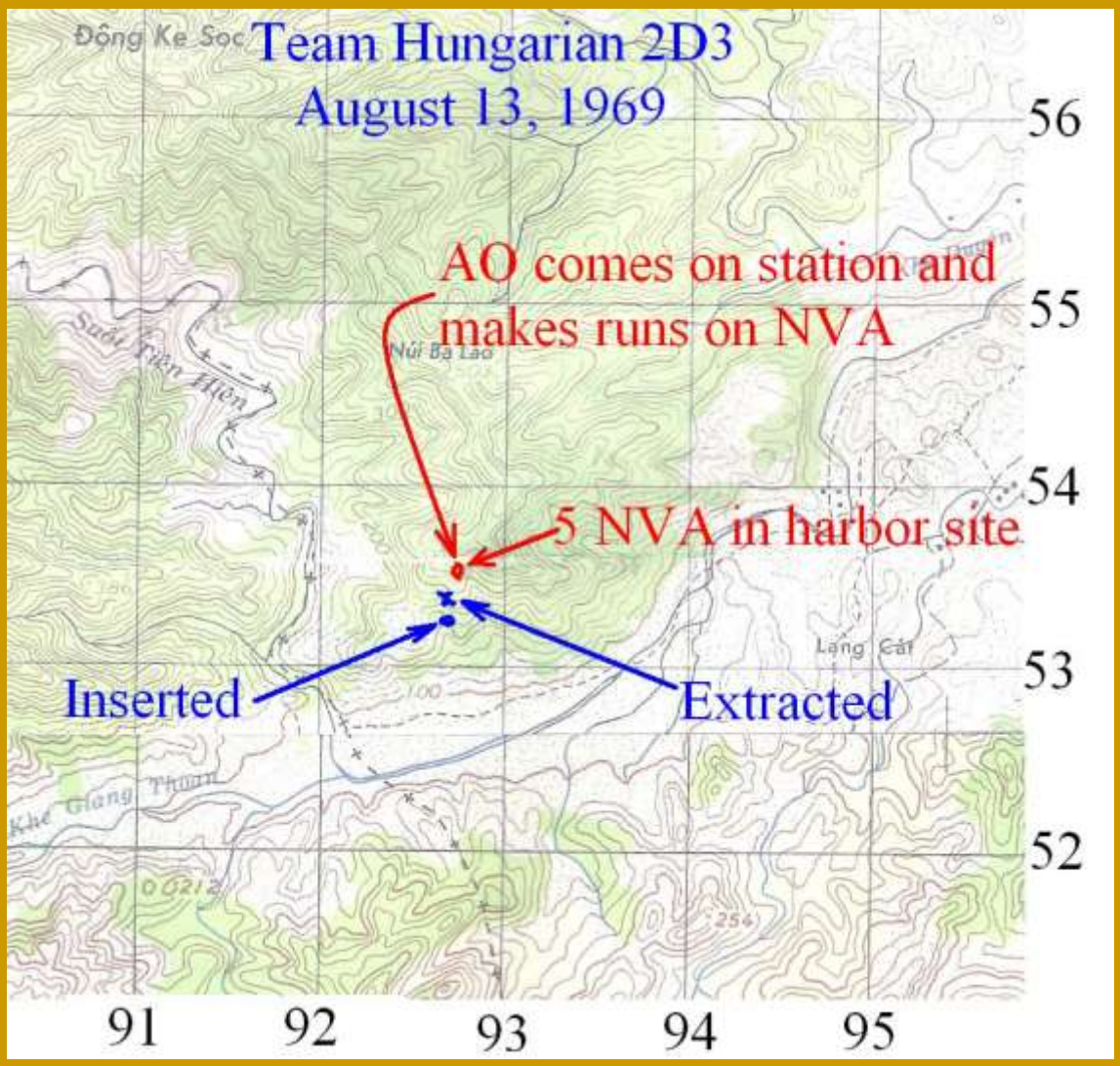
AUGUST 13, 1969

Today is no different from any other. It's up before the crack of dawn and get to the COC for the morning inserts and extracts.

As the day starts with teams going in the bush, it appears it might be a decent day. There have been no contacts with the working teams and extracts have been conducted without problems. With the plotting of the new teams in the bush, teams being taken out are removed from the maps as they are extracted.

It is great to have days like this. I know the guys running these missions deep into the jungles could use a break. Since I have been in the Nam, there has been no change in the war situation. We may have made a gain but all I can see is teams making contact with the enemy, maybe making a kill or two, maybe team members being killed. One thing is for sure, there are no winners on either side.

1030 Hours; Team Hungarian 2D3 has found a booby trap called a Malaysian Whip. Once plotted on the map the team moves on. Within minutes the team has made a sighting and is requesting an AO. After the AO confirms what he sees, gunships arrive and make strafing runs on the enemy position. The team is extracted at 1300 hours.


Đồng Ke Soc
Team Hungarian 2D3
August 13, 1969
AO comes on station and
makes runs on NVA
5 NVA in harbor site
Inserted
Extracted
Núi Ba Lao
Lang Cát
56
55
54
53
52
91
92
93
94
95

Aug

DRAFTED BY:LHH:ehh
CAC G-2 PH 30 RECON 2
C/O_____

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 190525 Z AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (RMIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHS
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CLE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: HUNGARIAN (2D3) (6 MEN) OPO 607-D-69
2. DTG INSEARTED/EXTRACTED: 130800H/131345H AUG 69 (6 HOURS)

3. ROUTE: FM XD927533 TO XD926534 TO XD927533
4. TERRAIN: STEEP RIDGELINE, DOUBLE CANOPY, THICK UNDER-

GROWTH. RATE OF MOVEMENT 50 METERS PER HOUR, GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT.

5. HLZ'S: SITE AT XD927533 WILL ACCOMMODATE ONE CH-46. SITE IS A SLOPE WITH 3-4 FEET ELEPHANT GRASS WITH BEST

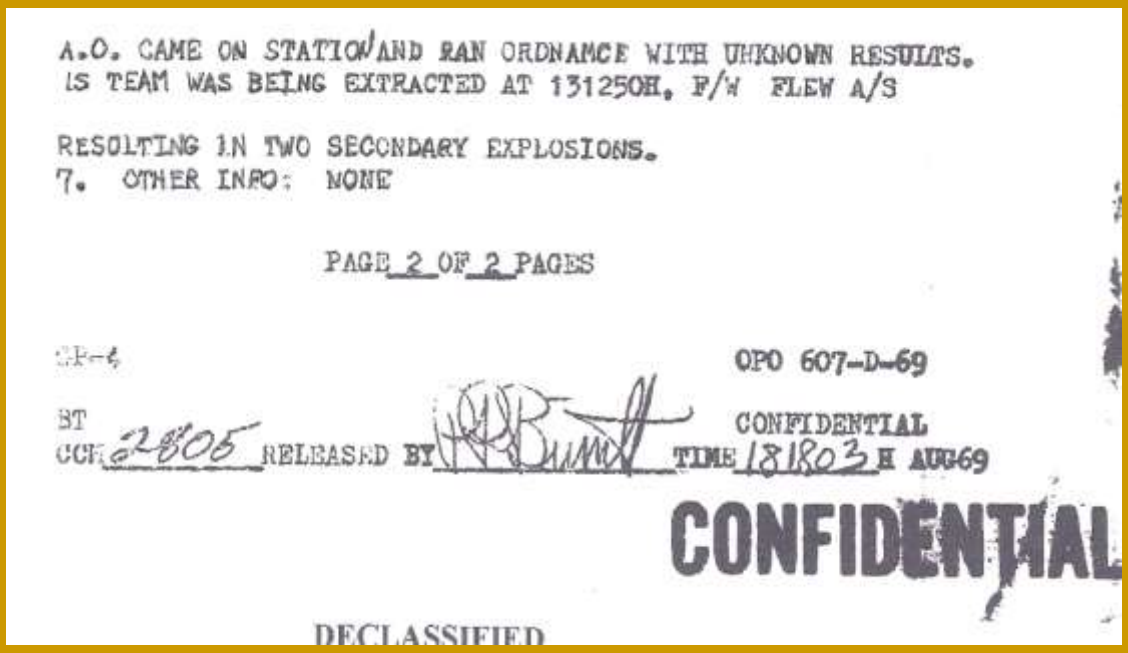
APPROACH 180 DEGREES AND NO APPROACH OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: 131100H TM FOUND A BOOBY TRAP (MALAYSIAN WHIP)

AT XD928535 APPEARING TO BE APPROX. 3-4 MONTHS OLD. 131145 TEAM SIGHTED 3 NVA/VC IN A HARBOR SITE, WHICH HAD HASTY SHELTERS BUILT OF PONCHOS AND BAMBOO, THE ENEMY ALSO HAD A FIRE IN

THEIR HARBOR SITE. ENEMY WORE HELMETS, GREEN UTILITIES, AND AK-47'S. 131155H AT XD928535 TM OBS 5 NVA/VC ENTER THE HARBOR

SITE. THESE NVA/VC APPEARED TO BE CLEAN AND FRESH AND WERE WEARING CLEAN UTILITIES , BOOTS AND HELMETS. 131210H ONE

MORE NVA/VC WAS APPROACHING THE HARBOR SITE FROM THE WEST



A.O. CAME ON STATION AND RAN ORDNANCE WITH UNKNOWN RESULTS.
IS TEAM WAS BEING EXTRACTED AT 131250H. F/W FLEW A/S

RESULTING IN TWO SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS.
7. OTHER INFO: NONE

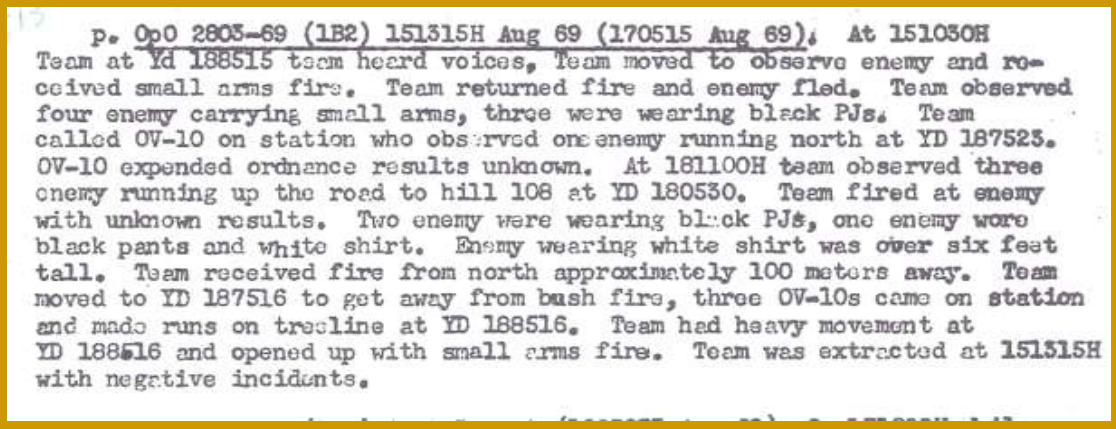
PAGE 2 OF 2 PAGES

OPO 607-D-69

BT
CCH 2805 RELEASED BY [signature] CONFIDENTIAL TIME 181803H AUG69

CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED



p. OpO 2805-69 (1B2) 151315H Aug 69 (170515 Aug 69). At 151030H Team at Yd 188515 team heard voices, Team moved to observe enemy and received small arms fire. Team returned fire and enemy fled. Team observed four enemy carrying small arms, three were wearing black PJs. Team called OV-10 on station who observed one enemy running north at YD 187523. OV-10 expended ordnance results unknown. At 181100H team observed three enemy running up the road to hill 108 at YD 180530. Team fired at enemy with unknown results. Two enemy were wearing black PJs, one enemy wore black pants and white shirt. Enemy wearing white shirt was over six feet tall. Team received fire from north approximately 100 meters away. Team moved to YD 187516 to get away from bush fire, three OV-10s came on station and made runs on treeline at YD 188516. Team had heavy movement at YD 188516 and opened up with small arms fire. Team was extracted at 151515H with negative incidents.

The rest of the day has gone without any problems. With all teams in the bush alpha sierra, the day is at a close and after the briefing I'm off to the club for a beer.



PART FIVE

AUGUST 14, 1969

All teams were inserted and extracted with few sightings. As for most of the day, it has been work-details outside the COC as well as inside. Once the briefing is over tonight, I plan on going to the small club in the recon area. I have a little celebration in store for myself. Today is my birthday. Yes, it's my second while in Vietnam but this time I have jumped out of the teen years. It seems like a lifetime but actually I've only been here 17 months to date. I guess one might say my first job has been somewhat different from most kids. If someone two years ago would have told me what my future held, I would have said they were out of their minds. The one thing I have learned here is life has no meaning and to kill is to survive only to be forced to kill again.

AUGUST 15, 1969

I wasn't too bad off this morning from the birthday party I gave myself. I knew once at the COC the coffee would get me in order. I usually make the coffee. Major Badolato has shown me just how he likes it. The coffee pot probably makes twenty cups or more but Major

B. likes the container not only topped off but packed down a little. Damn sure wakes a man up. It's got enough coffee in there to make three pots. Major Badolato had spent time in the Beirut, Damascus, and Lebanon as well as dozens of other countries and liked the coffee strong. It's okay, but like I said it's an eye opener. With the day moving along, all teams working are secure at this time.

0830 Hours; Hungarian 2D3 is taking fire and request AO and gunships. With Hungarian now in enemy contact, support is on the way. Hungarian is now reporting movement 20 meters to their southwest and requesting fixed-wing. The contact lightens somewhat but the team still has movement. As the gunships come on station, Hungarian is again taking heavy enemy fire as the enemy tries to close in on the team's position. The team stands its ground and attempts to repel the oncoming enemy force just feet from the team. Gun ships are now making strafing runs in support of the team. With the initial help of the gunships, the enemy has been successfully held at bay. Fixed-wing is now on station and the AO fires a Willy Pete (white phosphorus) rocket to mark the target for the jets. On impact the team comes back with "You're on 'em!" Seconds later jets deliver their deadly payload of bombs onto the location.

0950 Hours; "Contact, Contact," Sanforize 3-4 is taking fire from approximately 10 to 15 NVA. There is a break, "be advised we have made two enemy KIA's request gun ship support and AO, copy?" As the relay carries out the team's request, team Sanforize remains in heavy enemy contact.

1010 Hours; Gunships arrive on station and start to make their strafing runs in support of team Sanforize.

1030 Hours; Once the area around team Hungarian is worked over heavily by gunships, the extract birds manage to extract the team.

1040 Hours; Sanforize, still in enemy contact, hugs the earth as Mark-82 500-pound bombs impact dangerously close to their defensive perimeter. As the fixed-wing pull back, gunships come back to support the team. The team takes the opportunity to boot a short distance to an extract zone.

1040 Hours; “Contact, Contact, Candy Tuft Contact.” “Twenty, I say two zero NVA-taking heavy fire, request AO and gunships.” Do you copy? Candy Tuft 1B2 is in heavy enemy contact as the team waits for support from above.

1212 Hours; Gunships are now on station in support of team Candy Tuft.

1220 Hours; With gunships in support of the incoming extract bird, team Sanforize returns fire as the chopper sets in the zone. Now we hold our breath for the word they’re out. Within a few tense minutes, we get the word that the team has made it out.

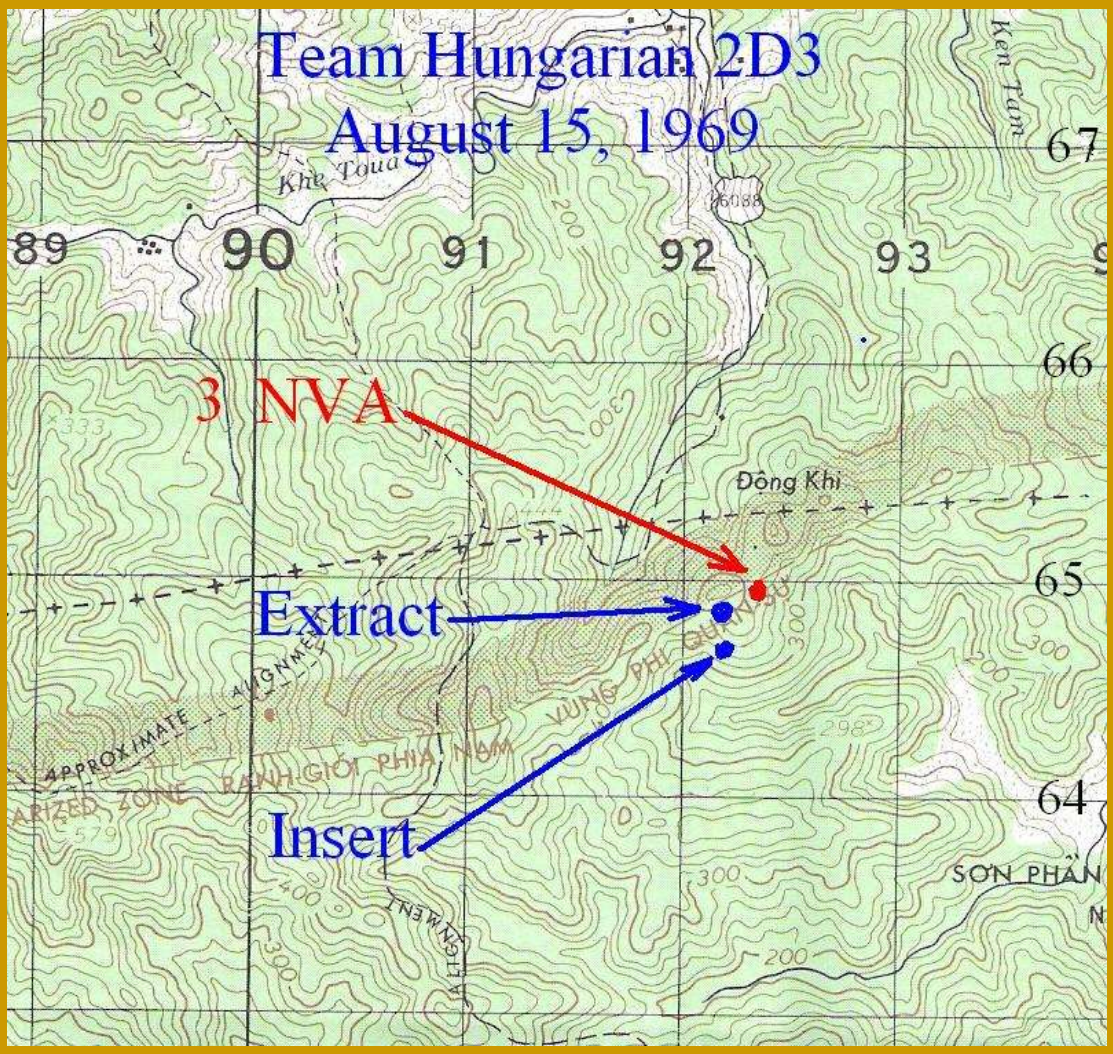
1230 Hours; Candy Tuft is still taking enemy fire while gunships open fire just feet from the team’s position holding the enemy at bay. As fixed-wing come on station, the AO makes its inbound firing a WP to mark the enemy position. Jets drop out of the sky and start to drop napalm and high explosives within meters of the team’s position to repel the enemy force. With every key of the handset, the explosions of the close air support along with heavy automatic fire can be heard.

1250 Hours; Team Candy Tuft is still taking enemy fire and now is also taking ChiCom grenades as the team continues to return fire with small arms, M-79 and grenades.

1300 Hours; At this time Candy Tuft has managed to break contact and is now boot to a LZ as the AO directs the team to the zone.

1320 Hours; With the team Candy Tuft 1B2 now in a better position to be taken out, birds make their inbound approach with the support of gunships as a heavy base of fire is laid down. The bird is in the zone as we wait the word of their pullout. Again, seconds seem like minutes and the word comes. They are out of the zone and all are secure. All teams will be brought back to Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing.

As a result of the contacts, Hungarian 2D3 had a possible three NVA kills. Sanforize 3-4 made two NVA kills and Candy Tuft 1B2, after over an hour in contact, was able to make two kills with their small arms fire and possibly more kills with their supporting jets and gunships.


Team Hungarian 2D3
August 15, 1969
3 NVA
Extract
Insert
Đồng Khi
Khe Toua
Ken Tam
89
90
91
92
93
67
66
65
64
SƠN PHẦN

FIDENTIAL Aug 15, 1969

DRAFTED BY: EHH: ehh
S-2 PH 30 RECON"2
DTG

[illegible] 190823Z AUG 69

[illegible] (-) (RAIN) DGH
[illegible]

[illegible] AIRBORNE DIV CLE
[illegible] INF DIV (MECH) CYR
[illegible]

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

[illegible]

DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

RECON TEAM: HUNGARIAN (2D3) (8 MEN) OP02813
INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 150810H/151000H AUG 69

1. ROUTE: FM XD921647 TO XD922647
2. TERRAIN: [illegible] STEEP AND ROLLING HILLS, SPARSE UNDER-

[illegible] COVER AND CONCEALMENT. RATE OF MOVEMENT AT

DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

RECON TEAM: HUNGARIAN (2D3) (8 MEN) OP02813
INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 150810H/151000H AUG 69

1. ROUTE: FM XD921647 TO XD922647
2. TERRAIN: [illegible] STEEP AND ROLLING HILLS, SPARSE UNDER-

GROWTH [illegible] COVER AND CONCEALMENT. RATE OF MOVEMENT AT
[illegible] DIRECTION.

[illegible] AT XD923649 WILL ACCOMMODATE (1) CH-46 .
[illegible] HILLTOP WITH BEST APPROACH FROM EAST TO

[illegible] OBSTACLES.
[illegible] AT XD923649 TEAM OBS THREE NVA/VC FIVE

FROM TEAM'S POSITION, WEARING GREEN UTILITIES. TEAM
[illegible] ENEMY RESULTING IN ONE NVA/VC KIA.

[illegible] TEAM OBS ONE NVA/VC 30 METERS WEST OF THIER POSITION.
WORE GREEN UTILITIES. NO WEAPON WAS OBS. AT THIS TIME

[illegible] MOVED 30 FEET NORTHEAST OF TEAMS POSITION
[illegible] A BUNKER BUILT IN THE SIDE OF THE HILLS. THE TOP
CAMOUFLAGED.
WAS [illegible] GROUNDAND WAS WELL CAMOUFLAGED. THER WAS
A 8' x 12' APERTURE OFFERING A VIEW TO THE EAST. SAND BAGS

WERE VISIBLE ON THE NORTHERN CORNER OF THE BUNKER. TWO NVA/VC
BUNKER

PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES

CONFIDENTIAL

MOVING TOWARD THE BUNKER, TEAM MOVED FROM THEIR
50 METERS SOUTHEAST TO FACILITATE FIXED WING PREP

FOR EXTRACTION. AFTER THE HLZ WAS PREPPED
THEIR ORIGINAL POSITION AND AT 151000H THE

TEAM EXTRACTED WITH NO FURTHER INCIDENTS.
NONE

OPO 2813
OPO ~~2742-69~~
CONFIDENTIAL

RELEASED BY [signature] TIME 181600 H AUG 69

t. OpO 2813-69 151000H Aug 69 (190523Z Aug 69). 150810H At XD 925649 team observed three enemy five meters from team position. Team exchanged fire with enemy resulting in one enemy KIA. Enemy was wearing green utilities. Team observed a bunker built into the side of the hill. The top was level with the ground and was well camouflaged. There was an 8"x12" apperature offering a view to the east. Sand bags were visible on the northern side of the bunkers. Two enemy were observed moving toward the bunker. Team moved from their position to 50 meters southeast to facilitate fixed wing prep of the primary HLZ for extraction. Team was extracted at 150000H with no further incidents.



o. Op0 2810-69 (3-4) 151220H Aug 69 (170513Z Aug 69). 150940H at XD 953946 team found one harborsite with six foxholes. Team received fire from two enemy in a bunker at XD 951645. Team returned fire, resulting in two enemy KIA. Team moved back to insert point and began taking small arms fire from ridgeline at XD 942642. Team called AO on station. AO took small arms fire from team's north. AO called fixed wing on station. Fixed wing destroyed two 50 caliber positions; six small secondary explosions were seen and several bunkers were destoryed. Team and helicopter took small arms fire while being extracted at 151220H at XD 953649

DECLASSIFIED

Sanforize 3-4
Aug 15th 69

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFTED BY:HFR:HHR,
SEC S-2 FMF 3D FORCE RCC 2
CMD

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 170513Z AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (RCIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CGE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN.
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
CCC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON SPOT REPORT (IN LIEU OF PATROL DEBRIEF) (U)

1. RECON TEAM: SANFORIZE (3-4) 150940H AT XD 953646 FOUND 1 HARDOR SITE WITH 6 FOXHOLES. TEAM DREW FIRE FROM 2 NVA IN BUNKER AT XD 951645. RESULT

2 NVA KIA (C). TEAM MOVED NORTH AND REAR SECURITY SHOT AND KILLED 1 NVA FOLLOWING TEAM. TEAM MOVED BACK TO INSERTION POINT AND BEGAN TAKING SMALL

ARMS FIRE FROM RIDGELINE AT XD 942642. TEAM THEN CALLED AO ON STATION AND AO TOOK FIRE FROM THE TEAMS NORTH WHILE RUNNING ORDNANCE ON ENEMY POSITION.

AO CALLED IN 3 FLIGHTS OF FIXED WING ON ENEMY POSITIONS, RESULT (2) 50 CAL. POSITIONS DESTROYED, 6 SMALL SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS, AND SEVERAL BUNKERS

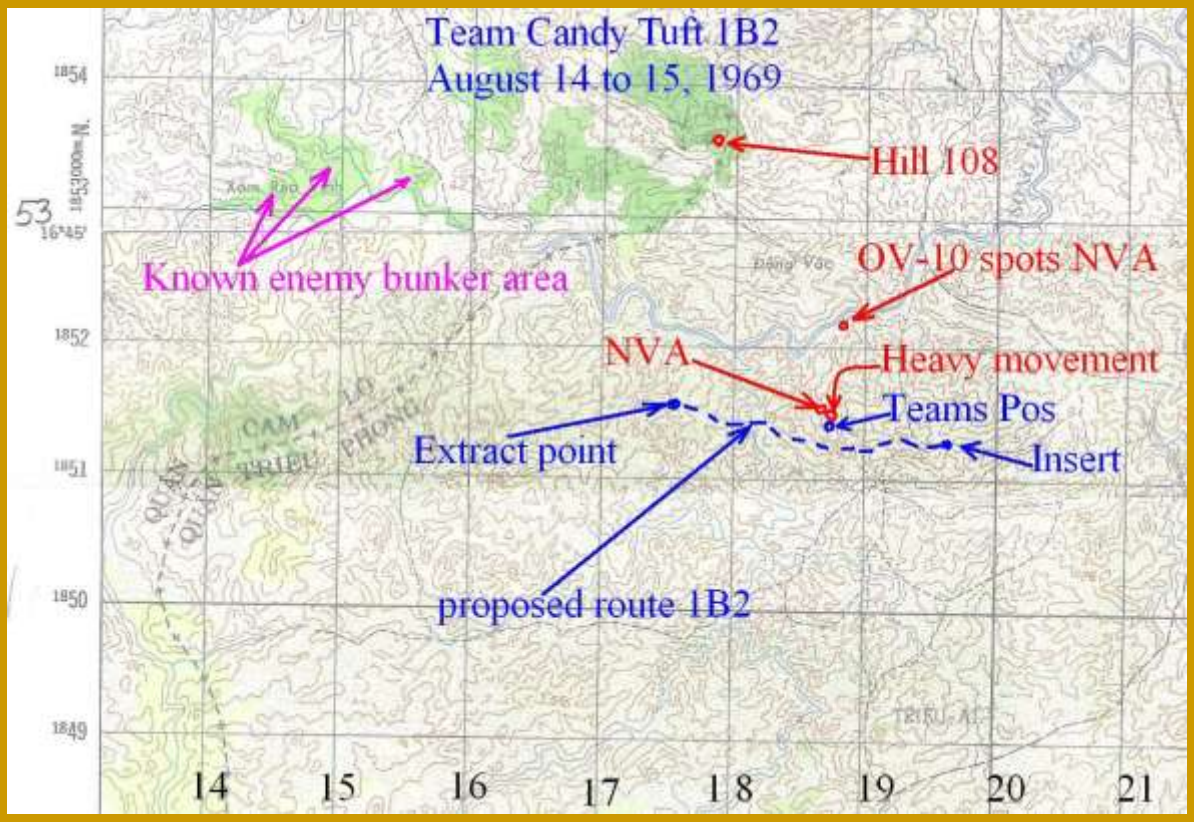
DESTROYED. EXTRACT HELO'S TOOK SMALL ARMS FIRE WHEN TEAM WAS EXTRACTED AT 151220H AT XD 953649.

CP-4
HT

CONFIDENTIAL
OPO 2010

CCN 2587 RELEASED BY Burnett TIME 162235 H AUG 69

6-2 6-3/GSV/COC



p. OpO 2803-69 (1B2) 151315H Aug 69 (170515 Aug 69). At 151030H Team at Yd 188515 team heard voices, Team moved to observe enemy and received small arms fire. Team returned fire and enemy fled. Team observed four enemy carrying small arms, three were wearing black PJs. Team called OV-10 on station who observed one enemy running north at YD 187525. OV-10 expended ordnance results unknown. At 181100H team observed three enemy running up the road to hill 108 at YD 180530. Team fired at enemy with unknown results. Two enemy were wearing black PJs, one enemy wore black pants and white shirt. Enemy wearing white shirt was over six feet tall. Team received fire from north approximately 100 meters away. Team moved to YD 187516 to get away from bush fire, three OV-10s came on station and made runs on treeline at YD 188516. Team had heavy movement at YD 188516 and opened up with small arms fire. Team was extracted at 151315H with negative incidents.

DTG FTsD BY:[illegible]:reg
S[illegible] S-2 PH 3D RECO 2
C:U

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 170515 Z JUL 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-)(REIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CNL
FIRST BN FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: CANDY TUFT (1B2) (6MEN) OPO-2803-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 140820H/151315H AUG 69 (29HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD196513 TO YD176517
4. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS WITH TWO TO FOUR FEET ELEPHANT

GRASS. UNLIMITED RATE OF MOVEMENT, POOR COVER AND CONCEALMENT. OP SITE AT YD188515 OBSERVE 360 DEGREES. WATER SOURCES AND

TRAILS AS SHOWN ON THE MAP.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD196513 WILL ACCOMMODATE TWO CH-46'S.

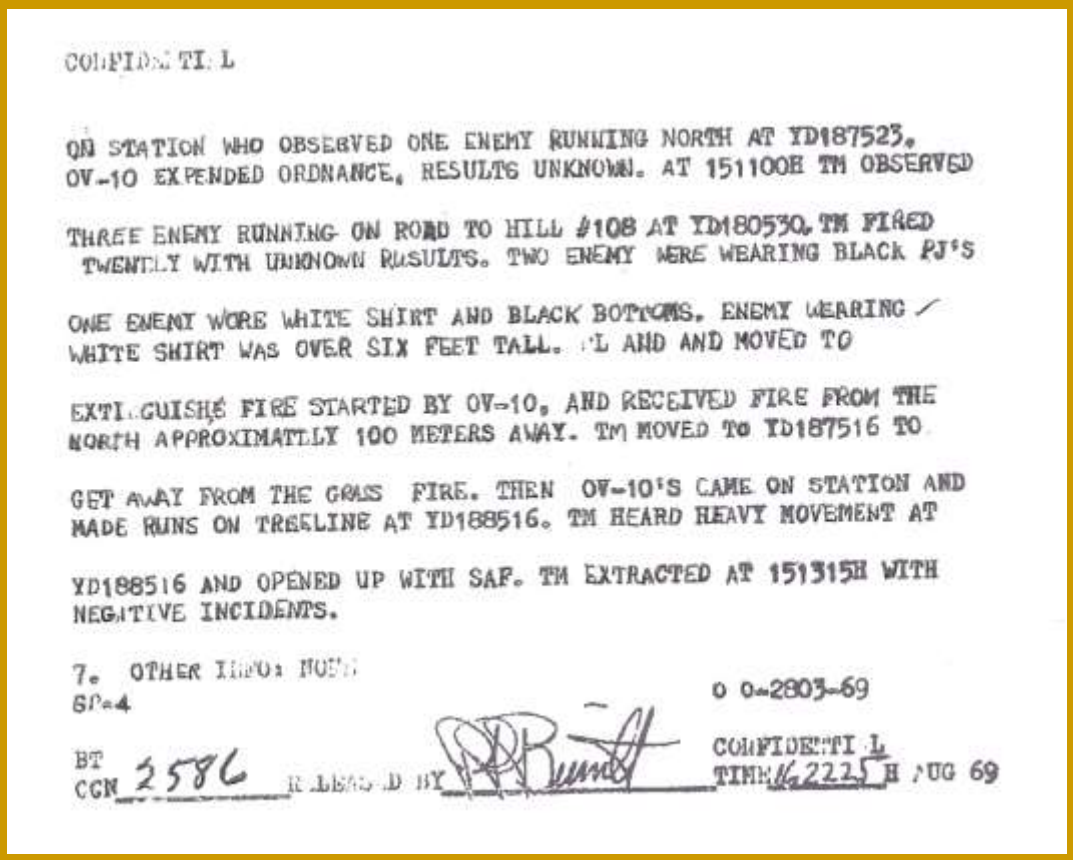
SITE IS A HILLTOP WITH TWO FEET HIGH ELEPHANT GRASS. APPROACH FROM 360 DEGREES WITH NO OBSTACLES. SITE YD176517 WILL

ACCOMMODATE TWO CH-46'S. SITE IS A HILLTOP WITH TWO FEET HIGH ELEPHANT GRASS. APPROACH FROM 360 DEGREES WITH NO OBSTACLES.

6. ENEMY: AT 151030H TM AT YD188515 TM HEARD VOICES, TM MOVED TO OBSERVE ENEMY AND RECEIVED SAF. TM RETURNED SAF AND ENEMY

FLED. TM OBSERVED FOUR ENEMY CARRYING SMALL ARMS. THREY WERE WEARING BLACK PJ'S AND ONE ONE WHITE PJ'S. TM CALLED OV-10

G-2 G-3/GSV/COC



CONFIDENTIAL

ON STATION WHO OBSERVED ONE ENEMY RUNNING NORTH AT YD187523. OV-10 EXPENDED ORDNANCE. RESULTS UNKNOWN. AT 151100H TM OBSERVED

THREE ENEMY RUNNING ON ROAD TO HILL #108 AT YD180530. TM FIRED TWENTY WITH UNKNOWN RESULTS. TWO ENEMY WERE WEARING BLACK PJ'S

ONE ENEMY WORE WHITE SHIRT AND BLACK BOTTOMS. ENEMY WEARING WHITE SHIRT WAS OVER SIX FEET TALL. [illegible]L AND AND MOVED TO

EXTINGUISH FIRE STARTED BY OV-10, AND RECEIVED FIRE FROM THE NORTH APPROXIMATELY 100 METERS AWAY. TM MOVED TO YD187516 TO

GET AWAY FROM THE GRASS FIRE. THEN OV-10'S CAME ON STATION AND MADE RUNS ON TREELINE AT YD188516. TM HEARD HEAVY MOVEMENT AT

YD188516 AND OPENED UP WITH SAF. TM EXTRACTED AT 151315H WITH NEGATIVE INCIDENTS.

7. OTHER INFO: NONE

SP-4

0 0-2803-69

BT

CCN 2586 RELEASED BY [signature] CONFIDENTIAL

TIME 1622H AUG 69

God, I am glad every day is not like this one in Recon but somewhere in the Nam there are enemy contacts daily. Sitting back in the COC, I can only get part of the story. Having been in enemy contacts, I can relate to what is going on. I know while at the threshold of deaths door that things like the horror of killing or being killed remain the same. But each contact is unique and is only fully experienced by those who are actually there. To have Artillery, Mark 82-500-pound bombs, 2.75 rockets from gunships, along with ChiCom's, the enemy, American M-26 grenades and hundreds of small arms rounds going off within a 150-foot radius or less at your position will blow anyone's mind. Written words by themselves cannot truly convey the horrible emotions that are experienced by men who are desperately trying to save themselves

and each other from death. But nonetheless, having been myself awash in these emotions, I can only hope that someday if someone reads this diary, they can somehow try to understand the difficult job of the brave men who have lived and sometimes died in this hellish war.

The day is at an end. All teams are alpha sierra in their harbor sites, 2115 hours.

On the sixteenth I had to take care of some work on Major B's jeep. Man, I hate to work on that damn thing. The motor transport Sergeant always gives me a lot of crap. Anyway, I finally got it finished today. I probably wouldn't mind working on the jeep if I didn't always get the white glove treatment. It's not like someone is going to eat off the hood. Anyway, it's cleaned up.

AUGUST 19, 1969

The past few days have been enemy contact free, for the teams in the bush. Days like these can't last long. The enemy is out there and it's just a matter of time before another team gets into the shit. There have been several sightings and fire missions.

AUGUST 20, 1969

Within the recon area, teams are standing by for inserts to get underway. As the morning moves fast, all team inserts and extractions go without a hitch.

As the day now moves into the afternoon, it sure makes you wish you had your own air conditioner. Vietnam does get very hot. When I say hot, I mean steaming hot. I have seen many Marines overtaken by

heat stroke. Teams in the bush carrying 80 to 100 pound plus packs have to really watch it. The heat can get to you before you realize it.

It is 1000 hours and all working teams are alpha sierra at this time. I continue to plot team locations as each recon zone is covered by the teams in the bush.

1025 Hours; “Contact, Contact, Belmont Tone 1-2 Contact.” The team has made a point-to-point with an undetermined number of NVA and the contact is heavy. Team Belmont Tone has requested AO and gunships. At this time, they are en-route to the team’s position.

1115 Hours; As the AO arrives on station above the team, several NVA are seen moving towards the team’s position. Belmont Tone 1-2 has informed the rear they are still in heavy contact having at this time two confirmed enemy kills. As fixed-wing arrives on station, close air support is used around the team. As the fixed-wing finish their runs, gunships move in to support the team. The gunships circle the team’s position and lay down heavy suppressive fire. Run after run is made by the gunships and the impacts of their rockets land only meters away from the team.

Belmont Tone was holding their own as the team continued to hold the enemy force at bay. With extract birds now on station, gunships continued to fire just a few meters away from the team’s location. With the gun ship support, the enemy’s gunfire is somewhat suppressed. It’s time. The birds are going in for the team. As the extract bird sets into the zone, gunships intensify their fire support. Once in the zone, the team makes a run for the extract bird.

1725 Hours; Then the word comes, they're out of the zone and all team members and crew are okay. The team will be returned to Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing.

1830 Hours: At this time, all teams are secure.

During the day Cpl. Pete has also had close calls with the enemy in their recon zone. With movement close to their position in the afternoon the team ran air strikes on possible enemy locations and on one occasion got a secondary explosion. It is 1900 hours and team Corporal Pete 2-2 has advised us that they have movement at 50 meters, from their position.

1955 Hours; Corporal Pete 2-2 is now informing us they have had two ChiCom grenades explode 30 meters from the team. As the team keeps their cool, they watch and wait for the enemy's next move. It would seem as if the team is being searched for but the enemy does not have a good fix on them. We wait for further word on the situation.

2030 Hours; Team Green Money whispers over the radio they also have enemy movement around their position.

2045 Hours; Hasty Foot, a reinforced recon team in the DMZ, has heard movement 50 meters from their position but have made no enemy sighting at this time. The team is playing it cool and not jumping the gun. I am sure these are attempts for the teams to show their hand. At this time of night, it is not a good idea to reveal your position even though one does get the urge to open fire. To reveal your location at night might surely cost you your life. The enemy would ChiCom you to death. The only way to survive is to be patient and utilize stealth to its fullest.

2115 Hour; Corporal Pete 2-2 is alpha sierra at this time. The movement has stopped and the team believes the enemy has moved out of the area.

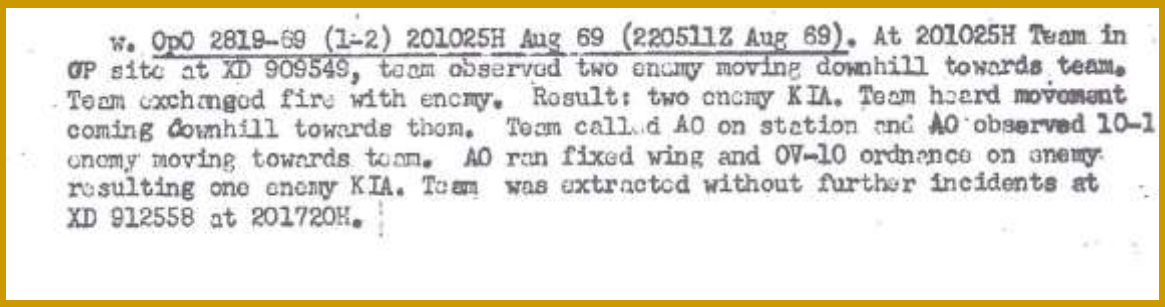
2120 Hours; Green Money has informed their radio relay that movement has stopped approximately 75 meters from the team's position. At this time the team feels they are secure but scan the area through the darkness making sure the enemy has moved away.

2135 Hours; At this time all working teams appear to be alpha sierra. There have been no contacts with any of the reported movements.

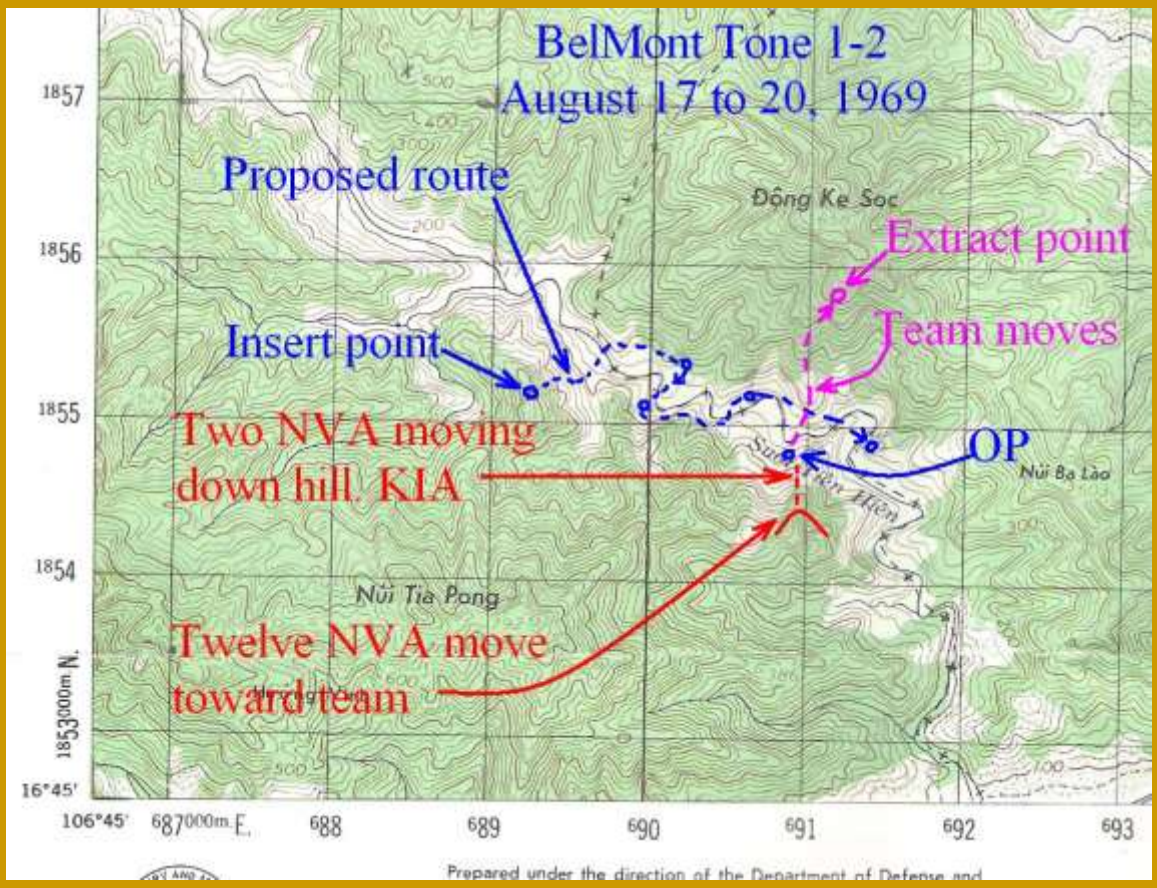
With the Colonel's briefing over, I will call it a day. One last check at the COC to drop the briefing map off and I am ready to crash. (2230 Hours)

The following are the reports of those missions;

Belmont Tone 1-2;



w. OpO 2819-69 (1-2) 201025H Aug 69 (220511Z Aug 69). At 201025H Team in OP site at XD 909549, team observed two enemy moving downhill towards team. Team exchanged fire with enemy. Result: two enemy KIA. Team heard movement coming downhill towards them. Team called AO on station and AO observed 10-1 enemy moving towards team. AO ran fixed wing and OV-10 ordnance on enemy resulting one enemy KIA. Team was extracted without further incidents at XD 912558 at 201720H.



DRAFTED BY:HHR:HHR
JBC S-2 III MD FORCE REC 2

DATE/ROUTING 22 0511 Z AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR (-) (REIN) DCH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS ARTY/RUMC
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CHR
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
1ST BATTALION 9TH MARINES
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE/RUMLDNI
THIRD RECON BN
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: BELMONT TONE 1 (1-2) (7-MEN) OPO 2819
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 171110H/201720H AUG 69 (78 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM XD 893553 TO XD 902553 TO XD 900551 TO XD 906552 TO XD 914549.
4. TERRAIN: STEEP HILLS WITH VERY THICK BRUSH AND SINGLE CANOPY; RATE OF

MOVEMENT 50 METERS PER HOUR; GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT XD 913558 WILL ACCOMODATS (2) CH-46. SITE IS A VALLEY;

TERRAIN FEATURES 3 FEET ELEPHANT GRASS; BEST APPROACH FROM EAST TO WEST; NO OBSTACLES.

6. ENEMY: AT 201025H WHILE [illegible] IN O.P. SITE AT XD 909549, TM SAW (2) ENEMY MOVING DOWN HILL. TM EXCHANGED FIRE WITH ENEMY, RESULT (2) NVA/VC KIA.

TM THEN HEARD MOVEMENT COMING TOWARDS TEAM. TM CALLED AO ON STATION AND AO OBSERVED 10-12 ENEMY MOVING TOWARDS TEAM. AO RAN FIXED WING AND OV-10

[illegible] OF ENEMY. RESULT (1) NVA/VC KBA. TM THEN MOVED TO LZ AND WAS EXTRACTED AT XD 913558 AT 201720H.

7. OTHER INFO: NONE.

CONFIDENTIAL
APO 2819

CODE: 3214 RELEASED BY [signature] DTG: 202145 H AUG 69

G-2 G-3 CONFIDENTIAL



gg. OpO 624-D-69 (2-2) 230930H Aug 69 (240527Z Aug 69). 201400H at YD 019493 team heard heavy movement to their south. Team called AO and AO r: OV-10 ordnance on suspected enemy position. After observing three secondary explosions. AO ran six flights of fixed wing on target area. Result: five bunkers destroyed. AO called fire mission on target and team continued mission. On 211500H at YB 024497 team heard voices, negative action taken. On 221500H at YD 023496 team heard movement to the north. Negative action taken

165

DRAFTED BY: [illegible]
SOC S-2 HQ 3D FORCE REC 2

DTG DATE/ROUTINE: 240527Z AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DCH
CG XXIV CORPS RHB
CG III MAF [illegible]

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CES
FORCE RDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE HMM
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN.
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
CVS
CCC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: CPL PETE (2-2) (7-MEN) OPO 624-D
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 191700H/230930H AUG 69 (97 HOURS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD005485 TO YD013492 TO YD021496 TO YD023498 TO YD021496 TO YD005495.

4. TERRAIN: STEEP HILLS WITH TRIPLE CANOPY AND DENSE UNDERGROWTH; RATE OF MOVEMENT 75 METERS PER HOUR; O.P. SITE AT YD022497 LOOKING SOUTH AND WEST.

5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD 024497 WILL ACCOMMODATE (1) CH-46; SITE IS HILLTOP WITH SHORT GRASS; BEST APPROACH FROM SOUTH TO NORTH WITH NO APPROACH OBSTACLES.

6. ENEMY: 20 1400H AT YD019493 TM HEARD HEAVY MOVEMENT TO THEIR SOUTH. TM CALLED AO ON STATION AND AO RAN OV-10 ORDNANCE ON SUSPECTED ENEMY POSITION.

AFTER OBSERVING (3) SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS AO RAN (6) FLIGHTS OF FIXED WING ON THE TARGET AREA, RESULTING IN (5) BUNKERS DESTROYED. AO THEN CALLED F/M

ON THE TARGET AREA. TM COMPLETED MISSION. ON 211500H AT YD024497 TM HEARD VOICES, NEGATIVE ACTION TAKEN. ON 221500H AT YD023496 TM HEARD MOVEMENT TO

THE NORTH, NEGATIVE ACTION TAKEN.
7. OTHER INFO: NONE

GP-4
BT
CCI 3607 RELEASED BY [signature] DTG 232230Z AUG 69

CONFIDENTIAL
OPO 624-D

G-2

G-3/G5/C oc

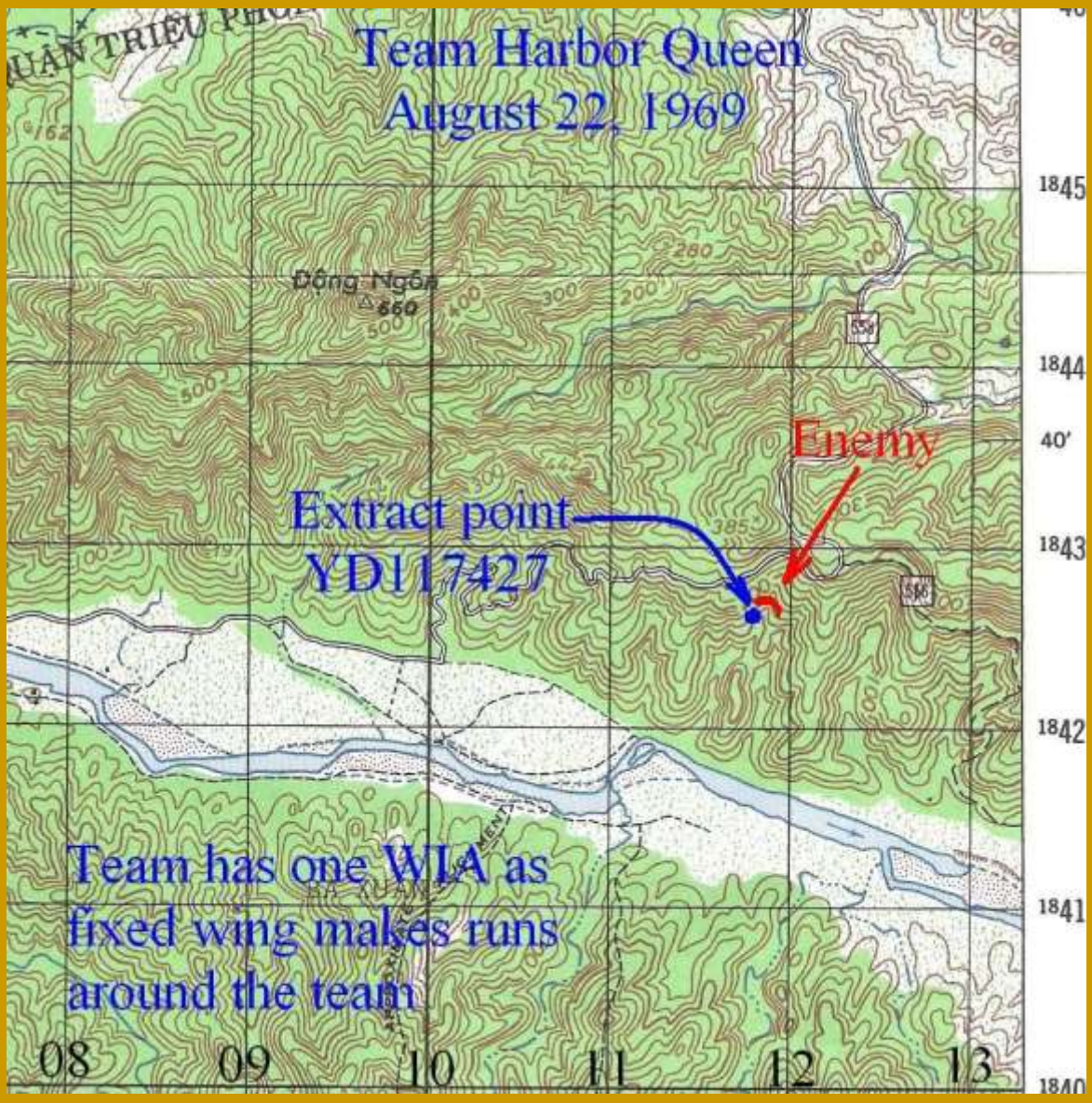
CONFIDENTIAL

AUGUST 22, 1969

All inserts and extracts are now underway at this time. The day is moving fast. Now into the afternoon it is 1335 hours. “Contact, Contact, Harbor Queen Contact.” Harbor Queen, a six-man Recon team has made contact while in an ambush site. The team is taking heavy fire from the south southwest at grid YD117427. The team has requested AO and gunships on station as they battle the enemy force. As the air support comes on station, Harbor Queen has informed the rear the team has taken one WIA and is still taking enemy fire. As the AO drops out of the sky to aid the team, every inbound run, results in the AO taking heavy enemy fire. With the enemy hot on the team’s ass, the AO and gunships cover the team’s movement as Harbor Queen moves to a more defendable position. Still in enemy contact, the AO has requested fixed-wing air support. In minutes, fixed-wing arrives on station as the AO rolls into the enemy position to mark the target with a WP. As the AO fires a rocket on the enemy position, marking the target only meters from the team, he calls to the team. “Harbor Queen, Harbor Queen, get your heads down, in-bounders coming in hot.” From Harbor Queen, “Roger copy.” As the bombers drop to the team’s position, they deliver 500-pound snake and nape impacting only 50 meters from the team. With the confirmation the bombers are on target, the area is again pounded with devastating force. Run after run is made in support of Harbor Queen as they prepare for an extract of the team and wounded. With the area now very well worked over, the jets pull back as extract birds notify the team they are now inbound for the extract. As the gunships lay down a base of fire in support of the inbound extract bird, team Harbor Queen is taken out meters from their contact point. Once out of the hot LZ, the wounded will be taken to Quang Tri Medical and

the rest of the team will be returned to the recon area for debriefing. The team was taken out meters from contact point grid YD117427 at 1445 hours.

The following map, 12,000 meters Northwest of LZ Stud, Vandergrift Combat Base is the area which the Harbor Queen contact took place;



1500 Hours; All teams working at this time are alpha sierra. Inserts and extracts continue without problems.

With the day ending all teams are secure. I will prepare the nights briefing. It is 2045 hours as all teams are now moving into their night's harbor sites. Once in their harbor site locations they are plotted and the day is at a close.

AUGUST 24, 1969

Most of my days are long and somewhat hard on the mind. It's 0330 hours and my night has been destroyed by my dreams of death. Sometimes I think I am going crazy. I know I am not alone because on the nights I can't sleep, I hear others scream out in the night also. The dreams bring each of us our own demons from the battle field to deal with. With the night shot, I go to the COC. It's one place that is open 24 hours a day. It is quiet and the coffee is always on.

0400 Hours; It is Dixie Diner 1E3 and they have movement around their position. The team is located 10 klicks southwest of the Rock Pile at XD870536, not a good area.

The team Dixie Diner, 1Echo3 team members were:

Cpl. Stephen "SK" White – Patrol Leader WIA
L/Cpl. Richard A. "Tex" Anderson – Asst. Patrol Leader
wounded 3 separate times Killed in Action Medal of Honor
PFC. Jim Simpson – Point man WIA
PFC. Curtis D. "Homer" Hughes, (unit one medical) WIA
L/CPL. Phillip K. Symon - M-79 man WIA
L/CPL. Alan Rouse – Radio WIA
L/CPL. Dennis "Animal" Plopper WIA

The team's radio man whispers that the team hears movement at approximately 10 meters from their position. The team reports the movement is coming from the west and southwest. Suddenly, the radio blares out with, "Dixie Diner, Dixie Diner, Contact, Contact, taking heavy machine gun fire and ChiCom's from the west and southwest. "THEY ARE ON US." The team is in heavy contact and the enemy is at 15 to 20 feet from the team's position. As the team returns grenades, the enemy is now assaulting the team as Dixie Diner returns fire. Another transmission…. "20 to 25 we are taking heavy machine gun fire, ChiCom's….Fire west and south on calls." "Roger, copy, fire west and south on calls, standby." Dixie Diner calls again, "be advised, we have wounded…Three… I say three WIA's, Fire on calls. Request extract, copy?" "Dixie Diner Dixie Diner, shot out," "Copy shot out." As the volley makes its impact its drop 200 FIRE for effect." As the adjustment is being made Dixie Diner is now reporting they are still taking heavy fire and ChiCom's. As the arty volleys impact, the team comes back with "drop 100 Fire, the son-of-a-bitches are on us." FIRE! Be advised we have……. there is a break, SEVEN….. I say SEVEN WIA's still in contact." With incoming enemy ChiCom's Dixie Diner is in a world of shit. "Be advised we have Seven WIA'S ONE, I say one KIA still taking fire." With the team now having seven wounded and one killed, arty is virtually on the team position.

As support from above locates the team's position there will be an extract attempt. As team members stand united in their fight, the cost to hold the enemy back is too high. Only after heavy arty support has pounded the team's perimeter are the extract birds able to go inbound for the team. With arty on hold, the support of the gunships covers the

extract bird as he hovers as if in a standoff with the enemy, as the extract bird sets in the zone. Knowing the bird is taking heavy enemy fire, the team is able to get the dead and wounded teammates on the bird as Dixie Diner 1E3 is taken out of the hot zone. The team will be taken to Quang Tri where medical teams are standing by awaiting their arrival.

Phillip K. Symon secondary radio man with team Dixie Diner remembers the team being spotted on the 23 of August and requested an extraction but was denied. He knew the team was in for real trouble and big time. Even making every effort to evade the enemy, once in the nights harbor site there was little sleep. On the early morning of the 24th, the enemy had found the team and in the early morning hours Dixie Diner was hit hard knocking out the Primary radio. Switching to the secondary the team still in heavy contact is able to regain comm with support.

As the enemy assaulted, they are so close to the team, John Hays who was shot through the shoulder returned fire with his M-79 hitting his attacker, but was so close the round hit the enemy but didn't arm or explode but knocked the enemy out of the battle.

As dawn arrives so do the extract birds as the team is taken out under enemy fire. With all aboard the team shoots their way out of the zone.

Richard Anderson, was the man killed in the team. It was only later I had found out that Richard, being wounded very badly, was on the ground when an incoming grenade entered the team's position. Richard used his body to shield his fellow teammates from the blast. It is said he will be put up for the Medal of Honor. We are at a great loss today with the wounded and killed from the team Dixie Diner. Richard will be missed among the Marines of 3rd Recon. He may not be remembered by the people in the world but he will never be forgotten by the men of 3rd Recon Battalion. It is men like Richard Anderson, along with all the Recon Marines that are heroes to me. They truly represent the words, gallantry, above and beyond the call of duty, dedication to a fellow comrade. Some risk their life, others dedicate their lives and so many gave their lives. Their dedication and comradeship exemplify their extraordinary heroism.





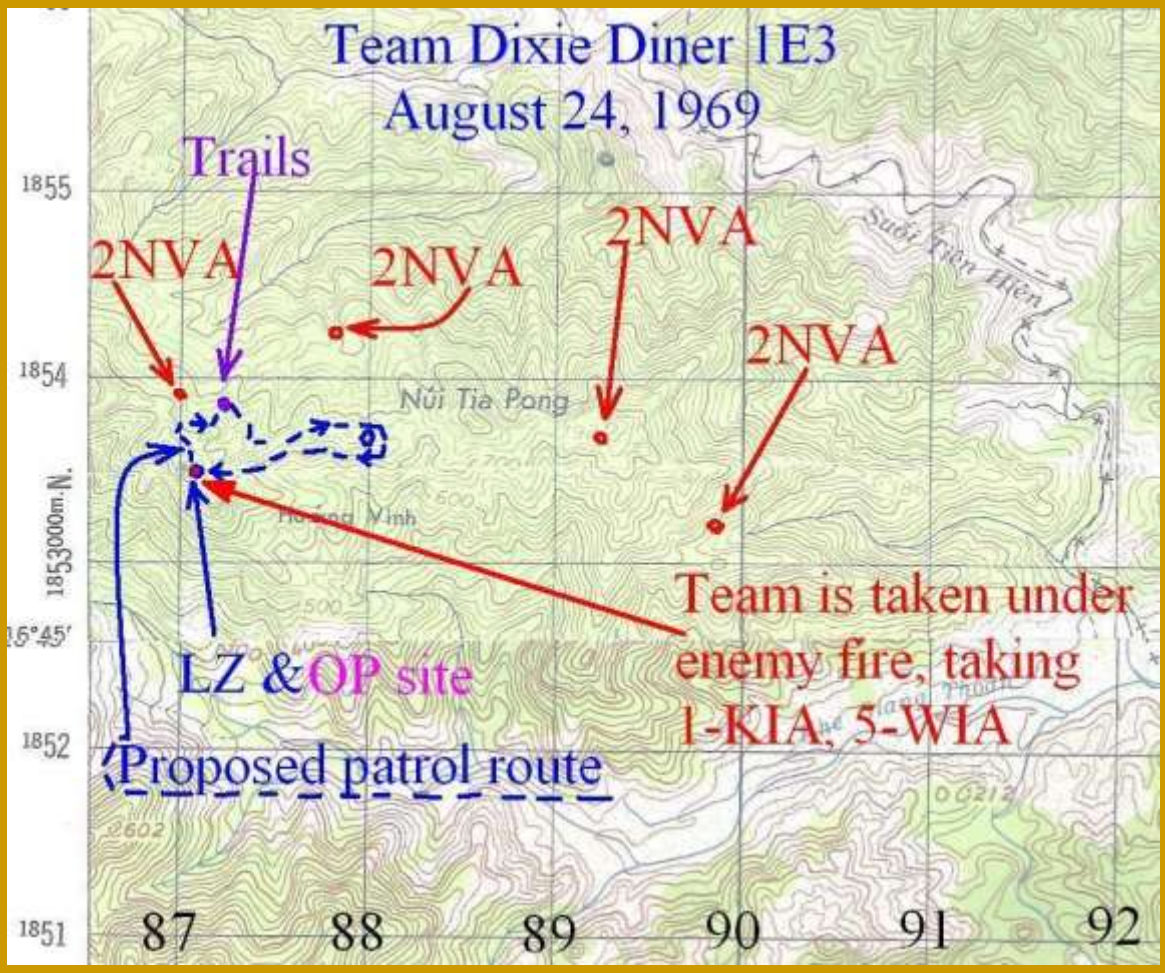
Richard (Tex) Anderson

. Photo taken by team members “Dixie Diner” 1Echo3

Richard A. Anderson, U. S. Marine Corps, company E. 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, 3d Marine Division serving in Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam August 24, 1969. Citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a assistant team leader with Company E, in connection with combat operations against an armed enemy. While conducting a patrol during the early morning hours Lance Corporal Anderson's reconnaissance team came under a heavy volume of automatic weapons and machine gun fire from a numerically superior and well concealed enemy force. Although painfully wounded in both legs and knocked to the ground during the initial moments of the fierce fire fight, L/Cpl. Anderson assumed a prone position and continued to deliver intense suppressive fire in an attempt to repulse the attackers. Moments later, he was wounded a second time by an enemy soldier who had approached to within 8 feet of the team's position. Undaunted, he continued to pour a relentless stream of fire at the assaulting enemy unit, even while a companion was treating his leg wounds. Observing an enemy grenade land between himself and the other marine, L/Cpl. Anderson immediately rolled over and covered the lethal weapon with his body, absorbing the full effects of the detonation. By his indomitable courage, inspiring initiative, and selfless devotion to duty, L/Cpl. Anderson was instrumental in saving several marines from serious injury or possible death. His actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the U. S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the service of his country.

The following is the report of that mission;



kk. OpO 636-D-69 (1E3) 240600H Aug 69 (280541Z Aug 69). 230930H team at XD 871535 observed five A-Frame bunkers, approximately six months old. 231130H team observed two enemy at XD 870539, at the same time team observed two more enemy at XD 878543. 231135H team called fire mission of three rounds at XD 870539 with negative results. 231630H team observed two enemy at XD 870539 negative action taken. 231630 team observed two enemy at XD 895570. 240401H team at XD 871535 began receiving small arms fire from two meters to team southwest. Team return fire with a M-79, resulting in one enemy KIA. 240416H team received satchel charges, enemy grenades, machine gun fire, and small arms fire from five meters to team west and southwest, resulting in one USMC KIA and five WIA, two emergency, two priority and one routine. Team returned fire with grenades, small arms fire and M-79 resulting in one enemy KIA. 240420H team observed one enemy at 10 meters to team southwest. Team fired M-79 and threw grenades, results unknown. 240552H gunships made straffing runs and received small arms fire from XD 872568.

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFTED BY: DJF:ptm
SISC S-2 RM 3D R&C 2
CWO

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 280541Z AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON B

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: DIXIE DINER (1E3) (8 MEN) OPO636-D-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 230930/240605H AUG 69 (21 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM XD871535 TO XD880536 TO XD871535
4. TERRAIN: STEEP HILLS WITH DOUBLE CANOPY AND THICK UNDERBRUSH.

WATER SOURCES AS SHOWN ON MAP. GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT ON RIDGES. OP SITE XD871535 OBS 360 DEGREES. AT GRID XD873538

SEVERAL TRAIL LEADING IN EVERY DIRECTION.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT XD871535 WILL ACCOMODATE (1) CH-46. SITS IS OLD

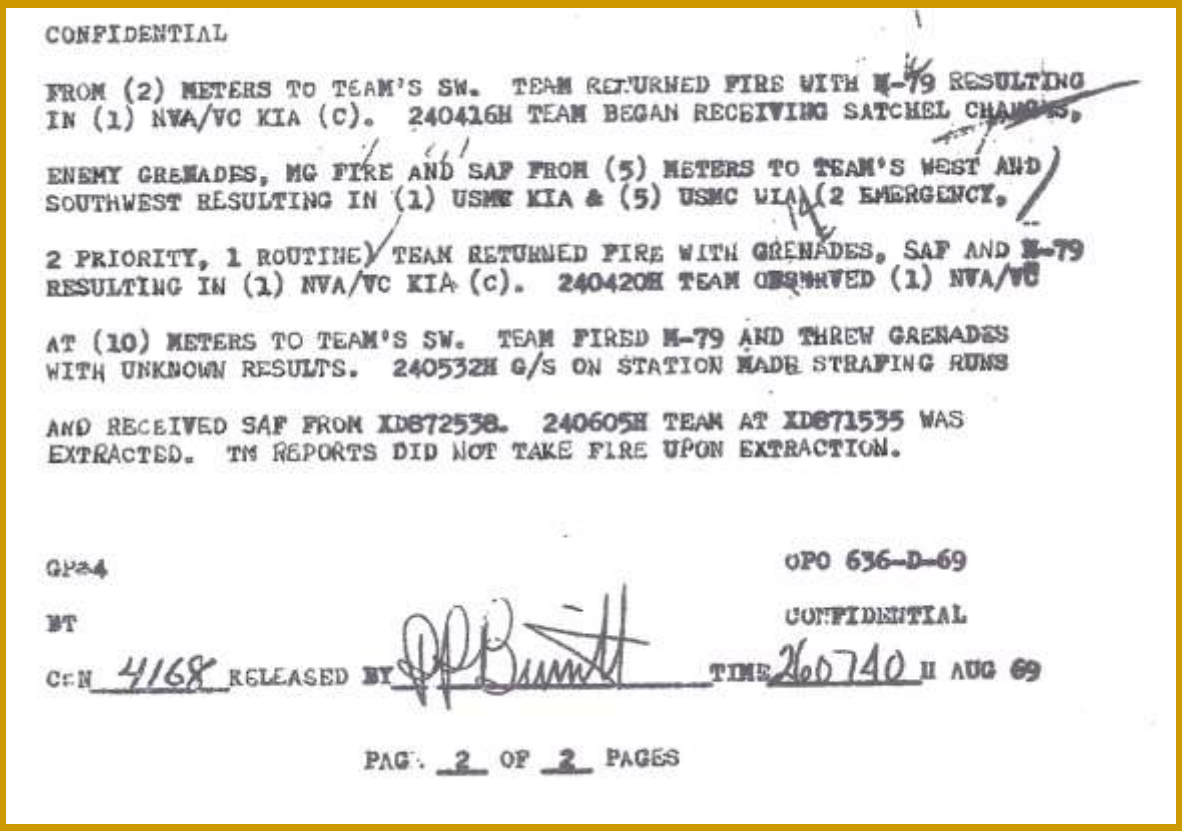
INF POS WITH SCATTERED TREES. APPROACH FROM 360 DEGREES WITH NO APPROACH OBSTACLES.

6. ENEMY: 230930H TEAM AT XD871535 OBS (5) OLD "A" FRAME BUNKERS THAT APPEARED (6) MONTHS OLD. 231130H TEAM OBS (2) NVA/VC AT XD870539/

AT THE SAME TIME TEAM OBS (2) MORE NVA/VC AT XD878543. 231135H TEAM CALLED FIRE MISSION OF (3) ROUNDS AT XD870539 WITH NEGITIVE RESULTS.

231630H TEAM OBS (2) NVA/VC AT XD893537. 231640 H TEAM OBS (2) MORE NVA/VC AT XD899532. 240415 H TEAM AT XD871535 BEGAN RECEIVING SAF

PAGE 1 OF 2 PAGES
G-2/G-3/GSV/COC/



CONFIDENTIAL

FROM (2) METERS TO TEAM'S SW. TEAM RETURNED FIRE WITH M-79 RESULTING IN (1) NVA/VC KIA (C). 240416H TEAM BEGAN RECEIVING SATCHEL CHARGES, ENEMY GRENADES, MG FIRE AND SAF FROM (5) METERS TO TEAM'S WEST AND SOUTHWEST RESULTING IN (1) USMC KIA & (5) USMC WIA (2 EMERGENCY, 2 PRIORITY, 1 ROUTINE). TEAM RETURNED FIRE WITH GRENADES, SAF AND M-79 RESULTING IN (1) NVA/VC KIA (C). 240420H TEAM OBSERVED (1) NVA/VC AT (10) METERS TO TEAM'S SW. TEAM FIRED M-79 AND THREW GRENADES WITH UNKNOWN RESULTS. 240532H G/S ON STATION MADE STRAFING RUNS AND RECEIVED SAF FROM XD872538. 240605H TEAM AT XD871535 WAS EXTRACTED. TM REPORTS DID NOT TAKE FIRE UPON EXTRACTION.

GP-4 OPO 636-D-69

BT CONFIDENTIAL

CEN 4168 RELEASED BY [signature] TIME 260740 H AUG 69

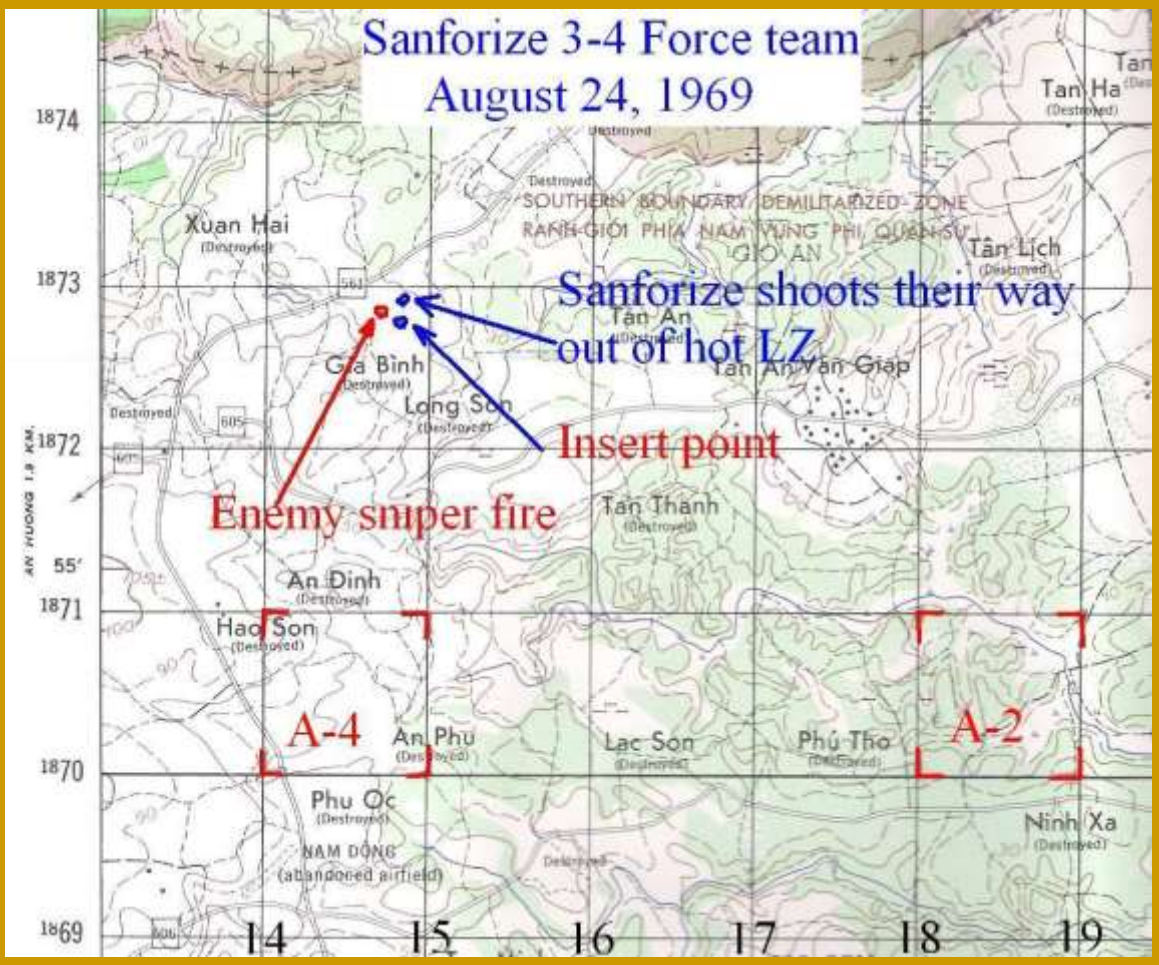
PAGE 2 OF 2 PAGES

As the day is now in full swing all inserts and extracts are going fine until Sanforize, a Force Recon team 3-4 was inserted in their LZ at grid YD148729. As the insert bird set into the zone the team was off and in a 360. After moving a short distance, the team is now taking sniper fire.

The enemy will at times set up in a prime landing zone just to try to get a chopper. Marines on the chopper are a bonus for the enemy. When the team gets off the chopper the enemy will strike. When the bird comes in to get the team, the enemy tries to take the bird down.

The team is now advising us they have spotted five NVA now moving toward the team. As an AO comes on station gun runs are made as the team prepares for extract. As gunships suppress enemy fire around the

team, choppers go inbound for the extract. With the bird in the zone the team shoots their way out of the contact making one enemy KIA. When the bird lifts out of the zone the team and the chopper take heavy enemy fire. The team and door gunners are able to account for three more enemy killed as the chopper pulls out of the hot landing zone. All crew and team members are okay. They were lucky this time. It just takes a few lucky shots or an RPG (rocket propelled grenade) and your party is over.



ii. Op0 2843-69 (3-4) 240945H Aug 69 (250109Z Aug 69). Upon insertion 240930H at YD 148728 team received sniper fire from the south at YD 147728. Team observed three enemy moving east. Enemy wore green utilities, pith helmet and carried two AK-47 and one SKS. Team then observed two enemy moving towards the first three. Point man exchanged fire with enemy, resulting in three enemy KIA. At 240930H team heard five small explosions 100 meters to their east. The team called AO on station and AO received small arms fire while running OV-10 ordnance on enemy position. Gunships made runs while team was extracted. Team exchanged fire with enemy while boarding helicopter resulting in one enemy KIA(C). Team was extracted at 240945H at YD 148729.

DECLASSIFIED

1505

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFTED B[illegible]
S3O S-2 M1 3D FORCE REC 2

DTG/DATE/ROUTING 250109Z AUG 69

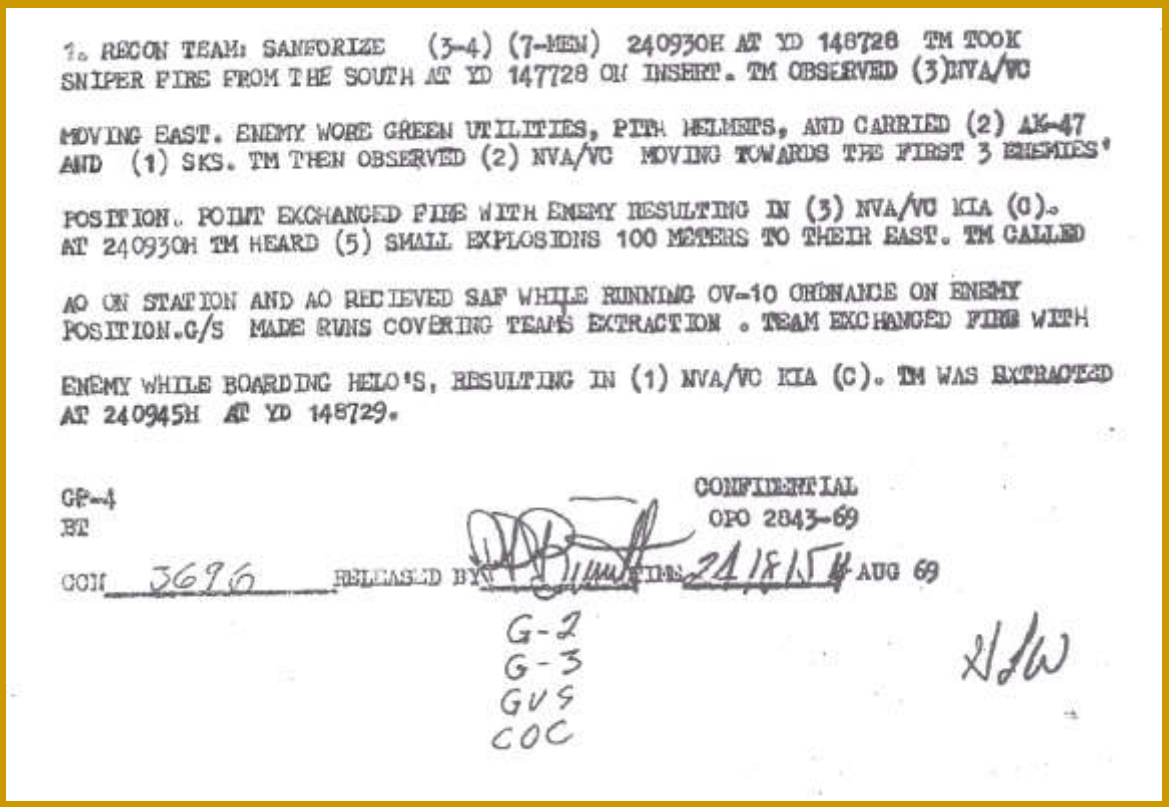
FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PIB
CG III MAF DAG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV GBS
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG TWELVE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN.
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO: RC
G-2
G-3
CVS
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON SPOT REPORT (IN LIEU OF PATROL DEBRIEF) (U)

1. RECON TEAM: SANDPIPER (3-4) (7-MEN) 240930H AT YD 148728 TM TOOK



1. RECON TEAM: SANFORIZE (3-4) (7-MEN) 240930H AT YD 148728 TM TOOK SNIPER FIRE FROM THE SOUTH AT YD 147728 ON INSERT. TM OBSERVED (3)NVA/VC MOVING EAST. ENEMY WORE GREEN UTILITIES, PITH HELMETS, AND CARRIED (2) AK-47 AND (1) SKS. TM THEN OBSERVED (2) NVA/VC MOVING TOWARDS THE FIRST 3 ENEMIES' POSITION. POINT EXCHANGED FIRE WITH ENEMY RESULTING IN (3) NVA/VC KIA (C). AT 240930H TM HEARD (5) SMALL EXPLOSIONS 100 METERS TO THEIR EAST. TM CALLED AO ON STATION AND AO RECIEVED SAF WHILE RUNNING OV-10 ORDNANCE ON ENEMY POSITION. C/S MADE RUNS COVERING TEAMS EXTRACTION . TEAM EXCHANGED FIRE WITH ENEMY WHILE BOARDING HELO'S, RESULTING IN (1) NVA/VC KIA (C). TM WAS EXTRACTED AT 240945H AT YD 148729.

GP-4
ET

CONFIDENTIAL
OPO 2843-69

CCN 3696 RELEASED BY TIME 24/8/15H AUG 69

G-2
G-3
GVS
COC

H/W

The rest of the day has gone without problems. At this time all teams are secure. I, along with others have noticed the pick-up in enemy contacts, not only with the Recon teams but the infantry units in and around our area of assignment. It is obvious the NVA are moving more troops into the mountains to the west. These troops are setting up for something big.

The NVA are expert jungle fighters but have high losses in dead and wounded. Yet with only what they can carry, I see them for what they are, men with a reason and cause to fight for what they feel is right. They are in a fight for their country. With no fixed-wing or choppers operating in South Vietnam, they still endure. They have very little

medical supplies and no choppers to extract their wounded. They have my respect as soldiers. With talks of a possible pull out, I see our only attempt for a win is to step up the bombings in the North. If a strong move toward the North is not made, I see no chance of a win for the United Sates. All I see day after day is enemy contacts with little gain.

It is 2145 hours and all working teams are secure at this time. After the CO's briefing, the day is at an end.

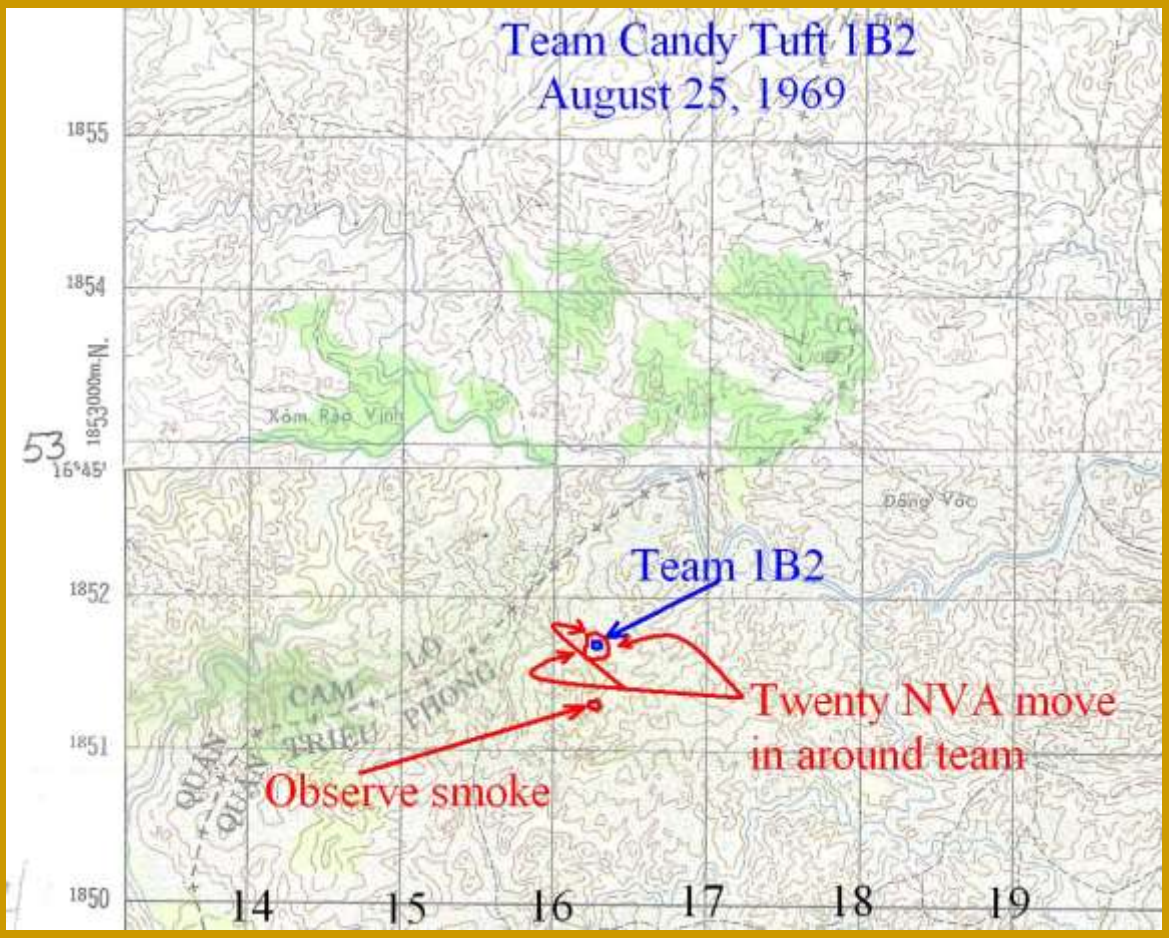
August 25, 1969

As with each day in the Nam, Recon starts it off with insert of fresh teams and the extract of teams completing their missions. With the new teams in, I plot the new and remove the extracts from the maps. The morning is going without problems as teams within their assigned recon zones patrol the jungles. The day continues.

1135 Hours; "Contact, Contact, Candy Tuft, Contact." Candy Tuft 1B2 has made contact with 20 NVA and is taking heavy small arms fire at grid YD167557. The contact is heavy and the team is requesting an AO and gunships as the team works up a fire mission in their defense.

1140 Hours; The team's arty support put rounds on the enemy but the enemy is persistent and move closer to the team's position. Now taking fire from 180 degrees the AO arrives on station. With the arty in check fire, the Air Observer makes an inbound run, in support of the team. With every dive made by the AO he takes heavy enemy fire. As the gunships take up the slack making gun runs and firing rockets in the team's aid, the AO makes a request for fixed-wing. Within minutes fixed-wing arrives on station as the team lays down a heavy base of fire repelling the strong enemy force. The AO drops out of the sky diving

toward the team firing a white phosphorous rocket to mark the enemy target for the fixed-wing air craft. As the white phosphorous rocket makes its impact, the team adjusts from its impact to the proximity of the enemy. As the AO pulls to the sky, he calls the team, “Candy Tuft Candy Tuft, get your heads down got inbound air coming in hot.” (Team) “Candy Tuft, copy.” With the jets on the inbound, the first run is Mark-82 500-pound bombs as they impact less than 200 feet from the team. Candy Tuft comes back with “you’re on ‘em Bud, get some.” Even with the close air support the team manages to get three confirmed enemy kills with small arms. With the jets now out of fuel, they are forced to depart the area. The team has been in enemy contact for almost two hours as the gunships prep the team’s perimeter for the extract. As the extract bird prepares for their inbound, the gunships move in low giving the extract bird cover fire as the chopper sets in the zone. In seconds the team is on the bird taking only light enemy fire as the bird pulls out of the hot zone. The team is out of the contact point, grid YD167557 at 1420 hours. The team is secure and will be returned to the Recon area for debriefing.



jj. OpO 2847-69 (1B2) 251410H Aug 69 (2805529Z Aug 69). At 251145H team at YD 163517 observed smoke 350 meters to the south. Team observed three enemy around camp fire. AO ran ordnance and received automatic fire. AO forced enemy toward team, team received small arms fire and automatic weapons fire. Team observed one enemy crawling in treeline. Team delivered small arms fire, resulting in one enemy KIA. Team then received small arms fire and automatic fire from estimated force of 20 enemy. AO, gunships and fixed wing ran ordnance on enemy position. Team heard numerous screams. Team observed one enemy wearing khakis and remainder wore black PJs, web gear, and carried AK-47 or SKS.

DRAFTED BY:REG:ptm
SEC S-2 PH 3D RSC 2
CWO_____

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 25/2972 AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III M.F DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV UBE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
G3V
COC

2Ø:-17

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON SPOT REPORT (IN LIEU OF DEBRIEFING) (U)

1. Recon TEAM: CANDY TUFT (1B2) (7 MEN) opo 2847
2. AT 252145H TM AT YD163517 OBS SMOKE 550 METERS SOUTH. TM OBS

(3) NVA/VC AROUND CAMP FIRE. AO ON STATION, RAN ORDNANCE AND RECEIVED SAF. AO FORCED NVA/VC TOWARD TM. TEAM REC'D SPORADIC

SAF-AWF. TM OBS (1) NVA/VC TO SW CRAWLING IN TREELIKE. TM DELIVERED SAF RESULTING IN (1) NVA/VC KIA (C). TM OBS (1) NVA/VC

TRYING TO MANEUVER CLOSE TO TM FROM THE SOUTH. TM DELIVERED SAF RESULTING IN (1) NVA/VC KIA (C)@. TM THEN RECEIVED SAF/AWF

FROM 360 DEGREES. ESTIMATED 20 NVA/VC. OV-10 AND GUNSHIPS EXPENDED ORDNANCE TO SUPPRESS FIRS AND MOVEMENT. F/W ON STATION

EXPENDED ORDNANCE ON SELECTIVE TARGETS. TM HEARD NUMEROUS SCREAMS. EXTRACT HELO(S RECEIVED FIRE ON APPROACH. TM OBS (1) NV /VC DURING

EXTRACT WHO WORE KHAKI UTILITIES & COVER. COVER HAD SIDE AND REAR FLAPS. TM DELIVERED SAF RESULTING IN (1) NVA/VC KIA (C). TM

EXTRACTED AT 251410H. EXCEPT FOR (1) NVA/VC WHO WORE KHAKI THE REMAINDER WORE BLACK PJ'S, WEBBED GEAR AND CARRIED AK-47'S OR SKS'S.

GP-4
BT

OPO 2847
CONFIDENTIAL

CCN 4155 RELEASED BY [signature] TIME 27/1151 H AUG 69

G-2 G-3/G CONFIDENTIAL

DECLASSIFIED

As the day continues, there have been no more enemy contacts with the teams in the bush and all teams are alpha sierra. With the teams soon to move into their harbor sites, another day is at a close in the Nam. Once the CO's briefing is taken care of, I will call it a day. 2145 hours.

The 26th wasn't too bad. All teams inserted and extracted have had few problems. At the end of the day, I was just sitting down to write in my diary when we started taking incoming rockets. There weren't any that landed in our area but they were close enough for us to have to take cover.

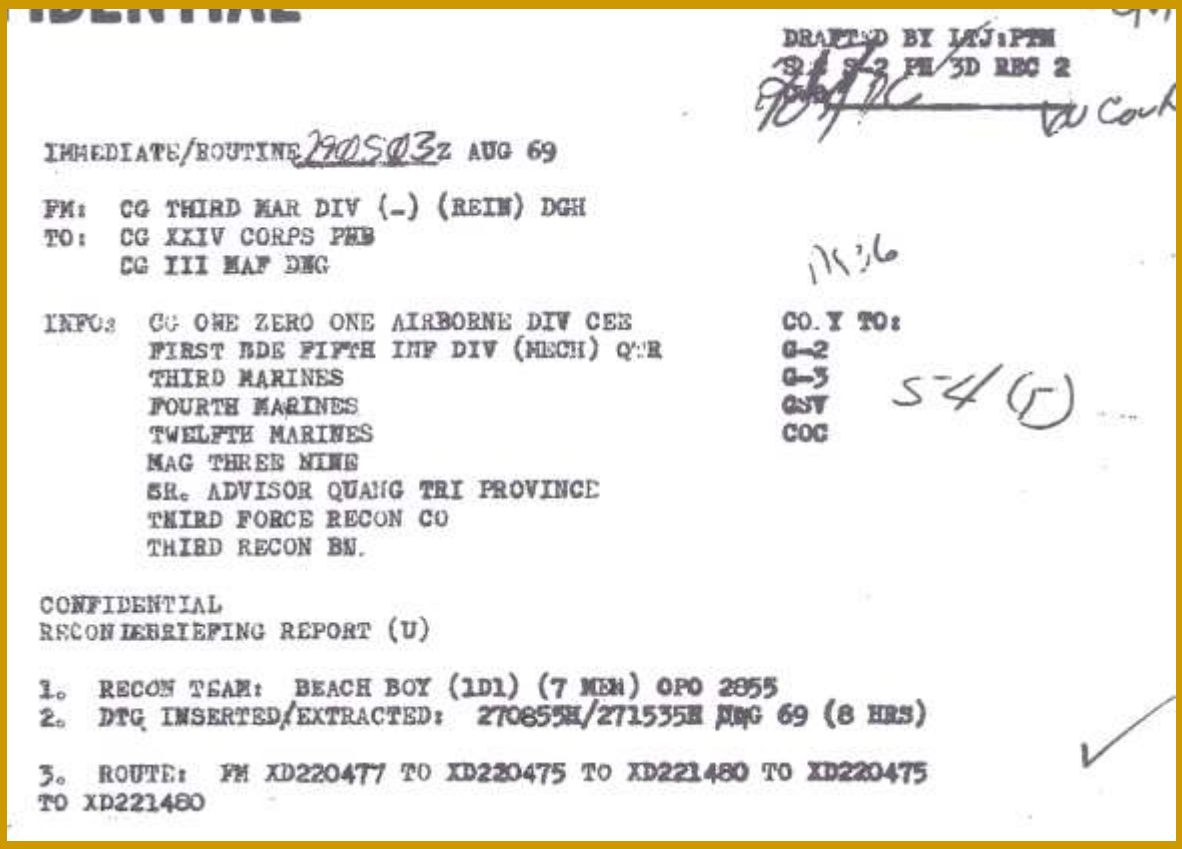
AUGUST 27, 1969

As the morning of the 27th came into play, inserts and extracts went very well. It is now 1145 hours and all teams are secure at this time.

1420 Hours; Beach Boy 1D1 is now informing the rear that the team has movement 25 meters from their position. The team is requesting an Air Observer in the team's aid. With the AO now on his way to the team's position, Beach Boy comes over the net with "Contact, Contact, Beach Boy Contact, taking fire." Estimate 10 NVA at grid YD220475 and still taking fire. As the AO comes on station the team briefs the eye in the sky. The AO drops in for a closer view and takes heavy automatic enemy fire. The AO has made a request for fixed-wing support that is now en-route to the contact grid. As the team battles the advancing enemy force, before the fixed-wing is on station, the team has made two confirmed enemy kills and the fire fight is heavy. When the jets arrive on station, the AO drops out of the sky to mark the enemy target

for the jets above. Run after run was made in the team's support to hold the enemy at bay. With two flights of fixed-wing making runs around the team's position, gunships and extract birds are prepared to take the team out. As gunships drop into the team's zone to cover the extract bird, it swoops into the hot LZ. Within seconds the team is on the bird as door gunners and teammates shoot their way out of the landing zone. Once the bird and team are out of the LZ, gunships cover the contact point with rockets and 7.62 machine guns. With all team members secure, the team will be taken back to Quang Tri Recon area for debriefing. 1630 Hours.

The following is the report of that mission;



DRAFTED BY LTJ:PTM
3D RECON

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 270503Z AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QNR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN.

CO.Y TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: BEACH BOY (1D1) (7 MEN) OPO 2855
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 270855H/271535H AUG 69 (8 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM XD220477 TO XD220475 TO XD221480 TO XD220475 TO XD221480

4. TERRAIN: FLAT WITH NO COVER. CONCEALMENT LIMITED EXCEPT ALONG STREAM BANKS. RATE OF MOVEMENT UNLIMITED. ONE TRAIL FOLLOWS STREAM.

TRAIL APPEARSD TO HAVE LIGHT USE.
5. MMZ'S: SITE AT XD220477 IS A PLAIN WITH LOW HILLS. IT WILL

ACCOMODATE 100+ CH-46'S.
6. ENEMY: 271000H TM AT XD220475 HEARD MOV'T OF 1-2 NVA/VC (30)

METERS TO SOUTH. CALLED AO. AO MADE STRAFING RUNS. TM OBSD SMALL ARMS ~~FIRES~~ COOK-OFFS. TM MOVED 20 METERS TO E.AT 271300H

TM HEARD MOV'T 2-3 NVA 35-40 METERS TO E. TM CALLED AO. WHILE TM WAS TRYING TO CONTACT AO, TM OBS 2 NVA/VC W/BLACK PJ'S, SKS'S, NO

WEB GEAR, NO COVERS. 271315H TM OBS 1 NVA/VC IN BUNKER 30 M TO S. AO MADE STRAFING RUNS. TM OBSERVED 1 NVA/VC 30 METERS TO N, CARRYING

SKS AND WEARING US WEB GEAR. ENEMY INITIATED CONTACT WITH TM.

G-2/G-3/CSV/COC

RESULTING IN 1 NVA/VC KIA. TM THEN OBSERVED 3 NVA/VC 30 METERS TO E. IN BUNKER. NVA/VC INITIATED CONTACT. TM RETURNED FIRE RESULTING IN

3 NVA/VC KIA. REMAINING 2 NVA/VC FLED TO S. TM RECEIVED SAF FROM NE. 2 NVA/VC RETURNED FROM S TO RETRIEVE NVA BODY IN RIVER. AO

RAN A/S AND TM FIRED W/NEGATIVE RESULTS. 271530H TM TRIED TO RETRIEVE BODY IN BUNKER AND RECEIVED FIRE FROM S. TM MOVED TO XD221480. F/W.

AO AND GUNSHIPS DELIVERED ORDNANCE FROM E TO W, 150-200 METERS SOUTH OF TM. TM MOVED BACK TO BUNKERS TO GET BODY AT 220475. AT THIS TIME

TM RECEIVD HEAVY SAF AND POSSIBLE MG FIRE FROM UNKNOWN SIZE NVA/VC FORCE. FIRE WAS FROM APPROX 30 METERS TO S, 40-45 METERS TO W, 40

METERS TO NE. TM PULLED BACK TO XD221480 AND FW RAN A/S ON BODIES AND ENEMY PSN. ~~FW~~-10 AND GUNSHIPS DELIVERED ORDNANCE. 271635H TM WAS

EXTRACTED. HELO RECEIVED LIGHT SAF.
7. OTHER INFO: NEGATIVE.

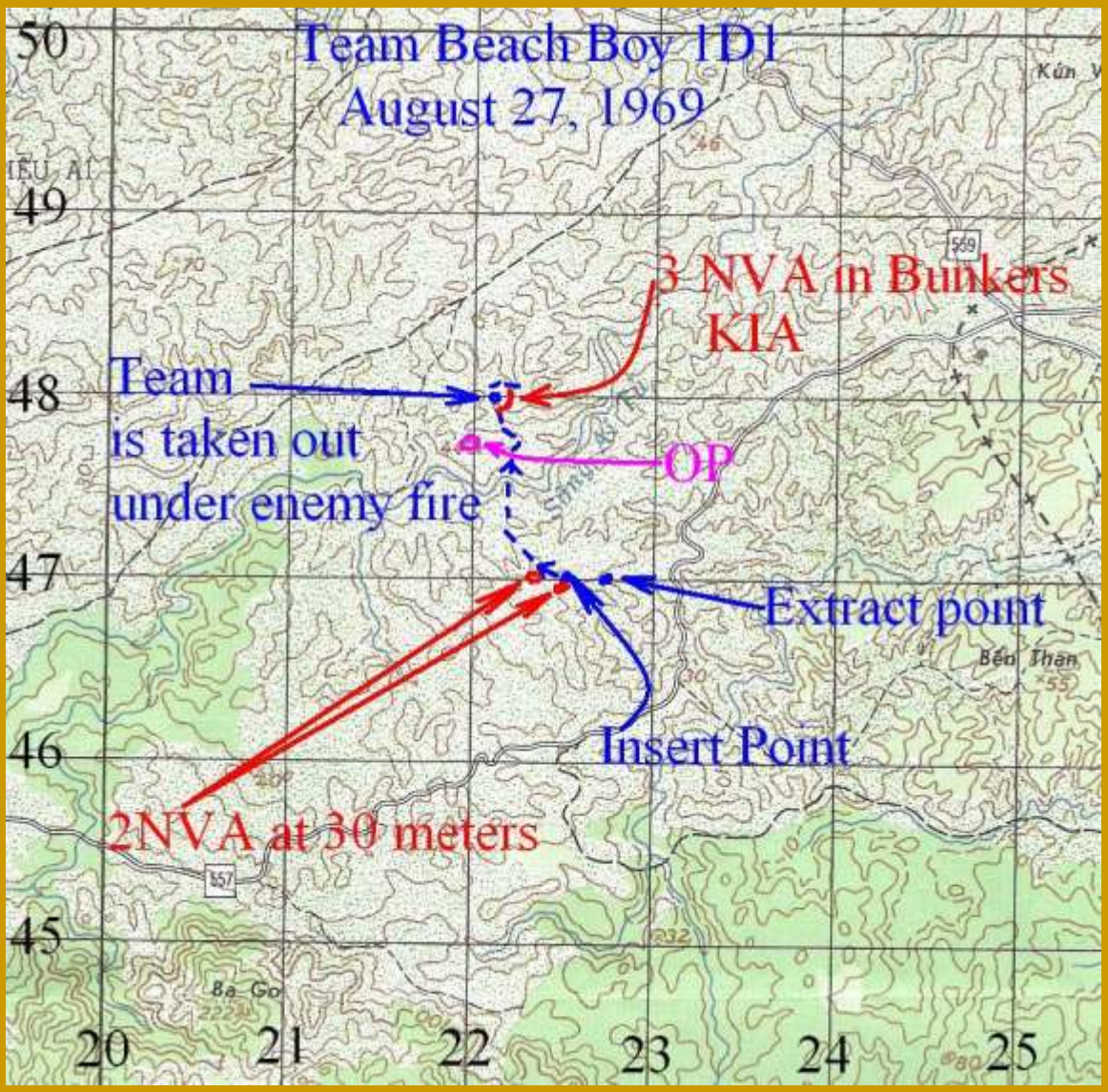
GP-4 OPO 2855

ET CONFIDENTIAL

CCN 4324 RELEASED BY [signature] TIM: 281840 H AU 69

qq. OpO 2855-69 (1D1) 271535H Aug 69 (290505Z Aug 69). 271000H team at XD 220475 heard movement of 1-2 enemy 30 meters to their south. AO came on station and made straffing runs. Team observed small arms rounds cook-off. Team moved to the east twenty meters at 271300H team heard movement of 2-5 enemy with black PJs, SKS, no web gear, no covers. 271315H Team observed one enemy in bunker 30 meters to east. AO made straffing runs. Team observed one enemy 30 meters to north carrying an SKS and web gear. Enemy initiated contact with team resulting in one enemy KIA. Team then observed three enemy 30 meters to east, the team exchanged fire with these enemy, resulting in three enemy KIA. Remaining enemy fled south. Team received small arms fire

Enclosure (1)



AUGUST 29, 1969

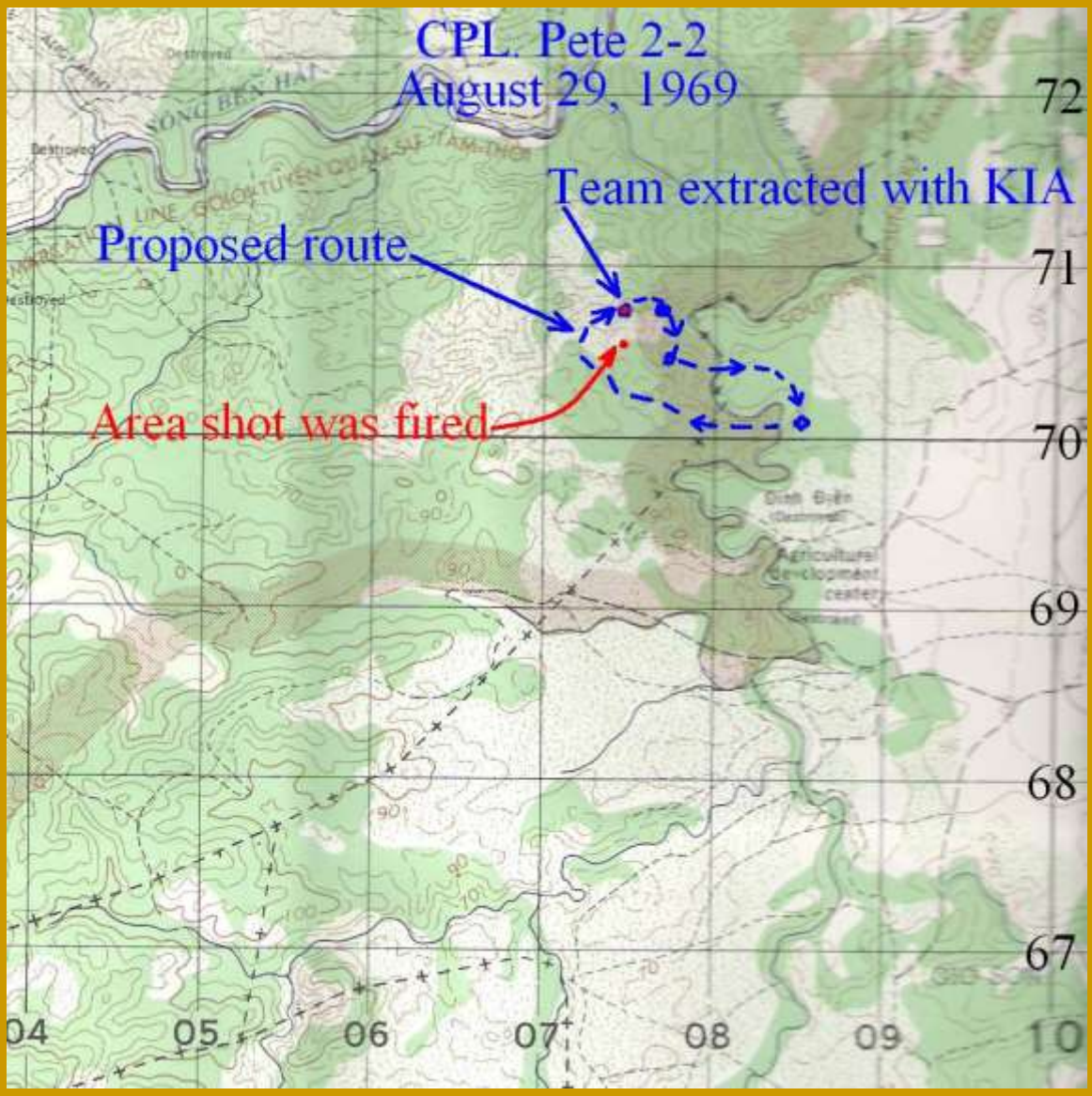
After spending the day of the 28th in Dong Ha, upon my return I have found out that one of the Force teams had made contact while in the DMZ. The team was able to make one confirmed enemy kill. After a short fire fight with the enemy, the team was able to break contact continuing their mission. All team members are secure having had no more enemy sightings or contacts.

With the 29th now underway, inserts and extracts are going as planned. There have been no problems at this time and all teams working are secure within their assigned recon zones.

0845 Hours; Contact Corporal Pete. After a few moments of silence, the team comes back with the shattering words, “be advised we have one, I say one KIA.” Corporal Pete is not taking fire at the present time believing their team member was hit by sniper fire. With AO and extract birds now on the way, the team is in a more defendable position awaiting their medivac. It was my understanding the team member was William Nelms and he will be a great loss to the men of recon.

0930 Hours; With AO and gunships overhead the extract bird drops into the team’s landing zone. Gunships cover the team and extract choppers in the zone. Corporal Pete is taken out with their dead teammate. The deceased recon marine will be taken to Quang Tri Medical Graves Registration while the team will proceed to the debriefing.

The following is the report of that mission;



oo. Op0 2853-69 (2-?) 290930H Aug 69 (300501Z Aug 69). At YD 076709 at 250900H team heard one distant rifle shot. Team member was hit in the chest and become a USMC KIA. Team believed shot came from south approximately 400 meters. Team called AO and ran OV-10 ordnance on suspected enemy position Team then received small arms fire from south. AO ran fixed wing and team was extracted.

SECRET

DRAFTED BY: [illegible]
SEC S-2 3d FORCE REC 2

IMMED DTG/ROUTINE 300501Z AUG 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG CMC ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CHS
FIRST BDE FIFTH MEF DIV (MECH) QNR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
NINE MARINES KING
SPL. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN.
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
G-4
COC

SECRET
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: CPL PETE (2-2) (6-MEN) CPO 2855
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 271000H/290950H AUG 69 (46-HOURS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD085701 TO YD015705 TO YD077708 TO YD076709.
4. TARRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS WITH THICK UNDERBRUSH RATE OF MOVEMENT.

50-75 METERS PER HOUR; GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD076706 WILL ACCOMODATE (1) CH-46. SITE IS HILLTOP

WITH 6' TO 8' FEET ELEPHANT GRASS. BEST APPROACH 360 DEGREES WITH NO OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: AT YD076709 WHILE TEAM WAS ON SECURITY STOP AT 290900H TEAM HEARD

(1) RIFLE SHOT, TEAM MEMBER WAS HIT, RESULT (1) USMC KIA. TEAM BELIEVED SHOT CAME FROM SOUTH APPROX. 400 METERS. TEAM CALLED AO ON STATION AND AO RAN OV-10

ORDNANCE ON SUSPECTED ENEMY POSITION. TEAM THEN RECEIVED SAF FROM SOUTH. AO RAN FIXED WING ON AREA AND TEAM WAS EXTRACTED ON 290950H AT YD076709.

GP-4
EF

SECRET
CPO 2855

CCN 4424 RELEASED BY [signature] TIME 291700H AUG 69

G-2/G-3/GSU/COC
300501
BdReconBn S/C No. 4195-69
Copy 5 of 5
5 of 5
6

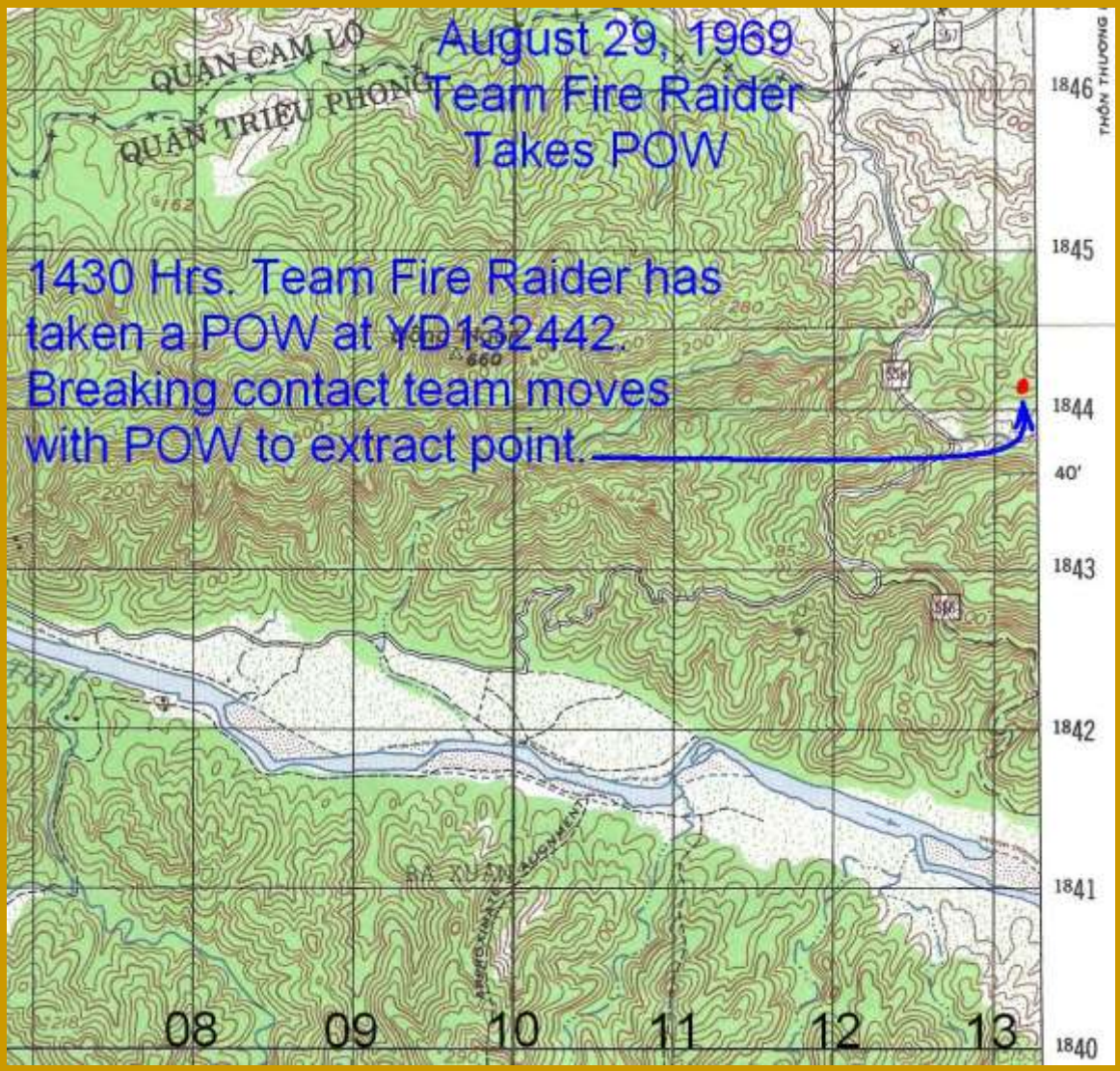
SECRET

DECLASSIFIED

With the morning now over, teams are now boot within their assigned recon zones. Just when you think the day might change to be halfway decent, the shit hits the fan again.

1430 Hours; Team Fire Raider has movement. The team is located at grid YD132442. In minutes Fire raider is informing the rear they have taken one POW. At that time the team has requested an extract. With birds now on the way to the team's position, the enemy is now closing in on the team's position.

1440 Hours: Fire Raider Contact, taking small arms fire. As the team lays down heavy fire on the enemy, the team is able to break contact with the enemy and is now boot with their prisoner. The gunships come on station and the team is now in a secure landing zone as gunships prep the team's perimeter. Ch-46s waste no time dropping into the team's LZ with the support of gunships. In seconds the team, along with POW are on the birds and out of the zone. The POW will be taken to the prisoner compound and the team will be returned to recon for debriefing. All team members and chopper crew are secure.



The rest of the day went without incident and with teams now beginning to move into their harbor sites, the day is at a close. 2238 Hours.

AUGUST 30, 1969

With morning inserts and extracts over the day is moving fast. Now into the afternoon things in the bush start to go bad.

1155 Hours; Team Grass Hopper is in contact and exchanging fire. The team has made a point-to-point contact with four NVA. It is not known if the team has made any confirmed kills but is taking fire at this time. With an AO now on station, Grass Hopper has managed to break enemy contact and is moving out of the area. The AO checks out the area and it would appear at this time the NVA have also moved away from the team. With no enemy fire being taken, Grass Hopper is alpha sierra and continues their mission.

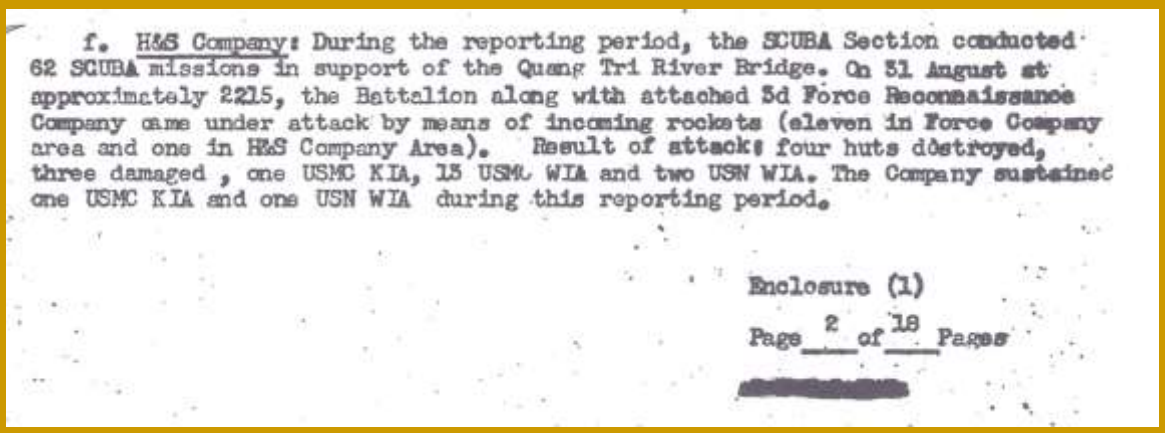
The remainder of the day held no more enemy contacts within the bush for the teams on patrol. At this time all teams are secure. I hope the night goes okay for Grass Hopper. I've been in the same spot they are in now and there is always that thought in the back of your head: Has the enemy followed you and will they hit you tonight? To say the least, it's not something a team looks forward to. With the day now at a close all teams are secure. 2200 hours.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1969

Today is the start of a new month. I would like to think days in the future could be better but I know that's not going to happen. Last night tells me we may be in for a hell of a month. For the Marines in the bush as well as in the rear, it is a day-to-day experience of not knowing when your number is up.

At 2205 hours last night, the screams of incoming could be heard as enemy rockets dropped into the company area. I, along with the rest of the men in my hooch were out the door and making it to the bunker. While inside the bunker it wasn't hard to tell where the first two rockets hit. I knew they were in the Force Recon area. The NVA had adjusted their fire and started walking the rockets into our area. Once

in the bunker it was dark and hard to see if everyone was safely in. As the rockets started coming into our area, I was thinking, oh shit, they were on us. Then there was an impact at a hundred meters, then fifty meters. I knew the next one would hit us. I felt it. Damn, man that one had to have been at ten feet. Everyone's ears just got blown off their heads. I couldn't hear shit. Then more rockets. Two more were close but I could hear them moving away from our bunker. Man, the one landing outside our bunker felt like a direct hit. It had some of the guys in the bunker praying like there will be no tomorrow. Sometimes it's difficult to keep the faith when you are constantly surrounded by death. Everyone wants to go home alive but it just is not going to happen that way. This place is like gambling, you're either lucky or not. Death has no sympathy on any soul in his path. If you are there, you are his. One can only hope that death comes on fast. With the all clear sounded, everyone is out of the bunker to see who has been hurt. Once out, I see that the rocket landed only 18 feet from our bunker entrance. We were lucky, but others were not. I was right about the first two in the Force Recon area. The first or second rocket made a direct hit in the Force area resulting in 14 wounded for Force Recon. The battalion area also had a direct hit. It was at the switchboard operator's position. I didn't know the man but later was told he was Eugene Hunt from H&S Company. I feel much sorrow for him. This man knowing the situation stood his post informing people of the incoming rounds. It is heroes of this caliber that make up this unit. They are truly the bravest of men. The 11 rockets that landed in our area caused much destruction.



f. H&S Company: During the reporting period, the SCUBA Section conducted 62 SCUBA missions in support of the Quang Tri River Bridge. On 31 August at approximately 2215, the Battalion along with attached 3d Force Reconnaissance Company came under attack by means of incoming rockets (eleven in Force Company area and one in H&S Company Area). Result of attack: four huts destroyed, three damaged , one USMC KIA, 15 USMC WIA and two USN WIA. The Company sustained one USMC KIA and one USN WIA during this reporting period.

Enclosure (1)

Page 2 of 18 Pages

The inserts and extracts of the day go without incident, all teams are secure.

With much work to be done in the company area the day moves very fast and closes with all teams secure. 2240 Hours.

SEPTEMBER 2, 1969

0630 Hours; As heavy rain pours down there will be no inserts or extracts due to all aircraft being on weather hold until further notice. The teams in the bush will have to hold on until the weather breaks. The word has come down there is a typhoon on its way and will hit the coast within the hour. At this time all teams are alpha sierra but waterlogged. Winds are at 50 miles an hour and are expected to increase. I feel for the teams in the bush especially the ones that were to be taken out today. If this typhoon is anything like last year's, lasting ten days, the teams are in a world of shit. There may be some teams that could walk out of the bush to friendly bases. Unfortunately, most are so deep into enemy territory it would most surely cost them their lives to attempt such a feat. I know that teams that were to be taken out today are low on food. We're hoping the typhoon will blow itself out. We will keep a close watch on any changes in the weather, advising the teams on the weather situation.

0930 Hours; The typhoon is at our doorstep and weather reports have informed all units that winds have been clocked at 60 miles an hour with gusts as high as 95. So far it has blown the roofs off some of the hooches. Right now, due to the weather, our communications with teams in the bush is poor. We still have communication with all teams at this time but most transmissions are garbled. All anyone can do is just wait till it blows out of here.

As the day closes, we have been given good news. The weather station is telling us we were hit by the tail end of the typhoon and there is a strong possibility it will blow out of our area very soon.

With the close of the day all teams are secure and soaked to the bone. 2235 hours.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1969

It is 0500 hours and they were right. Most of the bad weather is out of here. There is still some light rain with low clouds. Inserts and extractions that are close will start first and as the weather clears, extracting teams in the mountains will then get underway.

The radio operators have worked their asses off today. All teams have been inserted without any problems. Extracts also went very well and I am sure they are glad to be back in the rear. Today there were 11 inserts and nine extracts. All teams are secure at this time. 1850 hours.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1969

Man, what a night! More bad dreams. During the dream it seemed that no matter how hard I tried to evade the enemy, I was constantly

getting spotted and shot at. It felt like I was on the run for most of the night. Nights like that make for a hard day.

Once at the COC, a few cups of Major B's coffee will help me stay awake. With inserts and extracts now underway, the day moves very fast. I'm worn out and I'm glad to see the day is ending and hope that I can get some decent sleep. All teams working are secure at this time. 1600 hours.

1710 Hours; It is a whisper over the radio. "Foxtrot—Fire Raider, be advised we have movement, 20 meters." "Roger, Fire Raider I copy." "Fire Raider this is Foxtrot, do you copy? "Foxtrot...Contact, Fire Raider…taking heavy fire, ChiCom's, and RPG's. The team relays that they have taken one WIA. As the team sets up a fire mission, shots are out. When the patrol's radio handset is depressed, you can hear not only the loud impacts of the artillery rounds but heavy gun fire as well. As the team makes every effort to hold the enemy at bay, AO and gunships are five minutes away. Five minutes in the jungles with approximately 40 NVA around your position is forever. You're only six to eight men with the odds against you. You have one wounded man with the enemy firing rocket propelled grenades, throwing ChiCom's and firing heavy small arms at you. With the enemy at only 20 meters or less, the team has the arty right on top of them. When in heavy enemy contact arty is very important. With Recon Marines it is their only chance to make it out alive. It's not that the artillery rounds are landing right on your position, it's more like fifty to sixty meters away, (100 to 150 feet). It's, take your chances from friendly fire or just let the enemy kill your ass. Arty at danger close range is similar to thunder right outside your door, just multiply the noise ten times. Several arty rounds at sixty meters, takes staying power on the enemy's part.

1730 Hours. Fire Raider, still in heavy enemy contact welcomes the gunships from above. The team informs the gunships they are taking fire from more than 270 degrees. With a check fire on the arty, the gunships drop in around the team with guns blazing in their support.

“Foxtrot – Fire Raider, be advised we have another WIA. I say at this time we have two, two WIA’s, one very serious, taking more ChiCom’s at this time.” With the team returning fire and alternating throwing grenades to hold the enemy back, the situation deteriorates rapidly in favor of the enemy and the team requests for a reaction force to be sent to their aid. As the team’s Corpsman makes all attempts to take care of the wounded, the team continues to be in heavy contact as it awaits reinforcements.

1750 Hours; The reaction force is now airborne and will be at the team’s position as soon as possible.

1825 Hours; The reaction force goes inbound as the team continues to barely hold their own. The reaction force has landed very close to the team and is now moving to the team’s position. The team scans the area for their reinforcements.

1855 Hours; Once the reaction force has the team in sight, they are also now taking enemy fire. As the reaction force links with the team, both reaction force and team are under heavy enemy fire. The gunships make run after run around the team’s position and the enemy are held back as a landing zone is set up to take the wounded out. With gunships dropping in above the team’s position in support of the extract bird, the wounded are taken out. The remaining team members and reaction force sets up a three-sixty perimeter, holding their

position. With darkness falling on the force, they will hold this location until morning at which time they will be extracted. 1955 hours.

We will have our fingers crossed for the reaction force and team. With the wounded taken to Quang Tri Medical, Fire Raider and all teams working are alpha sierra at this time. As the day closed, we have been informed the second man wounded could lose his foot above the ankle as a result of the enemy fire the team had taken. All I can say is these brave men are paying a terrible price. I hope their efforts in the larger scope of things are worth it. 2245 hours.

SEPTEMBER 5, 1969

It is 0430 hours as we wait for first light. Team Fire Raider and the reaction force have made it through the night. Once first light comes, the area will be checked for enemy casualties.

It is not until 1100 hours that team Fire Raider and their reaction force are taken out. All other inserts and extracts have gone without incident today.

Shortly after Fire Raider and the reaction force were taken out, team Clemson Song was inserted into the area. Good luck Clemson Song. All teams remain secure at this time.

1910 Hours; Team Dock Leaf 2A1 has made contact with five NVA while moving into their harbor site. After exchanging fire, the team has broken contact. As Dock Leaf moves out of the area, the NVA do the same. With no time to lose, Dock leaf locates another harbor site and is waiting to move in under the full cover of darkness.


ỌC KỈNH
700
701
702
703
704
55'
705
706
707
Team Dock Leaf 2A1
September 5 to 7 1969
Thôn Miên Hoàn
(destroyed)
Thôn Hưng Cát
(destroyed)
Thôn Cu Ho
Thôn Thượng Nghĩa
(destroyed)
52
51
50
49
48
47
46
Núi Bà Hỏ
CAM NGHĨA
Inserted
NVA Gun fire &
Chi Com grenade
Extracted
Proposed route
Khe Mèo
Thôn Khe Xèng
Đồng Toàn
556

DRAFTED BY: CJL:pbm
SEC S-2 PH 3D REC'2
C&O

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 140-132 SEP 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (REIN)
TO: CG XXIV CORPS (PHB)
CG III MAF (DNG)

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV (REIN)
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) (TR)
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
BSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: DOCKLEAF (2A1) (6 MEN) OPO 626-D-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 050930H/071215H SEP 69 (48 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FR YD024497 TO YD020497 TO YD024496 TO YD028491
4. TERRAIN: STEEP HILLS COVERED BY THICK UNDERGROWTH AND

TRIPLE CANOPY. GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT. RATE OF MOVEMENT 75-100 METERS PER HOUR. OP AT YD024497 OBS 180° NW-NE. TRAILS

AT YD023497 1½ METERS WIDE, WELL WORN, NW-SE. NO RECENT USE. TRAIL AT YD027498 1 METER WIDE, FORKS AT YD029498. N-S, E-W.

5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD028491 WILL ACCOMODATE (1) UH-1E. HLZ IS A BOMB CRATER ON A FINGER. APPROACH FROM E°W WITH TREES 15-20' HIGH

N, S, & W OF LZ. SITE AT YD024497 WILL ACCOMODATE 1 (ONE) UH-1E. HLZ IS A HILLTOP COVERED BY 4-6' UNDERGROWTH. APPROACH FROM NE-SW WITH

TREES 20-30' HIGH S OF LZ
6. ENEMY: 051900H WHILE TM WAS MOVING TO HARBOR SITE REC'D (1) CHICOM

GRENADE AT YD027493 . REAR SECURITY FIRED SAF IN DIRECTION GRENADE CAME FM. AFTER EXPLOSION TM FIRED SAF AND REC'D 10 RNDS AK-47 FIRE.

TM MOVED 100 METERS NE WHILE TM WAS MOVING THEY OBS (2) NVA/VC 40 METERS TO N. TM FIRED SA AND THREW ONE GRENADE. TM COULD NO LONGER

CONFIDENTIAL

SEE OR HEAR ENEMY. TM MOVED TO BOMB CRATER AT YD029491. TM HEARD HEAVY MOV'T TO N AND W OF 6-7 ENEMY, 15-20 METERS AWAY. TM

CALLED FIRE MSN AND HEARD TALKING, YELLING AND CLICKING SOUNDS. HEARD 3 SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS TO W CAUSED BY ARTY. TM OBS 4-5 NVA/VC

WEARING KHAKI UNIFORES, BUSH HATS, CAOUFLAGED OR DIRTY FACES, CARRYING AK-47'S, OTHER EQUIPMENT UNKNOWN. RESULTS : UNK ON ARTY, 3 NVA/VC

KIA AT YD027490. TM MOVED TO YD029491 AND HARBORED. TM EXTRACTED AT 071215H WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT.

7. OTHE. INFO: NEGATIVE

OP-4

OPO 620-D-69

BT

CONFIDENTIAL

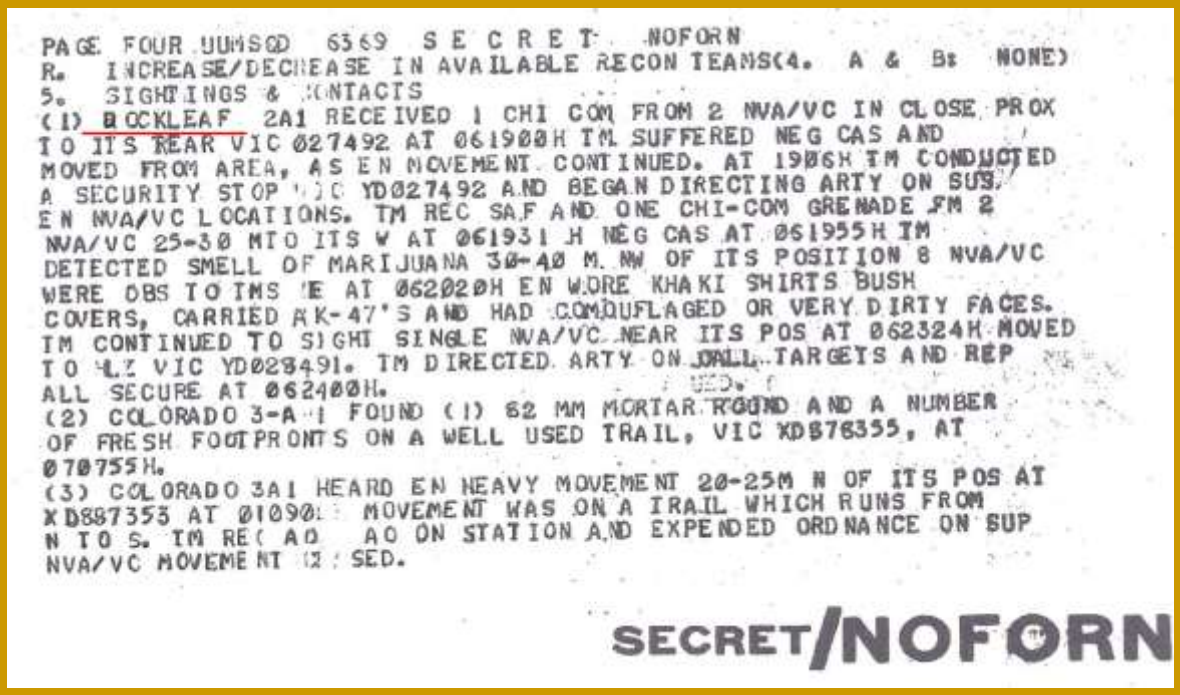
CCN_____ RELEASED BY_____ TIME_____ H SEP 69

5. SIGHTINGS AND CONTACTS:

& 1. Dockley 2A1 received one chi-com grenade from 2 NVA/VC in close proximity to its NDP VIC. 027492 at 061900H. Team suffered negative casualties and moved from area as enemy movement continued. At 1905 team conducted a security stop VIC. YD027492 and began directing artillery on suspected NVA/VC locations. Team received small arms fire and 1 chi-com grenade from 2 NVA/VC 25 to 30 meters to its west at 061931 H. Negative Casualties. At 061955 team detected the smell of marihuana

DECLASSIFIED

Dockley 2A1 VIC YD027492 experienced several incidents with NVA/VC between 1900 and 2400H. Detailed report to follow on NCD 24 HR sit rep.



PAGE FOUR UUMSGD 6369 S E C R E T NOFORN
R. INCREASE/DECREASE IN AVAILABLE RECON TEAMS(4. A & B: NONE)
5. SIGHTINGS & CONTACTS
(1) BOCKLEAF 2A1 RECEIVED 1 CHI COM FROM 2 NVA/VC IN CLOSE PROX TO ITS REAR VIC 027492 AT 061900H TM SUFFERED NEG CAS AND MOVED FROM AREA, AS EN MOVEMENT CONTINUED. AT 1906H TM CONDUCTED A SECURITY STOP VIC YD027492 AND BEGAN DIRECTING ARTY ON SUS. EN NVA/VC LOCATIONS. TM REC SAF AND ONE CHI-COM GRENADE FM 2 NVA/VC 25-30 MTO ITS W AT 061931 H NEG CAS AT 061955H TM DETECTED SMELL OF MARIJUANA 30-40 M. NW OF ITS POSITION 8 NVA/VC WERE OBS TO TMS E AT 062020H EN WORE KHAKI SHIRTS BUSH COVERS, CARRIED AK-47'S AND HAD CAMOUFLAGED OR VERY DIRTY FACES. TM CONTINUED TO SIGHT SINGLE NVA/VC NEAR ITS POS AT 062324H MOVED TO LZ VIC YD028491. TM DIRECTED ARTY ON 20ALL TARGETS AND REP ALL SECURE AT 062400H.
(2) COLORADO 3-A-1 FOUND (1) 82 MM MORTAR ROUND AND A NUMBER OF FRESH FOOTPRONTS ON A WELL USED TRAIL, VIC XD876355, AT 070755H.
(3) COLORADO 3A1 HEARD EN HEAVY MOVEMENT 20-25M N OF ITS POS AT XD887353 AT 01090[illegible] MOVEMENT WAS ON A TRAIL WHICH RUNS FROM N TO S. TM REC AO AO ON STATION AND EXPENDED ORDNANCE ON SUP NVA/VC MOVEMENT [illegible]SED.

SECRET/NOFORN

Once all teams were in their harbor sites, the day is at a close and all teams are secure at this time. As soon as I finish briefing the CO, my workday will be finished and I'll try to get some sleep.

On September 6, 1969 the day was very busy. After morning location plots of the teams, the day has many other jobs like working in S-2 or S-3, and in the afternoon, that damn jeep. Once back at the COC I was beat but had to check the teams and get the briefing ready for tonight.

1740 Hours; Recon team Payable has called in and made a report that their Kit Carson Scout (A Vietnamese) has overheard a conversation on the radio of a rocket attack. It appears it is planned for after 2200 hours. With the team close to Quang Tri and Dong Ha, notification of the situation has been passed on and all within radio range will prepare in case the enemy attacks. The following is the report of that mission;

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

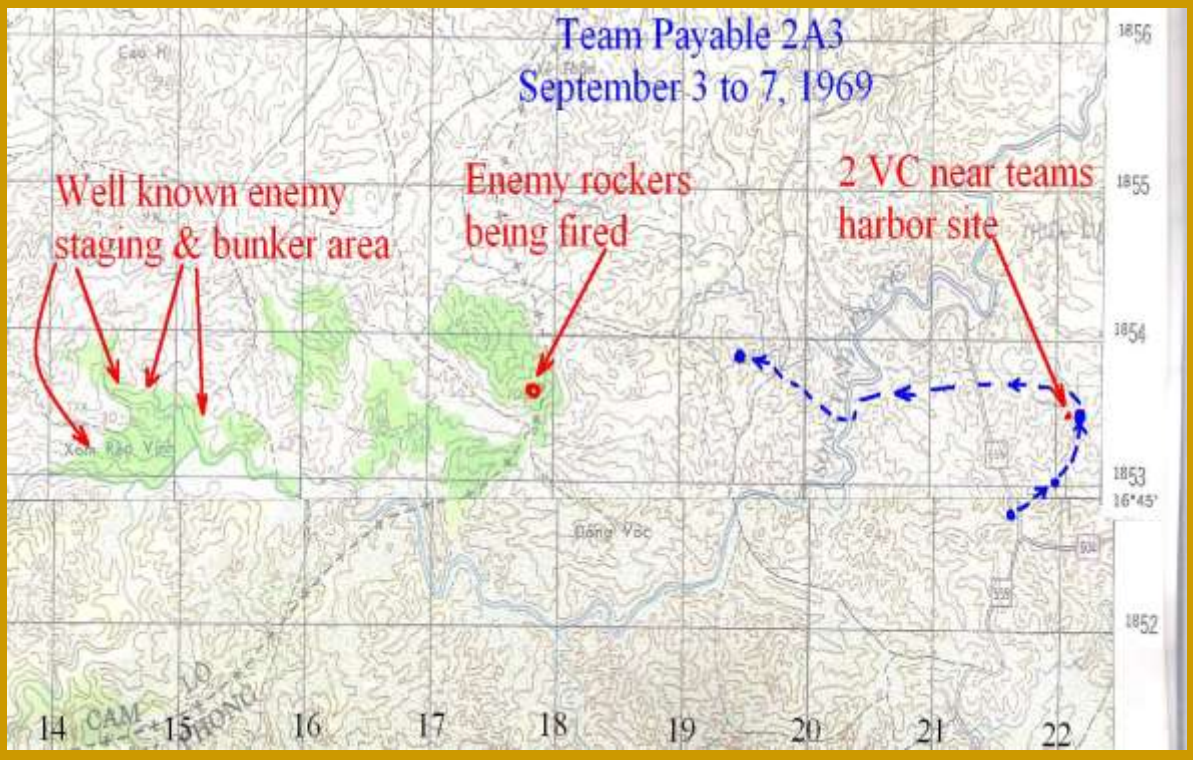
Payable 2AB reported on the afternoon of 06 September that its Kit Carson scout had interpreted NVA/VC radio transmissions which indicated a rocket attack on the night of 06 September. The target of the attack could not be identified. During the evening of 06 September, music was heard on the radio frequency of Payable. The scout reported he had heard the same music on the radio prior to other incoming attacks on this area. At 070115H Dong Ha received 8 140mm rockets.

PAG FIVE UNSCD 5369 S E C R E T NOFORN
(4) LUCKY PUNCH 3B WITH A HIGH POWERED SCOPE OBS 5-10 NVA MOVING FROM N T O S ON AND NEAR THE AIRSTRIP AT XD848419 AT 071600. ALL WORE GREEN UTILITIES AND HELMETS. NO WEAPONS WERE OBS 81 MM MORTAR MISSION FIRED ON AREA RESULTING IN (3) NVA /VC KIA(C) , (2) PROBALE NVA/VC KIA, AND (2) SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS MISSION UNCOVERED (1) BNKER 7' HIGH AND 15' WIDE. 2- NVA/VC WEARING DARK UTILITIES WERE OBS NEAR THE BUNKER WEAPONS PREVENTED IMMEDIATE ACTION AIR ATTACKS ON BNKER HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED.

6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: PAYABLE 2A3 REPORTED ON THE AFTERNOON OF 6 SEP THAT CIS KIT CARSON HAD INTERPRETED NVA/VC TRANMISSION WHICH INDICATED A ROCKET ATTACK ON THE NIGHT OF 6 SEP THE TARGET OF THE ATTACK COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED. DURING EVENING OF (6) SEP MISIC WAS HEARD ON THE RADIO FREQUENCY OF PAYABLE. SCOUT REPORTED HE HAD HEARD SAME MUSIC ON THE RADIO PRIOR TO OTHER INCOMING ATTACKS ON THIS AREA.

GP-4
BT
6369

SECRET/NOFO



DRAFTED BY:RJA:pmm
SEC S2 PH 3D REC 2
CWO_____

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 110511Z SEP 50

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEF
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: PAYABLE (2A3) (3A3) (6 MEN) OPO 2879
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 031725H/071630H SEP 69 (96 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD216529 TO YD220530 TO YD195539
4. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS COVERED BY 3-5' ELEPHANT GRASS.

POOR COVER AND CONCEALMENT. UNLIMITED RATE OF MOVEMENT. GOOD NUMEROUS OP SITES W/360° OBS. WATER AND TRAILS AS ON MAP.

5. HLZ'S: ENTIRE RZ.
6. ENEMY: 032030H AT YD224535 SCOUT AND CORPSMAN WERE PUTTING

OUT CLAYMORES AND OBS 2 NVA/VC WALKING FROM S-N. EN FLED TO NORTH AFTER EXCHANGE OF FIRE. TM SEARCHED AREA T FIRST LIGHT WITH NEG RESULTS.

042215H WHILE IN NIGHTS PSN, TM OBS PROBABLE RKTS BEING LAUNCHED FM VIC YD177536. 061500H WHILE ON OP, NVA CAME UP ON TEARS FREQ AND

KCS MONITORED THEIR CONVERSATION. THE KCS WAS ABLE TO PIECE TOGETHER A SYSTEM OF FIRE (BRACKETING THE TARGET) AND RECOGNIZED A SONG PLAYED

OVER THE RADIO WHICH INDICATED THAT A PARTICULAR AREA WAS TO BE ATTACKED DURING THE NIGHT OF THE 6TH.

7. OTHER INFO: NEGATIVE

GP-4 OPO 2879

BT CONFIDENTIAL

CCN_____RELEASED BY_____TIME_____H SEP 69

On the 16th of September Bravo Company is at a great loss. A man named Jack Harris was killed. Any time a team member is lost from any company we are all saddened. He will be forever in our minds.

SEPTEMBER 17, 1969

The past few days have been good to the men of 3rd Recon except for the rocket incoming on the 13th at 2135 hours. Recon Battalion area took five incoming rockets but we were lucky, no one was hurt. On the 14th, three days ago at about 2200 hours, some gooks were close enough to fire AK-47 and M-2 small arms into the company area but again no one was hurt. You could hear the rounds cracking through the hooches, and we were all doing a little low crawl but what the hell, we are alive.

Taking the small arms fire takes me back before I even came to Vietnam. I had just gotten out of boot camp and was home on leave when I met a Combat Vet named Charlie Blu. He had been wounded badly while in country, losing both legs. I will never forget what he told me: “when you hear the bullets cracking over your head like a bull whip, you better move son, they know right where you are.” Well, he was right.

The best thing that has happened is the teams out in the bush have had few contacts and haven’t taken any casualties. We have also heard rumors of more troop pullouts. The talk of troop and radio relay pullouts just seems wrong. There hasn’t been any final word from the CO so until I hear it straight from him, it remains scuttlebutt. I just can’t

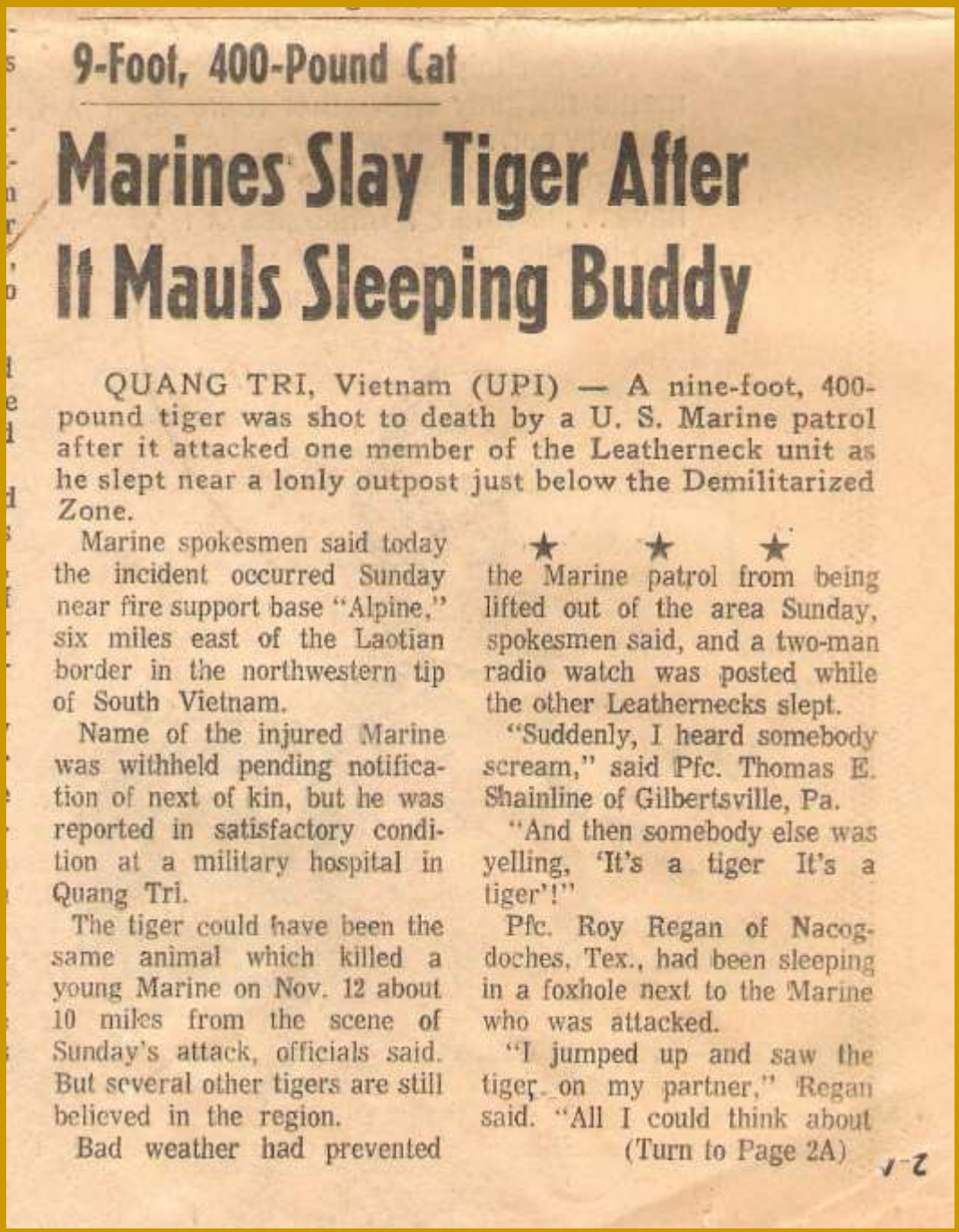
believe that this whole effort has been for nothing. I feel like all those who were killed and wounded will not get their justice. I got no problem with going back to the bush. I say bomb the hell out of them in the North and let's stop jacking around. Do the same to the North just as they did the French at Dien Bien Phu, hit 'em day and night until they give up or die.

As the day continues, everyone in the COC is hard at work. Gunney Goolden keeps an eye on the troops, helping with any problems. I don't know much about the Gunney, but do know he was with Charlie Company for a while and before that had done a tour with the grunts. All I know is he sure works his ass off down here. I remember back in 1968 when his brother, Dick Goolden, was attacked by a tiger. The story I got was the team was a couple of miles from the Laotian border, in the northwest tip of Nam. It was close to Fire Base Alpine. Due to bad weather the team wasn't able to be taken out and was extended. Roy Regan and Tom Shainline were in their OP site when the tiger came in and got Sergeant Dick Goolden. After attempts to run the tiger off, the tiger picked Goolden up by the head and jumped 30 feet into a bomb crater. Well, to say the least the team opened fire and killed that big son-of-a-bitch saving Dick Goolden's life. It was my understanding the tiger really chewed Goolden up bad. I didn't know him well but the times I talked to him, I found him to be a very nice guy. When the tiger was brought back to the company area it was hung on the company sign for all to see. The killer was 9 feet 9 inches long, weighing 400 pounds. Again, the battalion is at a great loss. Sgt Goolden was sent back to the world due to his wounds. As all Recon Marines, Sgt. Dick Goolden will not be forgotten.

The following is a picture of the tiger killed by the team Barrister 1Charlie3 and reports of that December 1968 mission.



400-pound tiger killed after attacking Sgt. Dick Goolden in teams harbor site.



9-Foot, 400-Pound Cat

Marines Slay Tiger After It Mauls Sleeping Buddy

QUANG TRI, Vietnam (UPI) — A nine-foot, 400-pound tiger was shot to death by a U. S. Marine patrol after it attacked one member of the Leatherneck unit as he slept near a lonly outpost just below the Demilitarized Zone.

Marine spokesmen said today the incident occurred Sunday near fire support base "Alpine," six miles east of the Laotian border in the northwestern tip of South Vietnam.

Name of the injured Marine was withheld pending notification of next of kin, but he was reported in satisfactory condition at a military hospital in Quang Tri.

The tiger could have been the same animal which killed a young Marine on Nov. 12 about 10 miles from the scene of Sunday's attack, officials said. But several other tigers are still believed in the region.

Bad weather had prevented

★ ★ ★

the Marine patrol from being lifted out of the area Sunday, spokesmen said, and a two-man radio watch was posted while the other Leathernecks slept.

"Suddenly, I heard somebody scream," said Pfc. Thomas E. Shainline of Gilbertsville, Pa.

"And then somebody else was yelling, 'It's a tiger It's a tiger'!"

Pfc. Roy Regan of Nacogdoches, Tex., had been sleeping in a foxhole next to the Marine who was attacked.

"I jumped up and saw the tiger on my partner," Regan said. "All I could think about

(Turn to Page 2A)

Tiger

(Continued from Page 1A)

was to get the tiger away from him. I jumped at the tiger and the cat dipped his head and jumped into a bomb crater 10 yards away still holding my partner."

The other members of the patrol opened fire with M16 rifles and pistols and killed the maneater. The injured Marine, badly cut and slashed about the neck and shoulders, stumbled out of the crater.

"He looked dazed and asked what had happened," said Pfc. Maurice M. Howell of Richmond, Ky.

A medical evacuation helicopter took the injured Marine to Quang Tri and the other Leathernecks—and the slain tiger—were taken back to their base in another chopper.

A special Marine unit and two professional South Vietnamese tiger hunters have been trying for three weeks to track down tigers believed to be in the same region. To date, only one of the animals has been found and slain.

Co. C During the reporting period, Company C conducted 20 patrols averaging 3.9 days with an average of 6.4 men per patrol. The company made three sightings of six enemy and 10 contacts with 44 enemy resulting in 13 enemy KIA(C). There was one USMC WIA. The company also captured many documents. The company fired 18 artillery missions of 766 rounds. The company also utilized five air strikes. The company also killed one tiger that attacked one of the team.

OpO 390-D-68 (1C3) 230030H Dec 68 (240215Z). Team had movement 20 meters to west and 100 meters to north, called fire mission on both, movement ceased. Later movement began again, fire mission called and movement ceased. Results unknown. 211000H team observed some type of enemy position, called air strikes of napalm, and fire mission with two secondary explosions. 221600H, team saw two NVA/VC. Team called fire mission and air strikes, results unknown. 221900, team in harbor site, Tiger attacked one man, dragging him off, team killed tiger, team call med-evac, team extracted.

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 240215Z DEC 68

3dRecon Bn No 6594-68
Copy 1 of 2

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV
TO: CG XXIV CORPS MHB

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV
CG TASK FORCE HOTEL
TASK FORCE BRAVO
THIRD MARINES
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH)
FOURTH MARINES
NINTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
3R. PROVINCE A DIVISION QUANG TRI
THIRD RECON BN
THIRD FORCE RECON CO

3RECON

RECEIVED 25 DEC 675

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: BARRISTER 1C3 (6 MEN) OPO 390-D
2. DATE INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 201200H/230030H 61 HOURS.

3. ROUTE: FM (XD774546) TO (XD773547) TO (XD774546)
UL 7655 LR 7753.

4. TERRAIN: STEEP HILL, VERY HEAVY UNDERGROWTH AND ELEPHANT GRASS, TO 7-8FT. SCATTERED CANOPY IN VALLEY, THICK ON HILLS

20-30 FT. COVER AND CONCEALMENT GOOD. OP SITE AT (XD773547) OBS N AND S IN VALLEY AND E AND W IN VALLEY(XD795555) OBS

E, S AND W. (XD800741) OBS 360.
5. HLZ'S: AT (XD773547) SITE WILL ACCOMODATE ONE CH-46

SITE IS HILL TOP, TERRAIN FEATURES DOME, BEST APPROACH FM SE, APPROACH OBSTACLES NONE.

390-D

6. ENEMY: 202200H AT (XD773547) TM HAD MOVEMENT TO WEST 20M AND TO NORTH 100M. TM CALLED ARTY MSN ON BOTH. MOVEMENT MOVED

OFF. A RTY MSN CEASED, MOVEMENT AGAIN MOVED IN TOWARD TM. CALLED REPEA T TO ARTY MSN, MOVEMENT MOVED OFF AND CEASED. NEG RES.

211000H TM NOTIFIED BY A O THA T, 30 CAL FIRE AT CV-10 AT (XD782563) NEG ACTION.

211000H A T (XD781548) TM OBS WHAT APPEARED TO BE SOME TYPE EN POS. CA LLED A/S WITH NAPALM WITH NEG RES. CALLED FIRE MSN WITH TWO SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS.

221600H DEC 68 TM PSN (XD773547) (XD773548) TM SAW TWO NVA/VC SITTING ON HILL TOP. CALLED FIRE MSN A ND AIR STRIKES. NVA/VC MOVED OVER HILL TO NORTH AFTER FIRST ROUND IMPACTED. TM HEARD ONE MA N SCREAM FM A IR STRIKE.

212300H AT (XD773547) TM HAD MOVEMENT FM NORTH, WEST, SW AND SOUTH. CALLED A RTY, MOVEMENT CONTINUED UNTIL 220300H NEG RES.

220800H A T (XD773547) HA D MOVEMENT TO WEST AND NORTH. AO ON ST ATION REPORTED NUMEROUS TRA ILS TO WEST. CALLED F/M AS MOVEMENT CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THE DAY. NEG RES.

221900H TM AT (XD774546) SETTING IN HARBOR SITE. TIGER ATTA-CKED ONE MAN AND ATTEMPTED DRAGGING HIM OFF. TM KILLED TIGER TM CA LLED FOR MED EVAC. TM EXTRACTED.

201500H TM STEPPED ON GRA VEL MINE AT (XD773547). SEARCH ON A REA FAILED TO REVEAL ANY MORE.

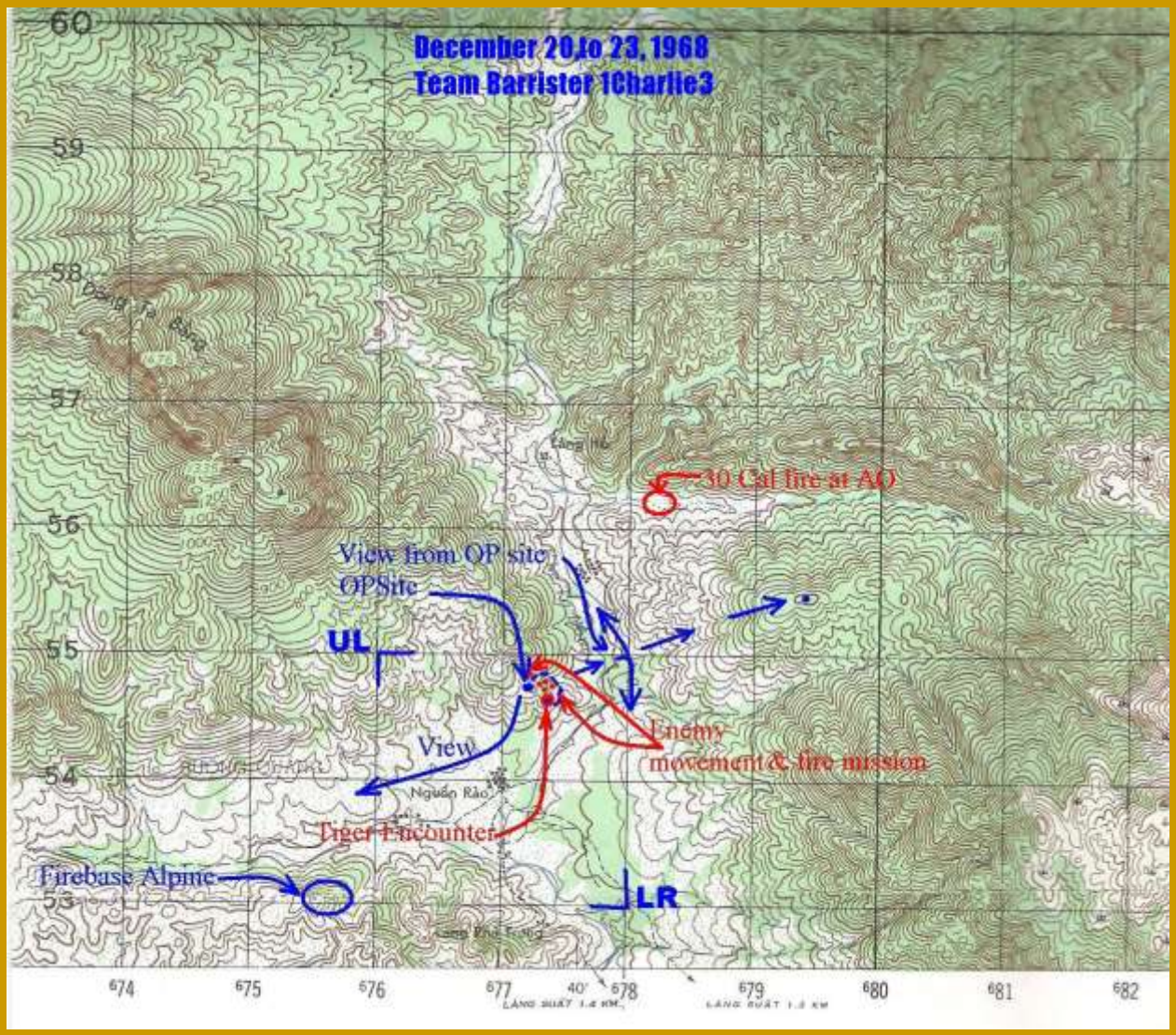
7. OTHER INFO: NVA/VC WEARING GREEN UNIFORMS W/NATURAL CAMOFLA GE. NO PACK ON HELMET, WPNS UNOBS.

GP-4
BT

OPO 390-D
CONFIDENTIAL

CON 2004 RELEASED BY: [signature] TIME [illegible] DEC 68

CONFIDE



SEPTEMBER 18, 1969

With another day in the war, recon is off to the usual start. Inserts and extracts are underway.

Today was the day that many have waited for. Word has spread that the 3rd Marine Division will be pulled out of Vietnam. As of now, word is that we will be out by December 15, 1969. As far as the bush Marines of Third Recon are concerned, three months might as well be three

years. Three months, three days or three hours for the Marines of 3rd Recon don't mean much because for them the war just goes on.

With the forecast of our pullout, the men of this unit along with others to be pulled will have the hardest job of all on their hands - not to be killed in the next 90 days. I think that our best chance of winning this war was to have continued the heavy bombing of the North. Once the bombing was stopped, the enemy had a chance to regroup, resupply and turn the events in their favor.

For all the years the United States has been in this country they have accomplished only two things. They have destroyed the lives of thousands of young men and blew millions of holes in the earth. What a waste! With all teams working, the day is at a close. All secure at 2140 hours.

SEPTEMBER 19, 1969

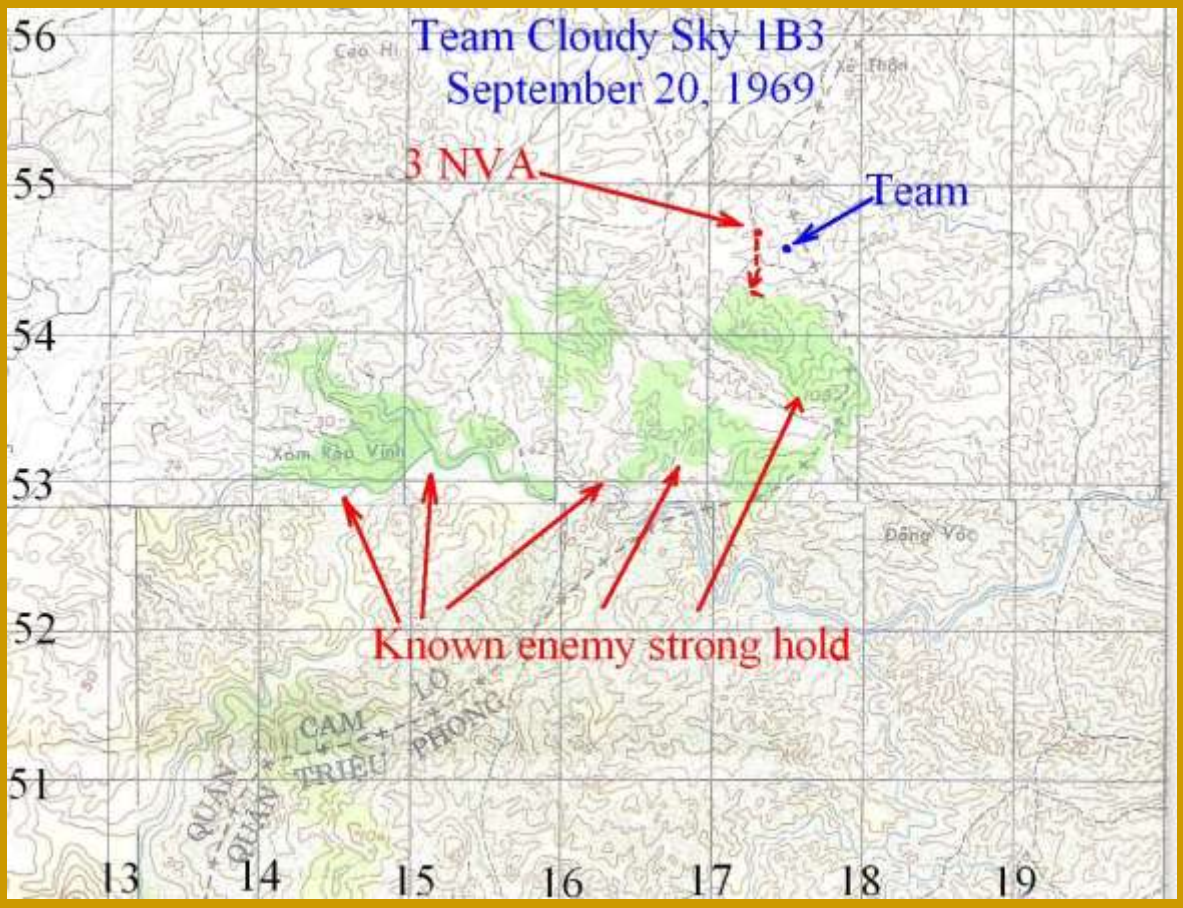
The nineteenth came with heavy rain and all birds were on a weather hold. With no teams put in or taken out, as soon as the weather clears, we will have a full day ahead of us.

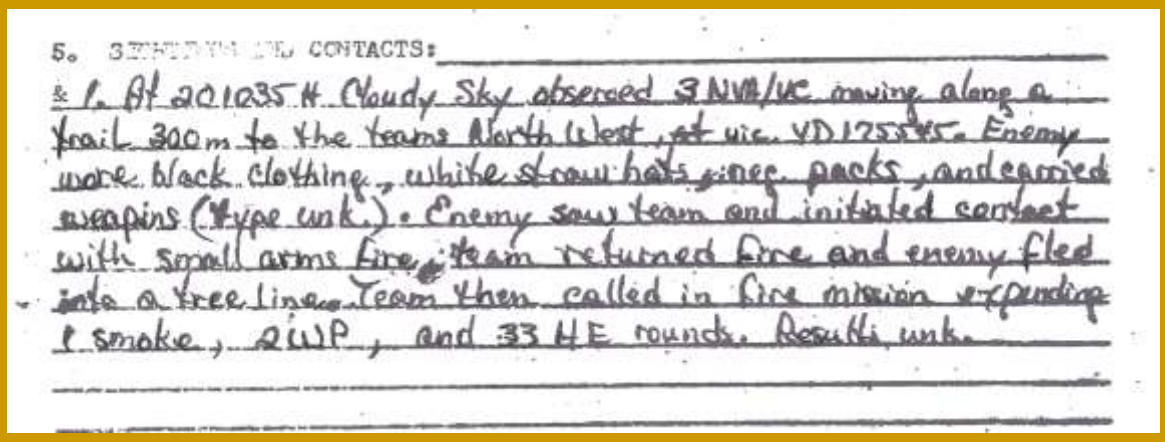
SEPTEMBER 20, 1969

It is early and inserts and extracts are beginning. It is 1015 and Team Cloudy Sky has made a point-to-point contact and is receiving small arms fire at this time. With the contact only lasting a few minutes, the team is now advising the relay that the contact has been broken. All team members are okay and have booted to a more defendable position. Cloudy Sky at this time has requested a fire mission and is standing by. In minutes the team is advised of a shot out. As the first round makes its way and impacts, the team adjusts. Right five zero, fire

for effect. Again, the volley is on its way making its impact less than 100 meters from the team's position. With the enemy on the run Cloudy Sky calls back with add "five-zero" and fire for effect. Another volley is on its way to the target. With the possibility of three confirmed kills, Cloudy Sky 1B3 is alpha sierra, booting out of the area. Contact was made on hill 108 in what is known as the backyard. This area is known to have hundreds of NVA as well as bunker complexes. It is close enough to our lines for the enemy to use mortars to shell Dong Ha and Quang Tri.

The following is the report of that mission;





5. [illegible] CONTACTS:

& 1. At 201035H Cloudy Sky observed 3 NVA/VC moving along a trail 300m to the teams North West, at vic. YD175345. Enemy wore black clothing, white straw hats, sing. packs, and carried weapons (Type unk.). Enemy saw team and initiated contact with small arms fire, team returned fire and enemy fled into a tree line. Team then called in fire mission expending 1 smoke, 2 WP, and 33 HE rounds. Results unk.

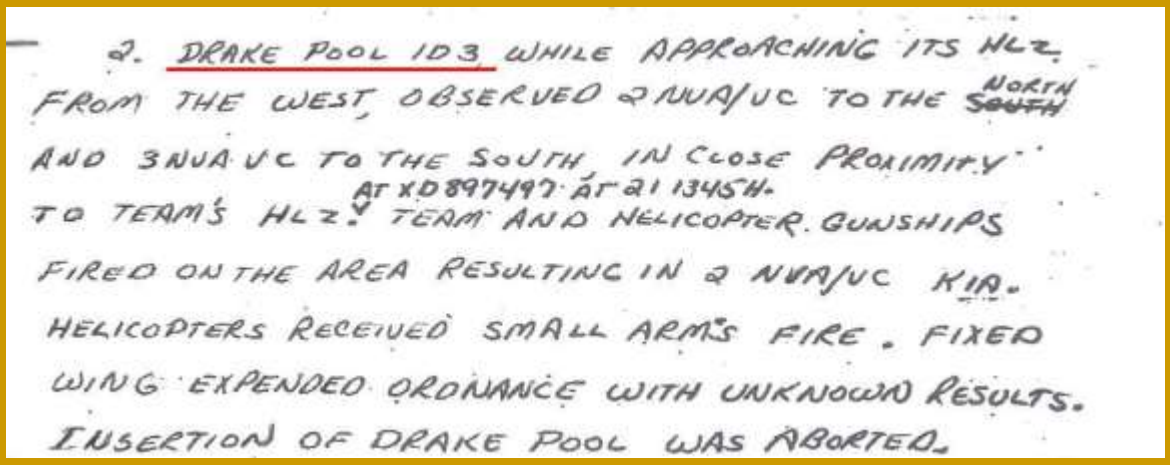
With the rest of the day going without incident, soon it will be at a close. All teams working are secure at this time. 2135 hours.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1969

Our day is at a start. Inserts and extracts are being carried out as I plot each team's insert as they take place. With each inbound team, I listen on the radio as the choppers drop in their landing zones. As I listen, it is as if I am there. It is 1030 hours as Team Drake Pool 1D3 gets the thumbs up for their inbound. I can just visualize the team members as they drop into their landing zone, each man scanning every tree and bush for anything that may be out of order. I wonder if they feel as I did, wondering if there are enemy in their insert zone.

As Drake Pool 1D3 sets in the zone, the patrol leader and gunner have spotted NVA in the landing zone. Only seconds later the enemy open fire on the bird and team. As the team returns fire, a massive firefight is underway. With bullets ripping through the chopper, the door gunners and team manage to get one NVA kill before pulling out of the hot LZ. The bird lifts out of the zone with guns blazing and we all hold our breath waiting for the word that the crew and team are safe.

Then the word comes, everyone is okay, no one got shot. Drake Pool will be returned to Quang Tri Recon.



2. DRAKE POOL ID 3 WHILE APPROACHING ITS HLZ FROM THE WEST, OBSERVED 2 NVA/VC TO THE ~~SOUTH~~ NORTH AND 3 NVA VC TO THE SOUTH, IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO TEAM'S HLZ. AT XD897497 AT 21 1345H. TEAM AND HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS FIRED ON THE AREA RESULTING IN 2 NVA/VC KIA. HELICOPTERS RECEIVED SMALL ARMS FIRE. FIXED WING EXPENDED ORDNANCE WITH UNKNOWN RESULTS. INSERTION OF DRAKE POOL WAS ABORTED.



With inserts and extracts continuing, the rest of the day goes by without incident. The teams are now patrolling within their assigned zones and the war goes on. As teams are plotted throughout the day, soon another day will close and one more day down to our pullout date. With teams all secure at this time, the CO's briefing will end my work day.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1969

On this day Romeo and India relays were pulled out. With these relays no longer operational, teams will no longer be able to patrol in the far northwest hinterlands of Nam. You can bet the enemy must be relieved as they lounge in the mountains of the west and northwest just waiting for the right time to make their move.

With the day at a close, for now all working are secure. 2150 hours.

SEPTEMBER 25, 1969

With the 24th having no problems, I hope this day holds luck for the teams in the bush. As inserts and extracts are now underway, there have been no contacts or sightings by teams working their respective areas. The day moves quickly and teams are plotted hour by hour as each recon zone is covered.

1530 Hours; Team Desert Sands and team Tarzan Stomper have made a sighting of NVA moving toward Dong Ha. At this time a fire mission is in progress and the teams are standing by. After the first round makes its way to the enemy target, there is an adjustment. With the team's call for a fire for effect, it is a shot out and a splash. Volley after volley of artillery rounds make their way to the enemy target. The first few rounds have definite possibilities of confirmed enemy kills. The enemy has now scattered and they are no longer in the team's view. At this time both teams are still in OP sites observing the area for further enemy activity.

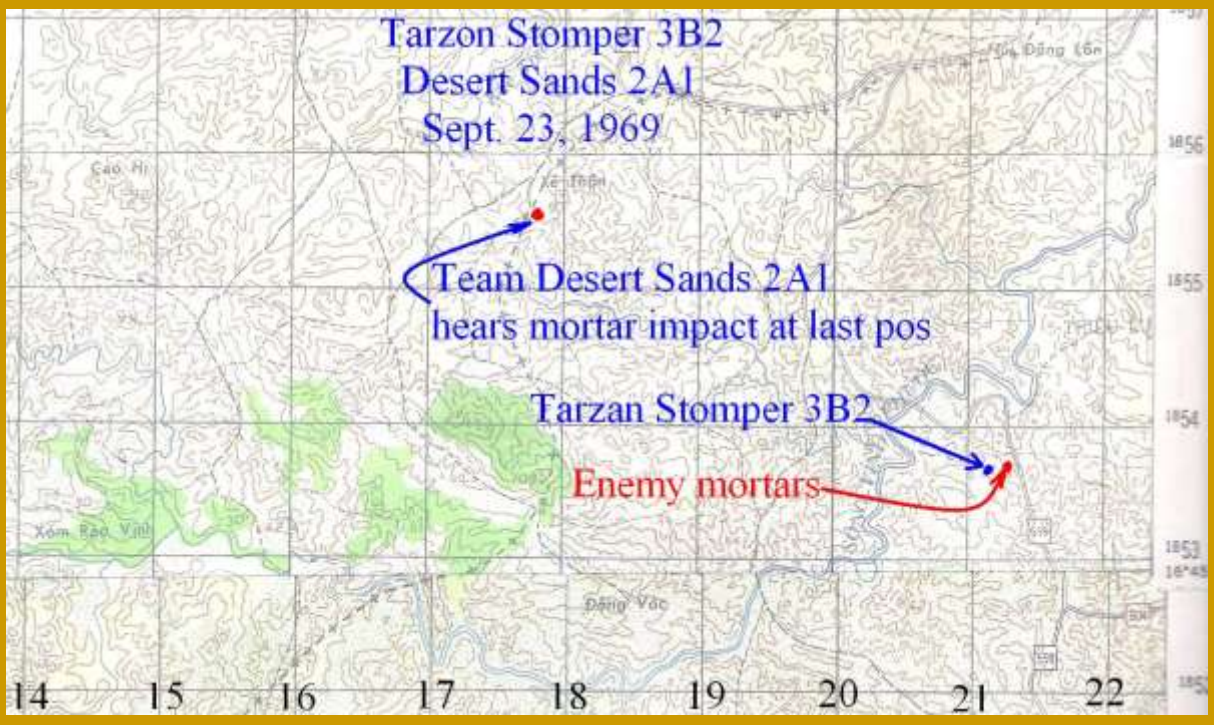
5. [redacted] AND CONTACTS:

1. TARZAN STOMPER 3B2 AT 232330 H. REPORTED HEARING THE POPPING OF A MORTAR TUBE 150 TO 200 METERS EAST OF ITS POSITION AT YD 214538. TUBE FIRED 8 ROUNDS IN AN EASTERLY DIRECTION, TEAM COULD NOT DETERMINE TYPE OF ROUNDS. NEGATIVE ACTION TAKEN.

2. DESERT SANDS 2A1 REPORTED AT 232342 H. HEARING 6 TO 7 60 MM MORTAR

DECLASSIFIED

ROUNDS IM[redacted]T AT THE LAST POSITION THE TEAM HAD OCCUPIED PRIOR TO ENTERING ITS HARBOR SITE. (YD178556).



With the remainder of the day going without any more enemy sightings or contacts, the Colonel's briefing will end my workday.

SEPTEMBER 27, 1969

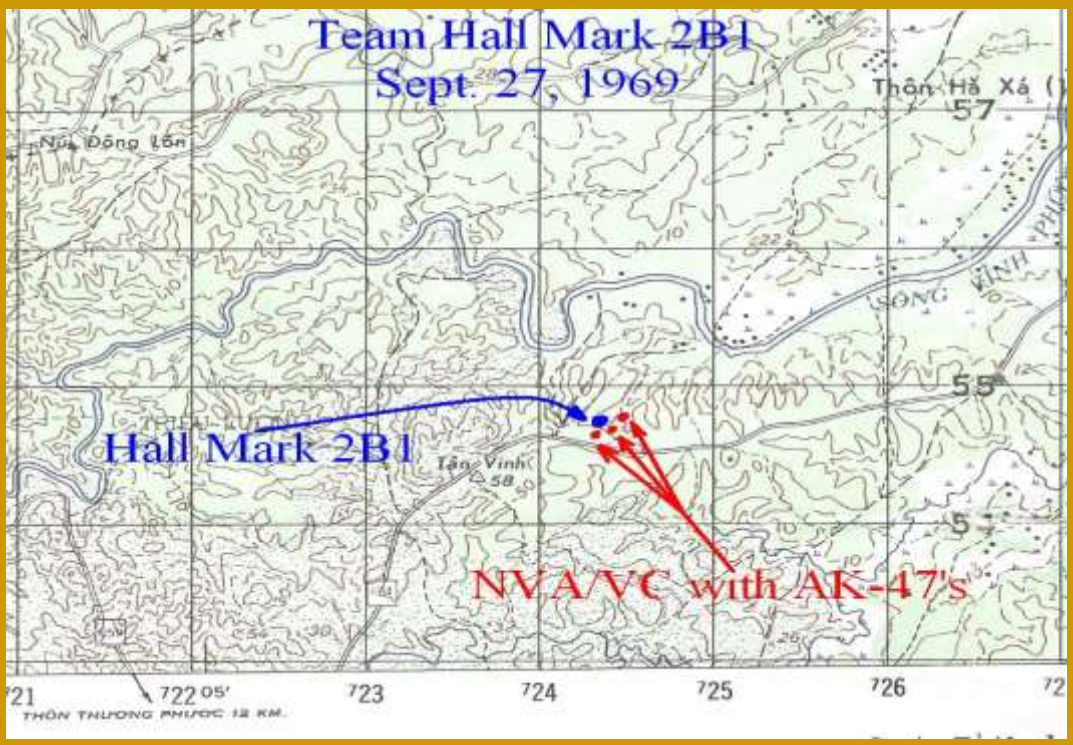
On the 26th I was in and out of the COC all day. With the pullout coming up, I help when I can while packing for the move. With the morning at a full start, all teams are secure with inserts and extracts now underway. As of 1000 hours there have been no problems. Some teams are having communication problems and are forced to use their whip antennas. If the relays hadn't been pulled, communications would not have been a problem. In some cases when a team gets on the far side of a ridge or in a deep valley, their radio transmission doesn't get out. The bad thing is, when a team makes enemy contact and has no communications, they can't get any arty or air support until they change locations and that may be impossible to do when in a heavy contact and surrounded. You talk about being in a world of shit, at that point your only chance is to fight your way out of that location. A Recon Marine is more prepared through training to escape and evade than your basic ground troop. Even so, all Marines are trained in escape and evasion and all members of a recon team are always informed of the escape azimuths before departing for a mission to make it easier to evade the enemy if separated. All team members are well versed in the use of maps and compasses to help in evasion. Anyway, I hope nothing like this happens so close to getting out of here.

As the day moves on, I do believe this one will end with few sightings and no contacts, but the day isn't at an end yet. All teams are secure at this time. 1605

1830 Hours; "Contact, Contact, Hall Mark Contact, taking AK fire." Team Hall Mark has made a point-to-point contact with 5 to 10 NVA. With the request for an AO and gunships, the team lays down a base of

fire to hold the enemy at bay. As the team informs us they are confirming one NVA kill, the AO and gunships have now arrived on station. As the AO makes gun runs around the team's position, he does not take any fire. Hall Mark 2B1 is advising that they have broken contact at this time. With gunships dropping in making runs around the team's position, extract birds await the word for the inbound extract. While the gunships work the area over, the team secures a landing zone and the extract birds are going in. Gunships are laying cover fire for the inbound 46. Now in the zone, the team scrambles onto the chopper and heads out of the LZ. With all team members and crew alpha sierra team Hall Mark will be returned to Quang Tri Recon for debriefing.

2123 Hours. With teams now moving to their harbor sites, the CO's briefing will end the day. The following is a report of the Hall Mark mission:



A. HALMARK 2B1

B. 27 1855H

C. YD 244547

D. HALMARK 2B1 AT YD 244547 EXCHANGED FIRE WITH 5 NVA/VC, (2) 40 METERS TO EAST, (1) 15 METERS TO SOUTHEAST, AND (2) 40 METERS TO SOUTH, OF TEAM'S POSITION AT 27 1855H. TEAM UTILIZED A HEAVY VOLUME OF SUPPRESSIVE FIRE DUE TO THICK ELEPHANT GRASS AND LIMITED VISIBILITY. ENEMY OBSERVED WORE GREEN UTILITIES, HEAVY PACKS (MADE OF A GREEN, PLASTIC LIKE MATERIAL), AND CARRIED AK 47'S. TEAM REPORTED NO CASUALTIES, 1 PROBABLE NVA/VC KIA. ENEMY BROKE CONTACT BUT REMAINED IN THE AREA. AT 1919H, WITH MOVEMENT BETWEEN 20 AND 40 METERS FROM ITS POSITION, TEAM FIRED M 79 ROUNDS TO ITS SOUTH AND HEARD 1 ENEMY SCREAM. TEAM THEN THREW CS GRENADES AND MOVED 75 METERS TO THE NORTH. AO ARRIVED ON STATION AT 1925. TEAM CONTINUED TO REPORT MOVEMENT AND AO EXPENDED ORDNANCE ON SUSPECTED ENEMY LOCATIONS. HALMARK WAS EXTRACTED WITHOUT INCIDENT AT 2040H.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1969

It's another day in the land God forgot and inserts and extracts are underway. The morning has gone by very fast with all teams are secure at this time.

At 0830 hours, Bazaar 1-2, a Force Recon team was inserted into their assigned recon zone. By 0900 hours the whispers of the team came over the radio. "Foxtrot, Foxtrot, Bazaar." Bazaar this is Foxtrot go." Be advised we have movement to our south southeast." "Roger, I

copy. Bazaar, Foxtrot do you have the bad guys in sight?" "That's a negative at this time." "Roger copy."

1105 hours; Foxtrot, Bazaar CONTACT, we are taking small arms fire at this time, request AO, guns, copy? "Roger Bazaar I copy." With the air support needed fairly close by, the AO will be on station shortly. With Bazaar still under enemy fire, the arriving gunships drop in above the team's location opening fire in aid of the team. With gunships taking fire with every pass, the AO has requested fixed-wing on station and they should arrive in approximately five minutes. With the jets now on station above the team, the AO drops out of the sky diving in on the enemy position. Taking careful aim, it fires a Willy Peter rocket (white phosphorus) marking the target only 150 feet or less from the team's position. Pulling to the sky, it's "Bazaar get your heads down, in-bounders coming in hot." I know for me to write these words "coming in hot" cannot truly relay the terror of what it is like to be the guy on the ground having 500- pound bombs hit the earth sometimes at 150 feet or less from where you are. The blast of just one bomb, let alone two at a time is terrifying. At times the blast would bounce you on the ground and along with being almost deaf from the blast, the fear inside you would make you tremble. Shrapnel would buzz over your head barely missing you. But when in close enemy contact this type of defense was our only chance to repel the enemy and save our team mate's lives. Unfortunately, this situation could happen at any time while on a mission deep in enemy territory. For the men of Force and Third Recon Marines, it happens too often.

With the bombers on target, run after run of high explosives and napalm are made in aid of the team. The jets pound the area around the team and gunships and extract birds are ready to go in for the

extract. With the 46 now on the inbound, the gunships drop in to give cover fire as the big bird set in the zone. It is only seconds when we get the word the team is out and all are safe. Bazaar is out and being close to Vandergrift Combat base, the team will be taken there for debriefing. Later the team will be returned to Quang Tri Recon area. Bazaar's contact resulted in two enemy kills.



DRAFTED BY: RWH:WIH
SEC S-2 3d FORCE REC 2
CAP [redacted]

DTGSD DTG/ROUT DTG 29 0500H SEP 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DGN
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

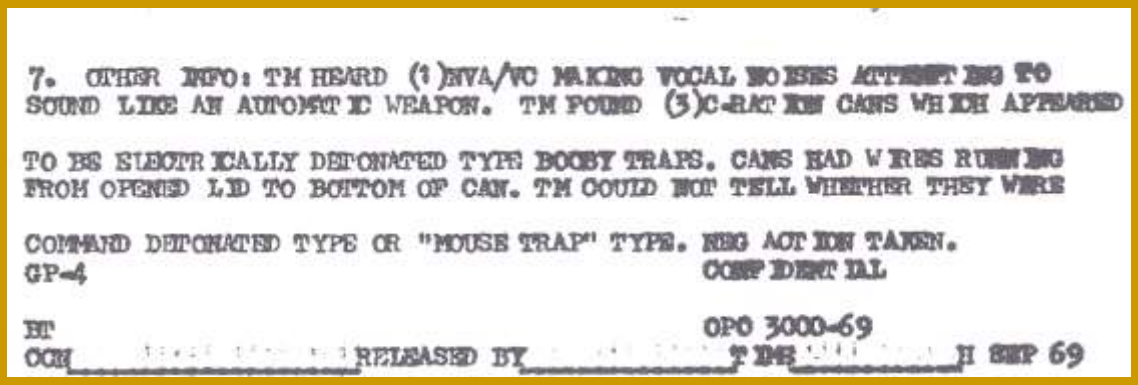
INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MAR REGS
FOURTH MAR REGS
TWELFTH MAR REGS
MAG THREE NRE
SR ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
CSV
CGC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (C)

1. TEAM CALL SIGN: BAZAAR (1-2) (6 MEN) OPO 3060-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 280900H/281220H SEP 69 (3 HRS)

3. ROUTE: NONE
4. TERRAIN: STEEP HILLS WITH HEAVY VEGETATION W/GOOD COVER & CONCEAL-MENT. RATE OF MOVEMENT ESTIMATED AT (100) METERS PER HOUR.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT XD 967412 WILL ACCOMODATE (1) CH-46. SITE IS A HILL TOP WITH BEST APPROACH FROM E/W. APPROACH OBSTACLES ARE TREES TO N/S.
6. ENEMY: TM WAS MOVING FROM INSERTION POINT WHEN PL OBSD (2) NVA/VC TO HIS FRONT APPROX (10) METERS. CONTACT WAS MADE AT XD 967412 AT 280940H. TM SET UP 360° PERIMETER AND HEARD A DOG AND HEAVY MOVEMENT TO THE SOUTH AND EAST. TM CALLED FOR AO AND AO CALLED (2) FLIGHTS OF FIXED WING ON ENEMY MOVEMENT. TM HEARD SCREAMING FROM THE AREA OF AIR STRIKES. AO MADE GUN AND ROCKET RUNS ON ENEMY AND RECEIVED SAF. ENEMY WORE FRESH GREEN & BROWN CAMOUFLAGE UTILITIES, NEW WEB GEAR AND LARGE PACKS. TM NOTED THAT GEAR AND CLOTHING WERE NEW AND FRESH. ENEMY CARRIED AK-47 RIFLES. (1) ENEMY WAS OBSD WEARING KHAKI SHORTS WITH A GREEN T-SHIRT, BUSH COVER, AND BLACK TENNIS SHOES AND CARRIED (1) AK-47 RIFLE. TM ESTIMATES (2) ENEMY KIA'S (PROBABLE) AND (5) ENEMY WIA'S (PROBABLE). ENEMY APPEARED TO BE FRESH AND RELATIVELY INEXPERIENCED. THE ENEMY NEAR THE TM'S POSITION WERE ESTIMATED AS PLT. SIZE.



7. OTHER INFO: TM HEARD (1)NVA/VC MAKING VOCAL NOISES ATTEMPTING TO SOUND LIKE AN AUTOMATIC WEAPON. TM FOUND (3)C-RAT KEM CANS WHICH APPEARED TO BE ELECTRICALLY DETONATED TYPE BOOBY TRAPS. CANS HAD WIRES RUNNING FROM OPENED LID TO BOTTOM OF CAN. TM COULD NOT TELL WHETHER THEY WERE COMMAND DETONATED TYPE OR "MOUSE TRAP" TYPE. NEG ACTION TAKEN.
GP-4 CONFIDENTIAL

BT DPD 3000-69
OCH RELEASED BY TIME H SEP 69

The rest of the day was not bad at all. All teams working are secure and the work in the COC goes on as usual. With approximately 78 days to December 15, I find myself as everyone else, still wondering if we will get out of here alive…Seventy-eight more days, and its pack our gear and leave. I know that our job is to secure the backyard area for the pull out so for now the war goes on. I can remember the days when a man was taken out of the bush when he was short (a couple of weeks left in country). He stayed in the company area and performed base duties. I now find myself worrying about every team that goes out knowing that everyone is short. Even though I personally don't know the guys in all these teams, having been out there and having experienced what they are going through, I worry about all of them as if they were longtime friends of mine. Sitting in the COC I know it may seem crazy but to listen to the teams on patrol makes me wish I could run just one more patrol, just one more as point man. I guess I feel like I never got all my paybacks collected or maybe I'm just going out of my mind for even thinking this way.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1969

As the days inserts and extracts continue, I am wondering if this is going to be one of those days.

Now into the afternoon, the day is slowly turning to shit. Team Noon Watch 3B3 has made a sighting as the enemy moved to their north about 30 meters from the team but has not spotted the team.

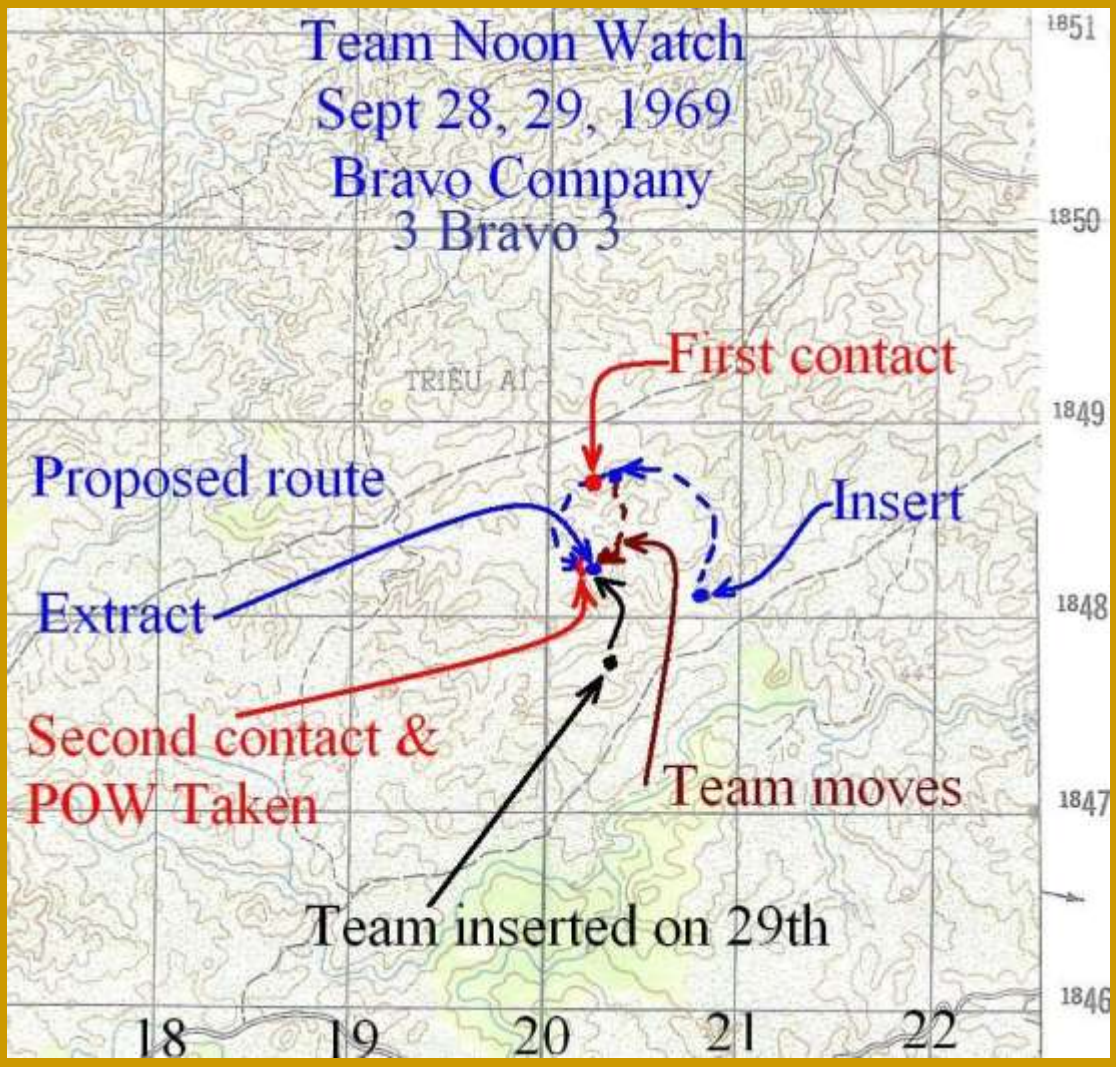
The day turns into evening and Noon Watch 3B3 prepares to move into a harbor site. Once in the site the team is informing us, they have spotted 10 NVA moving straight for the team. Noon Watch has informed us enemy contact is imminent. Then we hear, "Contact, Contact, Noon Watch Contact." Noon Watch has made a contact with estimated 10 to 15 NVA and is taking enemy fire at this time. Noon Watch is informing us they have made three confirmed enemy kills and are still taking fire. The team has requested an AO and gunships. As air support comes on station, the team manages to hold the enemy at bay. Now as a flare ship lights the area the team is reconning their perimeter by fire. The team is now informing us they have taken one POW. With the flare ship still on station the team checks their perimeter. Once a recon of the team's perimeter is made, Noon Watch finds several AK-47s as well as enemy packs and ammo. The choppers are overhead and gun runs are now in progress. As the team continues to hold its ground, gunships open fire only feet from the team blasting the area with 7.62 machine gun fire. With the enemy possibly still close to the team, the gunships work over the area with their rockets and machine guns. The extract birds now go in and attempt to extract the team and their prisoner. As the extract bird lands in the LZ, the team scrambles on and quickly departs. Word comes back that they are all secure and heading

back to Quang Tri for debrief. The POW will be taken to a POW compound. Again, the crews of the extract birds and gunships have made a daring rescue and saved the lives of our comrades. 0115 Hours.

The remainder of the night goes without incident and all teams out in the bush are secure.

On the 29th of September, 1969 team Noon Watch 3B3 was reinserted into the area of contact to make a sweep of the area in hopes of locating more enemy gear left after last night's enemy contact.

The following is the report of that mission;



DRAFTED BY:LRJ;ptm
SEC 32 PH 3D REC 2
CWO_____

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 030523 OCT 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (REIN) (-) DCH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNC

INFO: CG ONE AERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CER
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MARINES
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE INIE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G 3
GSV

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT

1. RECON TEAM: MOONWATCH (5B3) (6 MEN) OPO 2998
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 280945/282400H SEP 69 (9 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD207481 TO YD204487 TO YD203483
4. TERRAIN: ROLLING HILLS WITH SPARESE VEGETATION. UNLIMITED RATE

OF MOVEMENT WITH POOR COVER AND CONCEALMENT.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD207481 WILL ACCOMODAT- THREE (3) CH-46'S. HLZ

IS A VALLEY WITH 2' ELEPHANT GRASS. APPROACH 360° WITH NEG OBSTACLES.
SITE AT YD203483 WILL ACCOMODATE TWO (2) CH-46'S. HLZ IS A FINGER

WITH 2' ELEPHANT GRASS. APPROACH 360° WITH NEG OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: 281600H TM AT YD203486 OBS FOUR (4) NVA/VC 30 METERS

TO TM'S NW. HEADING NW. 1830H TM MOVED TO YD203483 TO HARBOR SITE.
2100H TM IN HARBOR SITE AT YD203483 OBS APPROX 10 NVA/VC 30 METERS

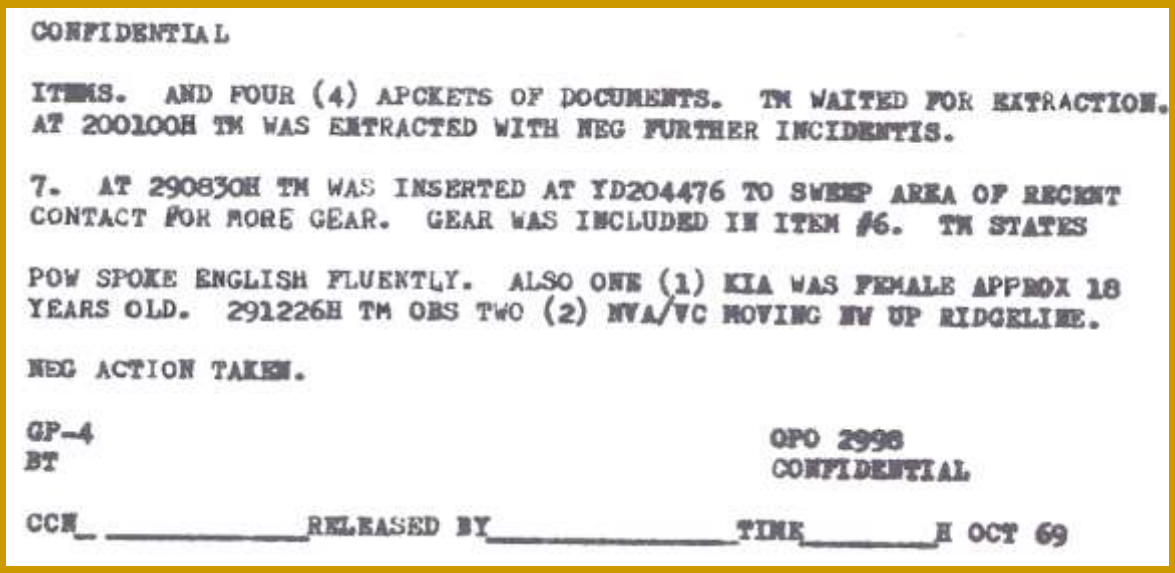
TO TM'S NW. TM EXCHANGED FIRE WITH NVA/VC RESULTING IN THREE (3) NVA/VC
KIA (C). TM RECONNED BY FIRE UNTIL 2115H. AT THIS TIME ONE (1)

NVA/VC JUMPED UP AND SHOUTED "DON'T SHOOT, DON'T SHOOT, I SURRENDER"
TM CAPTURED ONE (1) POW AND ADMINISTERED FIRST AID. 2130H TM CON-

TINUED TO RECON BY FIRE. 2200H FLARE SHIPS CAME ON STATION AND
DROPPED ILLUMINATION. TM CONDUCTED SEARCH AND DISCOVERED THREE

AK-47. RIFLES, THREE NVA/VC KIAL FOUR RUCKSACK PACKS FILLED W/RICE, WEB
GEAR, AND TWO (2) US M-26 FRAG GRENADES. SIX (6) AK-47 MAGAZINES

W/ROUNDS. ENEMY WORE GREEN UTILITIES, SOFT COVERS AND PITH HELMETS,
SANDALS. TM ALSO CAPTURED TWO (2) MEDICAL KITS AND SOME VARIOUS TOILET



CONFIDENTIAL

ITEMS. AND FOUR (4) APCKETS OF DOCUMENTS. TM WAITED FOR EXTRACTION. AT 200100H TM WAS EXTRACTED WITH NEG FURTHER INCIDENTIS.

7. AT 290830H TM WAS INSERTED AT YD204476 TO SWEEP AREA OF RECENT CONTACT FOR MORE GEAR. GEAR WAS INCLUDED IN ITEM #6. TM STATES

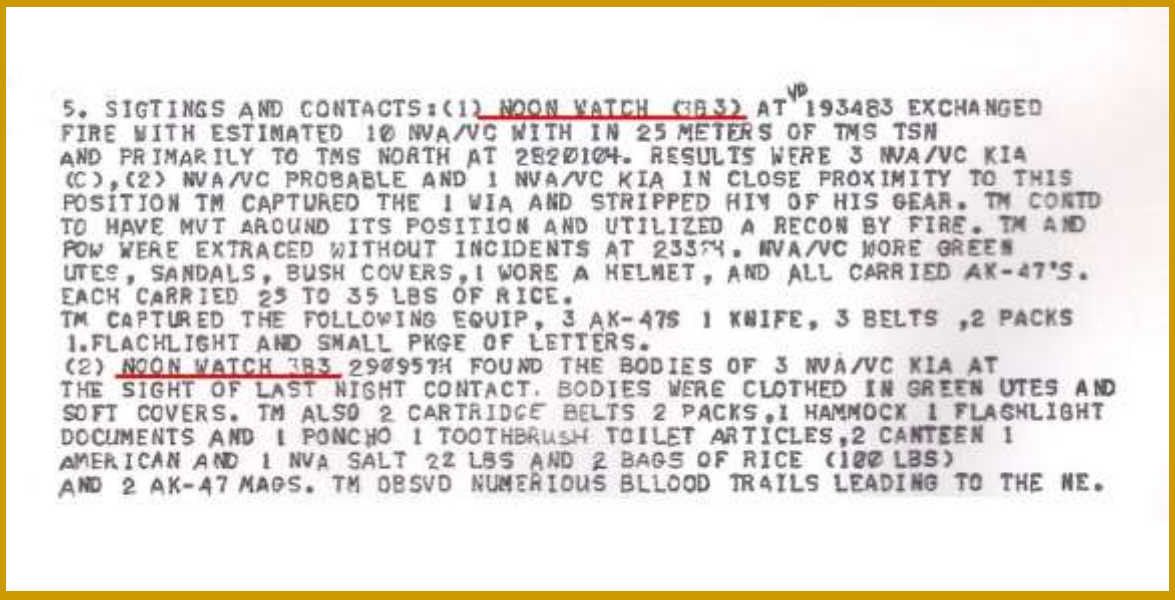
POW SPOKE ENGLISH FLUENTLY. ALSO ONE (1) KIA WAS FEMALE APPROX 18 YEARS OLD. 291226H TM OBS TWO (2) NVA/VC MOVING NW UP RIDGELINE.

NEG ACTION TAKEN.

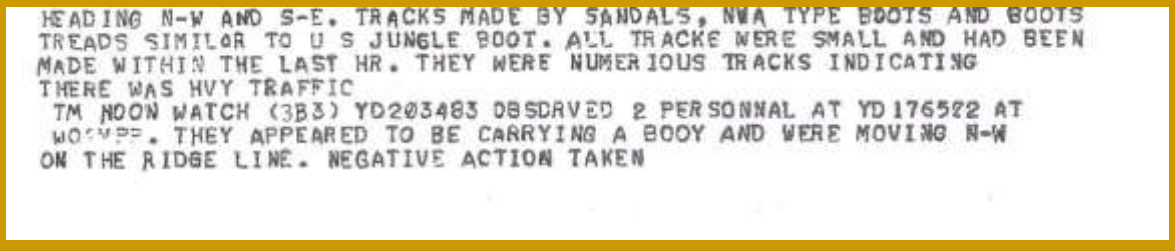
GP-4
BT

OPO 2998
CONFIDENTIAL

CCN_____RELEASED BY_____TIME_____H OCT 69



5. SIGTINGS AND CONTACTS:(1) NOON WATCH (3B3) AT VP 193483 EXCHANGED FIRE WITH ESTIMATED 10 NVA/VC WITH IN 25 METERS OF TMS TSN AND PRIMARILY TO TMS NORTH AT 282010H. RESULTS WERE 3 NVA/VC KIA (C),(2) NVA/VC PROBABLE AND 1 NVA/VC KIA IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THIS POSITION TM CAPTURED THE 1 WIA AND STRIPPED HIM OF HIS GEAR. TM CONTD TO HAVE MVT AROUND ITS POSITION AND UTILIZED A RECON BY FIRE. TM AND POW WERE EXTRACED WITHOUT INCIDENTS AT 2335H. NVA/VC WORE GREEN UTES, SANDALS, BUSH COVERS,1 WORE A HELMET, AND ALL CARRIED AK-47'S. EACH CARRIED 25 TO 35 LBS OF RICE.
TM CAPTURED THE FOLLOWING EQUIP, 3 AK-47S 1 KNIFE, 3 BELTS ,2 PACKS 1.FLACHLIGHT AND SMALL PKGE OF LETTERS.
(2) NOON WATCH 3B3 290957H FOUND THE BODIES OF 3 NVA/VC KIA AT THE SIGHT OF LAST NIGHT CONTACT. BODIES WERE CLOTHED IN GREEN UTES AND SOFT COVERS. TM ALSO 2 CARTRIDGE BELTS 2 PACKS,1 HAMMOCK 1 FLASHLIGHT DOCUMENTS AND 1 PONCHO 1 TOOTHBRUSH TOILET ARTICLES,2 CANTEEN 1 AMERICAN AND 1 NVA SALT 22 LBS AND 2 BAGS OF RICE (100 LBS) AND 2 AK-47 MAGS. TM OBSVD NUMERIOUS BLLOOD TRAILS LEADING TO THE NE.



HEADING N-W AND S-E. TRACKS MADE BY SANDALS, NVA TYPE BOOTS AND BOOTS TREADS SIMILAR TO U S JUNGLE BOOT. ALL TRACKS WERE SMALL AND HAD BEEN MADE WITHIN THE LAST HR. THEY WERE NUMERIOUS TRACKS INDICATING THERE WAS HVY TRAFFIC
TM NOON WATCH (3B3) YD203483 OBSDRVED 2 PERSONNAL AT YD176582 AT WOSVPP. THEY APPEARED TO BE CARRYING A BOOY AND WERE MOVING N-W ON THE RIDGE LINE. NEGATIVE ACTION TAKEN

SEPTEMBER 30, 1969

It is the close of the month and the day is underway. I dread to think of what might be in store for the recon Marines today. As I leaf through

the pages of my diary notes, I can't believe all the things that have transpired since I started it. Once we are out of this place, I will build this diary a coffin for it holds nothing but the stories of all who have suffered and died here. Even those of us who are still alive have died on the inside through the loss of so many of our comrades. Our casualty rate is over 40 percent and considering that most minor wounds do not officially get reported, the casualty rate is really much higher.

Today the battalion is at a great loss. It was my understanding that Bravo Company lost a man today. His name was Brian Thornton. I didn't know the Marine or the details of his death but he will remain forever in our hearts and memories.

The rest of the day has gone without incident, all working teams are alpha sierra at 2230 hours.

OCTOBER 3, 1969

It is very early in the morning, 0255 hours as I awake in a drenching sweat. I've had a bad night. My nightmares seem to be getting more frequent and intense. God, I must be losing it and I don't understand why. I know of other men who have had far more horrible experiences than me and I wonder if it's just me or do they also have the same terrible nightmares. If I could just shake these nightmares, I think I would be okay. Being unable to fall back asleep, I head down to COC where the coffee helps me stay up the rest of the night.

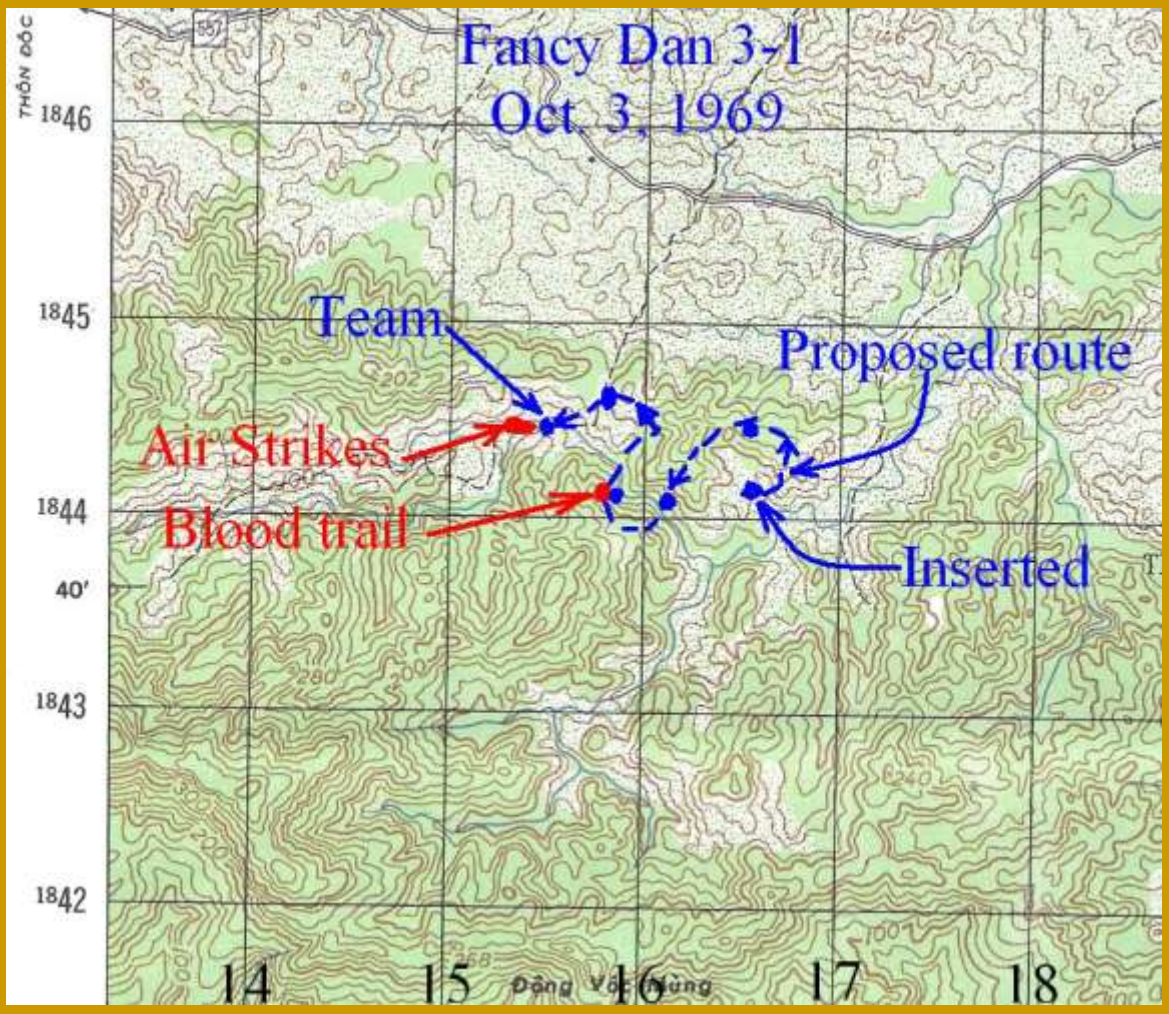
As the company area started to stir about, I headed to the mess hall to beat the crowd for chow.

Once back at the COC, the day is off and team inserts and extracts are underway. For most of the day things seemed to be going smoothly

for all teams. It wasn't until 1500 hours that Fancy Dan, 3-1 while checking out a well-used trail made a point-to-point contact wounding one NVA and killing another. The team has broken enemy contact at this time and has moved to a more defendable position. With the team secure at this time, an AO will be on station in a few minutes for assistance.

1523 Hours; AO arrives on station and proceeds to make runs around the team's position. Unable to spot anything and having not taken any fire, the AO leaves at 1540 hours.

1550 Hours; Fancy Dan proceeds to move out of the area but hears movement 20 meters to the north and northeast. The AO is advised of this and returns to the team's position and is back on station at 1610 hours. As the AO drops in for a closer look, he takes enemy fire. Due to the team's position having been compromised, the AO has requested gunships and fixed-wing support. In a few minutes all hell might be breaking loose around the team and hopefully they will be taken out of the bush since it appears their position has been compromised. As air support comes on station, fixed-wing is making bombing runs with devastating results around the team's perimeter. The jets then depart the area and gunships strafe in support of the team as the extract bird lands and picks up the team. A few tense seconds pass as the radio transmission reveals that the team is all secure and returning back to Quang Tri Recon for debriefing. With the remainder of the day going without incident, the CO's briefing will end my work day. All teams out in the bush are secure at 2230 hours.


Fancy Dan 3-1
Oct. 3, 1969
Team
Proposed route
Air Strikes
Blood trail
Inserted
1846
1845
1844
40'
1843
1842
14
15
16
17
18

DRAFTED BY: [redacted]
[redacted]
OPS [redacted]

DTG: 050507Z OCT 69

FM: CG 7TH ED [redacted] DIV (-) (REIN) [redacted]
TO: CG XXIV CORPS FWD
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV (REIN)
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) (ATK)
7TH ED [redacted]
FOURTH [redacted]
TWENTIETH [redacted]
[redacted]
SR ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
7TH ED RECON BN
7TH ED FORCE RECON CO.

COMFIDENTIAL
RECON PATROL [redacted] REPORT (C)

1. TEAM CALL SIGN: FANCY DAN (3-1) (6 MEN) OPO: [redacted]-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 030850H/031855H OCT 69 (10 HOURS)

3. ROUTE: YD165442 TO YD164445 TO YD161441 TO YD159442 TO YD159446
4. TERRAIN: THICK VEGETATION WITH SEVERE HILLS. RATE OF MOVEMENT (800-450)

METERS PER HOUR. RZ HAS GOOD COVER & CONCEALMENT.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD165442 WILL ACCOMODATE (1)CH-46. SITE IS HILL TOP WITH

(3-4)FT ELEPHANT GRASS. BEST APPROACH IS S/W WITH GOOD APPROACH [redacted]. SITE
AT YD159446 WILL ACCOMODATE (2)CH-46'S. SITE IS TOP OF HILL WITH (2-3)FT. VEGE-

TATION. TERRAIN FEATURES ARE STREAM AND DEEP DRAW TREE LINE TO SOUTH RUNNING E TO W.
6. [redacted]: 031345H OCT TM SPOTTED FIRST PARTY OF (5)NVA/VC, TO INF [redacted] SIZE

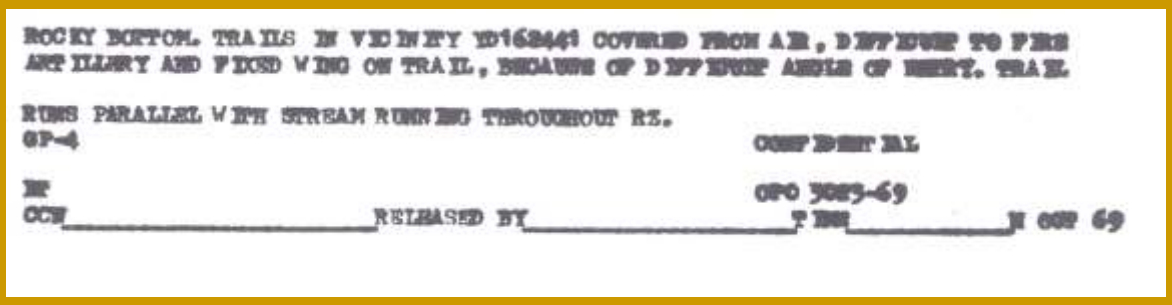
AND OTHER (4) CARRYING AK-47'S. AT 031346H OCT (2) MORE [redacted] CAME UPON TM'S.
POSITION. [redacted] WORE [redacted] UNIFORMS AND WERE GREEN. UNIFORMS WERE LIGHT GREEN.

TM FIRED UPON BOTH PARTIES PROBABLY KILLING (2)NVA/VC. AT 031347H AO GAINED OBSERVATION AND DELIVERED SUPPRESSIVE FIRE ON THE [redacted]. TM FOUND TRAIL [redacted] AND

BLOOD VIC YD158441?. AT YD154446 AO HAD FIXED WING ON STATION 200 METERS SW OF TM'S POSITION. ON AO'S RUN, AO RECEIVED SAF.

7. OTHER INFO: AT YD161441 TEAM FOUND (1)[redacted] (3D X 8 X 7)FT (FOR [redacted]
TO MORTAR BUNKER), AND A ROCKET LAUNCH PAD. IN VIC [redacted] WAS A TRAIL [redacted] AND

A MAIN TRAIL. TRAIL WAS (1)METER WIDE RUNNING SW/NE. AT YD163440 AND YD159442
TM FOUND NATURAL STREAM FORDS (3½-4)FT DEEP. STREAM (8-10)METERS WIDE WITH


ROCKY BOTTOM. TRAILS IN VICINITY YD162441 COVERED FROM AIR, DIFFICULT TO FIRE ARTILLERY AND FIXED WING ON TRAIL, BECAUSE OF DIFFICULT ANGLE OF MERIT. TRAIL RUNS PARALLEL WITH STREAM RUNNING THROUGHOUT RZ.
GP-4
CONFIDENTIAL
OPO 3029-69
CCN_____RELEASED BY_____TIME_____H OCT 69

OCTOBER 5, 1969

For the last few days, the war has been somewhat light for the teams out in the bush. There have been several enemy sightings with fire missions but no enemy contacts. The patrolling goes on as if the planned pullout was not going to happen. The enemy activity hasn't declined in any way in fact it is on the increase. I am sure with the pull back of US troops, the NVA know of what is to come and it is a big morale boost for them. The North, I feel, has always had the attitude that if they could just keep this war on a guerilla warfare basis, they could probably just wait us out. I am sure many in our government have probably felt that this is a no-win war for us but for reasons not known to me, they have just continued to endorse it, sending our young American men to fight. I do not understand the politics; all I know is in the I Corps, war goes on day after day.

With the rain now starting, air support is on weather hold. This makes it hard on the teams in the bush because with no choppers to extract them, their mission may be extended. We had word of two more relays to be closed find out that it will be Oscar and Foxtrot relays that will be shut down on the 5th. This move will further limit the distance that the recon units can penetrate into enemy held territory. I sure hope after these relays are pulled some guy in Washington doesn't

change his mind because we will be forced to retake all lost territory and wind up getting more men wounded and killed.

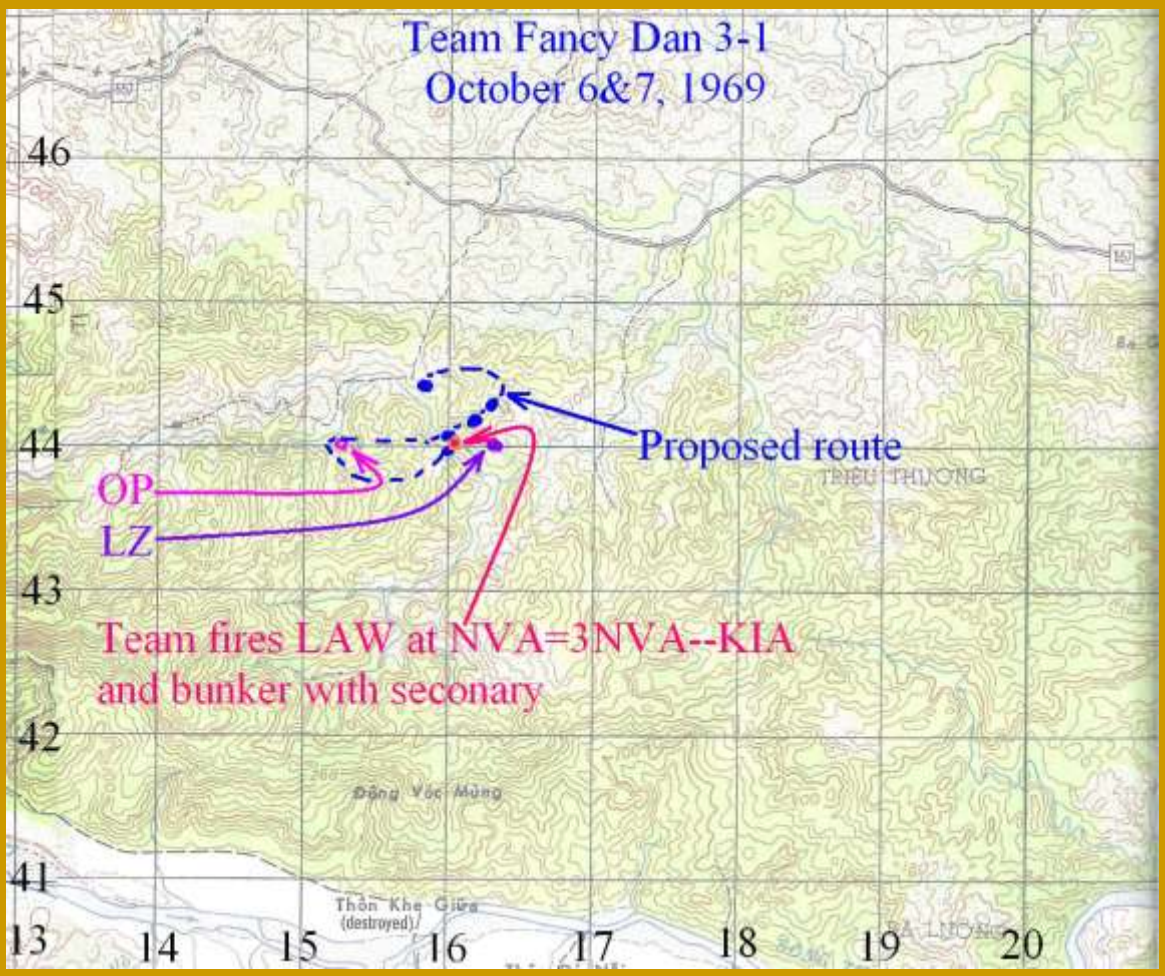
OCTOBER 6, 1969

It has rained 24 hours a day for the last three days with no relief. The teams in the bush are totally water logged and probably can't wait to get the hell out and get into some dry clothes. I remember during the rainy season putting my poncho over me with my head out and putting heat tabs under it for relief. It sure did help after days of being wet. The interesting thing about the rain in this country is that at any second it could just stop with the sun coming out. After the sun comes out, it only takes a short time for the temperature to soar and for the mountainous jungles to turn from cold and wet to hot and steaming. During these times, the leeches are all over the jungle floor and bushes as they search us out just as we search out the enemy or them, us. As soon as you sit down to rest on the jungle floor, the leeches as if by radar, home in on you squirming their way past your clothes and onto your body. They are a few inches long and after they gorge themselves on your blood, they get to be the size of a plum. Mosquitoes are just as bad and get as big as flies. It seems everything in the tropical jungle is damn bigger and meaner! The mosquitoes don't just bite, they sting. If not for the insect repellent that we are forced to put on our skin daily, we would probably be a pint low of blood and be left with a case of malaria. There are times when the teams do not have the luxury to stop and reapply bug juice. With rain and sweating, the last application washes off and we get chewed up anyway. It's a no-win situation crossing the difficult terrain and at the same time fighting off all the other harsh elements of the steaming jungle. At the same time, we also have to confront the enemy that is desperately trying to kill us and

occasionally our own supporting arms that at danger close range inflict casualties. With Death hanging over everyone's head, the stress sometimes becomes intolerable. You get so damn angry you almost want to get into a contact so you can just empty all of your pent-up rage. Yet we must go on day after day to survive. We are not afraid to fight but we don't want to lose our lives for nothing. Most troops aren't here fighting for the South or the US, they're just trying to do their time and get the hell out of this miserable place alive. I'm here for them.

At 1135 hours, the rain suddenly stops and within a short time hopefully the waterlogged teams will be extracted.

With the afternoon off to a start its Fancy Dan 3-1, Contact. Fancy Dan 3-1 has made contact with 3 to 5 NVA standing near bunkers. The team has fired a Law at the NVA destroying the enemy as well as the bunker. With streams too flooded to cross, the team has broken contact and pulled back to a more defendable position. Fancy Dan 3-1 has made three possible NVA kills and at this time is observing the area. The team is requesting an AO and is notified that one will arrive soon. The AO now on station is checking out the area around the team. As AO runs fixed-wing 200 meters from the team's position, the team aids by adjusting on the target. After the enemy position is covered by heavy support, the AO makes several low passes over the suspected enemy location as Fancy Dan 3-1 leaves the area.



h. Op0 3034-69 (3-1) 060944H Oct 69 (061745H Oct 69). At 071535H team observed well-concealed bunker with three NVA/VC in front of it. The Patrol Leader fired at bunker with LAW and made a direct hit from 60 meters. There was aloud secondary explosion with complete destruction of bunker, which knocked over surrounding trees. Team did not closely examine bunker after the explosion because of a deep swollen stream. Results of contact was 3 NVA/VC KIA.

DRAFTED BY: WLP/WIH
SEC S-2 HQ FORCE REC 2
CMD_____

DTG/ROUTINE_____ 2 OCT 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (-) (REIN) DON
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHIB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG OKR ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEN
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
THIRD MAR REGS
FOURTH MAR REGS
TWELFTH MAR REGS
MAG THREE WINE
SR ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN
THIRD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
CSV
CGC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (C)

1. RECON TEAM: FANCY DAN (3-1) (6 MEN) CPO 3034-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 060940H/081745H OCT 69 (96 HOURS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD159445 TO YD164443 TO YD163442 TO YD163441 TO YD160440
4. TERRAIN: DOUBLE CANOPY, THICK UNDERGROWTH AND RUBBOUN TRAILS. MODERATE

COVER & CONCEALMENT. RATE OF MOVEMENT (200)METERS PER HOUR. OP SITE AT YD154440 W/OBS TO NE, (4000-5000)METERS TO S, AND (200')METERS E & W.

5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD164440 WILL ACCOMODATE (1)CH-46. SITE IS HILL TOP WITH (2)FT ELEPHANT GRASS. BEST APPROACH IS NE/SW WITH MOD APPROACH OBSTACLES OR

PROMINENT TERRAIN FEATURES. SITE AT YD164443 WILL ACCOMODATE (1)CH-46. HLZ IS HILL TOP WITH (2)FT ELEPHANT GRASS. BEST APPROACH IS S/E WITH MOD APPROACH

OBSTACLES OR PROMINENT TERRAIN FEATURES.
6. ENEMY: AT 071335H OCT TEAM OBSD WELL CONCEALED BUNKER WITH (3)NVA/VC IN

FRONT TALKING. PL SHOT AT BUNKER WITH LAAW AND MADE A DIRECT HIT FROM (60) METERS. THERE WAS A LOUD SECONDARY EXPLOSION WITH COMPLETE DESTRUCTION OF

BUNKER, WHICH KNOCKED OVER SURROUNDING TREES. TM DID NOT CLOSELY EXAMINE BUNKER AFTER EXPLOSION, BECAUSE OF A DEEP, SWOLLEN STREAM BETWEEN TM AND BUNKER.

RESULTS OF CONTACT WAS (3)NVA/VC KIA (C).
7. OTHER INFO: NONE

GP-4
BT

CONFIDENTIAL
CPO 3034-69

CCH_____ REPEATED BY_____ TIME_____ 2 OCT 69

At 1515 hours, I hear over the radio Hasty Pudding 2D2 has made a sighting of 5 NVA but lose sight of them in the thick jungle. As the team sits in an OP observing the area the NVA move toward the team's position.

1530 Hours; Hasty Pudding has made another sighting. This time it is 10 NVA with AK-47s and heavy packs. They too are moving toward the team. With the team still in their OP site, they continue to observe the enemy. In minutes the team has made another sighting of 5 more NVA moving in their direction. It appears that the enemy knows that the team is there and is closing in on them from three sides

1535 Hours; Hasty Pudding 2D2 has another sighting. This time it is 15 NVA and they are at 50 feet and closing. A request for AO and gunships is made as the team is working up a fire mission. Shortly afterward the team's radioman reports, "Contact, Contact taking heavy fire from the east." As the artillery fire mission is fired at the team's rear, Hasty Pudding is now on the run to avoid being surrounded. As 155 rounds cover the team's rear, they proceed rapidly toward their extraction point. With AO and gunships minutes away, I am hoping the team is not being pushed into an ambush just ahead. With the enemy still closing on the team, arty and small arms fire from the team hold the enemy at bay. The artillery is discontinued when the team reaches the landing zone because two Cobra gunships have arrived and have started giving the team fire support. The Cobra gunships are well equipped with 2.75 rockets and thousands of rounds of 7.62 ammo. As the gunships dip their noses, they open fire on the advancing enemy force. These gunships are very formidable weapons platforms and

when they unleash their firepower, it is quite a sight to behold when you're not on the receiving end of their firepower. With the enemy still moving closer to the team, it is time to get them out. Gunships cover the team's rear as the extract bird drops into the LZ. Once in the zone, Hasty Pudding makes a run for the extract chopper. Still taking enemy fire, the chopper lifts out of the zone with all team members alpha sierra. The team will be returned to Quang Tri Recon for debriefing. (1750 hours)

As the day continues without further incident all teams are all secure. What a day!

The following is Team Hasty Pudding Map and patrol reports:



1. Op0 3033-69 (2D2) 061530H Oct 69 (061810Z Oct 69). At 061543 at YD0011434 team made contact with five (5) NVA/VC approximately 25 meters east of teams insert coordinates. One (1) NVA/VC was carrying a pack and all were carrying AK-47's. All wore green utilities and wore pith helmets. At first contact, team's point man returned fire and two (2) NVA/VC dropped to the ground. Team then moved west towards insertion HLZ and higher ground. With no communications the team moved on. Reaching the HLZ the team reestablished communications and AO came on station and was told to fire to their east. AO expended all ordnance and called for another AO. 2nd AO came on station but did not expand any ordnance. Team moved 500-600 meters at 061810H and was extracted without further incident. Results: two (2) NVA/VC KIA; (1) NVA/VC WIA.

DRAFTED BY:LTJ:ptm
SEC S2 PH 3D REC 2
CWO_____

IMMEDIATE ~~ROUTINE~~ 070829 OCT 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (REIN) (*) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNC

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CEE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECH) QTR
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD FORCE RECON CO
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: HASTY PUDDING (2D2) (6 MEN) OPO 3033
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 061530H/061810H OCT 69 (3 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD002443 TO YD999436
4. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS, 6-10' ELEPHANT GRASS, THICK VEGETATION

RATE OF MOVEMENT 75-100 METERS PER HOUR. GOOD COVER AND CONCEALMENT. ALL NATURAL WATER SOURCES ARE FLOODED.

5. HLZ'S: ENTIRE RZ.
6. ENEMY: AT 061543H AT YD001434 TM MADE CONTACT WITH FIVE (5) NVA/VC

APPROX 25 M EAST OF INSERT COORDIANTES ONE (1) NVA/VC WAS CARRYING A PACK AND ALL WERE CARRYING AK 47'S. ALL WERE WEARING PITH HELMETS, AND

GREEN UTILITIES. AT INITIAL CONTACT TM'S POINT MAN RETURNED FIRE AND SAW TWO (2) NVA/VC DROP TO THE GROUND. TEAM THEN MOVED WEST TOWARDS

INSERT HLZ AND HIGHER GROUND. TEAM LACKED COMM WITH RELAY. COMM REESTABLISHED WHEN TEAM REACHED HLZ. AT THIS TIME AO WAS ON STATION AND

TEAM DIRECTED AO'S FIRE TO TM'S EAST. AO EXPENDED ORDNANCE AND REQUESTED ANOTHER AO. FIRST AO RTB AND 2D AO CAME ON STATION, AND EST COMM WITH TM.

AO DID NOT EXPEND ORDNANCE AT THIS TIME. AT 1730H TM MOVED 500-600 METERS NW TO HLZ. 061810H TM WAS EXTRACTED. RES:TWO(2) NVA/VC KIA AND ONE (1)

NVA/VC WIA
7. OTHER INFO: NEGATIVE

GP-4
BT
CCN_____RELEASED BY_____TIME_____H OCT 69

OPO 3033
CONFIDENTIAL

OCTOBER 7, 1969

It's another day of rain and the birds are on weather hold. There will be no inserts or extracts until the rain stops. All teams are secure at this time as they continue to patrol their assigned recon zones. The typical zones consist of six, 1000-meter grid squares. The teams move through each grid square looking for enemy or signs of enemy. Each team's job is to cover their assigned zone in usually 4 to 5 days. When signs are found, notes are made of every detail. Once the team returns to the rear, the information is given to the debriefing officer.

1740 hours; Ringlet 3D2 has made a sighting of 5 NVA carrying AK-47s and heavy packs. The NVA, spotting the team stand and stare, then turn and move in the opposite direction as if to say "not today, the weather is bad enough." Both team and enemy move in different directions.

As the day moves on without incident, all teams working are alpha sierra at 2155 hours.

OCTOBER 11, 1969

It is another day of war and the day is off to a start. This morning the rain has stopped and inserts and extracts are underway. One of the members of the COC has finished his time in the Nam and it's a fast farewell. For somebody that has been here for thirteen months, long farewells are not in order. For the rest of us the war goes on as the teams are inserted and extracted. The day goes very well until 1550 hours. Team Barcroft 1B1 has spotted 5 NVA moving up a hillside while in their OP site. Within minutes the team has a fire mission underway and the first round has made its impact. With an adjustment and a fire for effect, the team believes it has 5 enemy KIA's. Barcroft 1B1

continues to observe the area for more enemy. The rest of the day proceeds without incident. At 2147 hours all is secure and one day closer to going home.

OCTOBER 15, 1969

Checking in at the COC, I have found all teams to be secure at 0500 hours. Today I will take Major B. to Dong Ha for a meeting at Headquarters. With the day spent sitting around waiting for the Major, it has been a skating day for me. Once the meeting is over, we find out good news about the pullout as we proceed back to Quang Tri. Once back in the area, the word is passed our pullout will be moved to November 20 or 22nd and the best news for the bush Marines is all patrolling operations will cease on November 5, 1969. At that time, it's pack your gear everyone get your party hats on because we're out of the Nam for sure.

Talk about hard! With 38 days left in the Nam the pressure is on. Nobody wants to get into a contact in the last few days. There are only 21 more days of patrols and 38 days of being in this place of death. With all teams in the bush having no problems, all are secure and another day is finished.

OCTOBER 16, 1969

The past few days have been uneventful, thank God, but that changed last night at 2135 hours. We were taken under attack with enemy rockets impacting in the area until 2245 hours. I don't know how many rockets were taken but no one was hurt that I know of. At this stage of the war, one rocket is too many. All teams working are secure

and have been all day. I would rather have a long day without anything happening than a short one with teams in enemy contact. Tonight there will be a puny USO show (we don't get any big shows here close to the DMZ) and if all goes well at the COC, maybe I'll make it.

OCTOBER 17, 1969

It's 36 days and a wake up before we depart and inserts and extracts are underway. I hope the day goes smoothly. With the new pullout date all teams must really watch their step. From the reports of units in and around the I Corps area, there is no change in the war or daily contacts. With the teams being inserted and luckily having few problems, the day goes fast. With map updates to plot, soon another day will end.

1830 Hours; It's team Isthmus 3-3 and the team has found a bunker complex within the DMZ. Isthmus estimates the bunkers to be more than 100 and they are now deep within the complex checking out the area. (1845 hours) As the team is checking out the bunkers, they have made a find. The team has found mines (tank type), RPG's and mortars at grid YD137753. I am thinking, now is not a good time of the day to be doing this. But with the team finding bunkers of equipment and ammo, they are told to take one of each enemy item if possible and return to Con Thien. The team takes the items and boots out of the area. While moving out of the area the team makes contact with NVA and is now taking and returning fire (1905 hours). With a request for an AO, Isthmus 3-3 is attempting to break enemy contact and move to a more defendable position. Isthmus has used their heads and gifted the NVA with four C-S gas grenades. With gas and small arms fire from the team, Isthmus manages to break enemy contact, eluding the enemy force for the moment. With the team now in a more defendable position, an AO

is now on station. The AO adjusts on the enemy's position and fixed wing conducts air strikes in support of team Isthmus. (1930 hours) With night now closing on team Isthmus, they are secure but enemy continue to search for the team's position. As the team sets up a three-sixty within a bomb crater, booby traps are set out to warn the team of the enemy's arrival during the night. It is hoped the night will go smoothly for the team and on first light an extract attempt will be made. For now, we can only wait. (2240 hours)

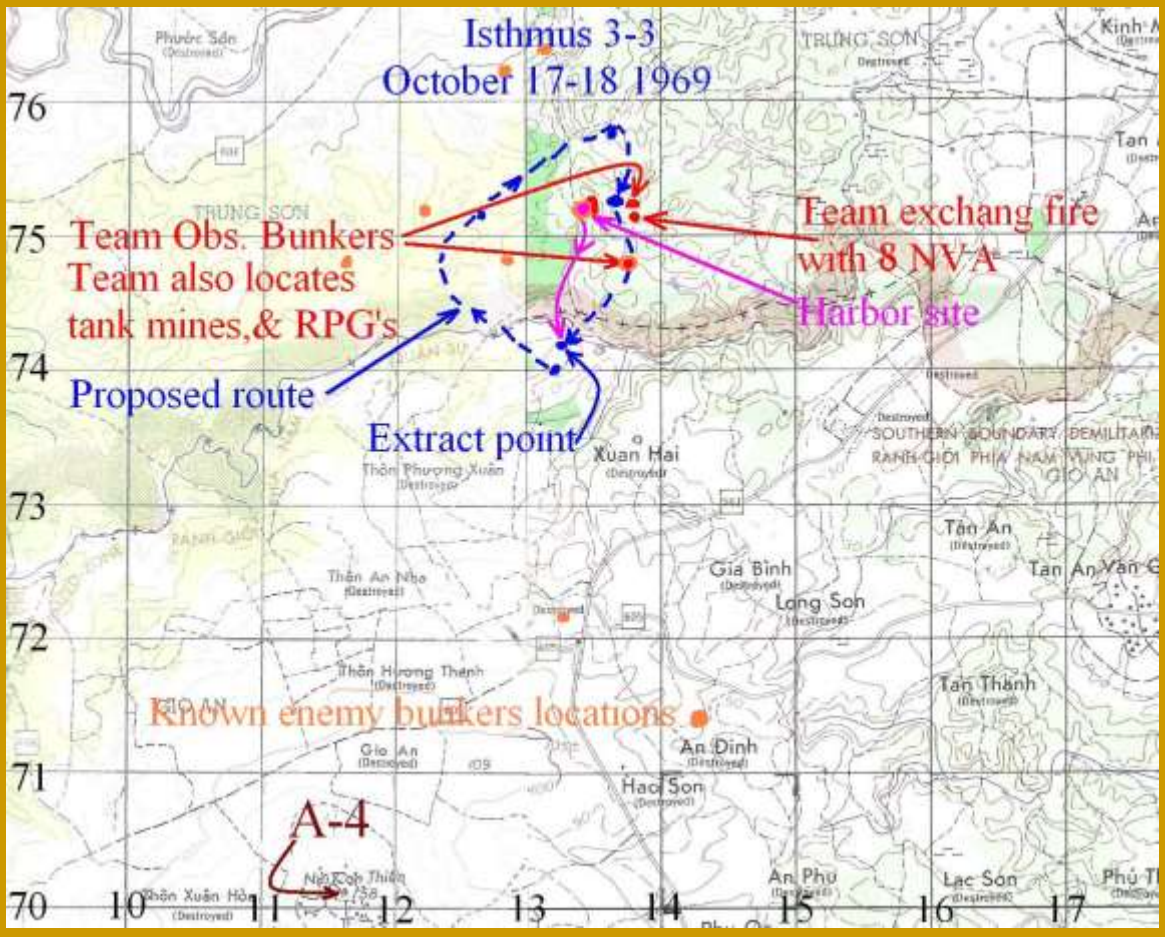
All teams, now in their harbor sites are secure at this time and my day is at a close, 2300 hours.

0CTOBER 18, 1969

I have arrived at the COC early. It is 0405 hours as I wait for the dawn light to appear. I know that just before first light all teams will be moving out of their harbor sites. Knowing the enemy is still close to team Isthmus, my ears are listening up for any word from the team. Before first light Isthmus 3-3 is boot and so is the enemy that have been close by the team's position. Just out of the night's site, the team's booby traps set before departure have gone off making the team aware that the enemy was on their trail. Still early in the morning hours, Isthmus makes enemy contact and is now taking fire. With support now overhead, gun runs are being made in support of the team. As the enemy closes on the team's position, a 46-drops into the LZ that the team has reached. The bird sets into the zone and is taken under heavy enemy fire forcing it to pull out before being able to pick up the team. The team moves a short distance the second bird is now inbound in an attempt to extract the team. As the second bird sets into the hot LZ, it too takes heavy enemy fire but the team manages to get on board and

the chopper lifts out of the zone to safety. The team will be returned to Recon area for debrief. Upon extract of the team, the 12th Marines were standing by after air strikes on the extract point with nine batteries of arty to drop 250 rounds into the bunker complex and extract point. The remainder of the morning has gone without incident. All working teams are secure within their assigned recon zones.

The following is the report of that mission:



1. OpO 3072-69 (3-3) 141420H Oct 69 (180845Z Oct 69). On 171820H at YD138753 team spotted six (6) (NVA/VC) wearing green utilities, bush covers, cartridge belts, and carrying five AK-47's. Team exchanged fire and called for an AO. AO came on station and ran ordnance. The AO received small arms fire from vicinity of YD138755. The AO later ran suppressive fire on this area. The team continued their mission. At YD139757 team found trail running North-South which the team followed. On 171600H at YD138753 team heard voices, the voices were coming from within a bunker complex of approximately 100 bunkers. The bunkers approximate size was (4'X4'X10'), the bunkers were well constructed of 3" TO 4" diameter logs. The bunkers appeared to be of the living type and were used within the entire bunker complex. While searching the bunkers, the team found (1) RPG round & (8) anti-tank mines. All captured ordnance was brought back to base.

DRAFTED BY: PFC [illegible]
SEC S-2 FM FORCE REC 2
C-O

[illegible] 19 05 05 1 OCT 69

FM: CG [illegible] DIV (-) (REIN) MAG
TO: CO XXIV CORPS INTD
CG III MAF DTG

INFO: CG CMD ZERO ONE A [illegible] DIV CMD
FMFPAC EDC I FFTR MAF DIV (RECON) CTR
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
CG ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
7TH RCT RECON BN
7TH MD FORCE RECON CO.

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
CGV
CGC

SECRET
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT

1. TEAM CALL SIGN: ISTHMUS (3-3) (8 MEN) OPO 3072-69
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 141420H/180845H OCT 69 (86 HOURS)

5. ROUTE: FM YD133740 TO YD126734 TO YD130753 TO YD136757 TO YD139748.
4. TERRAIN: LOW ROLLING HILLS WITH THICK UNDERBRUSH. RATE OF MOVEMENT

(50-100) METERS PER HOUR. GOOD COVER & CONCEALMENT.
5. HLZ'S: SITE AT YD153743 WILL ACCOMMODATE (2)CH-46'S. SIDE IS A HILL

TOP WITH (3)FT ELEPHANT GRASS. THE BEST APPROACH IS E-W WITH NEG OBSTACLES.
6. ENEMY: ON 171820H AT YD130753 TM SPOTTED (6)NVA/VC WEARING GREEN UNI-

FORMS, BUSH HATS, CARTRIDGE BELTS, AND CARRYING (5)AK-47'S. TM ENGAGED
FIRE AND CALLED AO ON STATION. AO RAN ORDNANCE AND TOOK SAF FROM VIC YD130753.

AO LATER RAN SUPPRESSIVE FIRE ON THIS AREA. TM CONTINUED MISSION.
7. OTHER INFO: ON 141700H AT YD126734 TM FOUND WELL USED (1')WIDE TRAIL

RUNNING E-W. TRAIL USED IN LAST (5)HOURS. TM FOUND (15)(7.62MM)SHORT RDS &
(50)(.50)CAL RDS. NEG ACTION TAKEN. ON 150950H AT YD133740 TM FOUND (18") 18"

WIDE TRAIL RUNNING N-S. TRAIL USED IN LAST (12)HOURS. ON 160930H AT YD130753
TM HEARD POUNDING, HAMMERING, AND WOOD CHOPPING. TM CALLED F/M WITH NEG RDA

EXCEPT THAT TM HEARD VOICES OF (3-4)PEOPLE AND (20-30)CHICKENS. TM CALLED
F/M AND AO ORDNANCE WITH NEG RDA. SHORTLY THEREAFTER AT VIC YD130753 TM

HEARD BANGING ON TIN. NEG ACTION TAKEN. ON 160935H AT VIC YD137748 TM
HEARD MORTAR TUBE POPPING AND ARTILLERY FIRING. NAG ACTION TAKEN. ON 170945H

AT YD130757 TM FOUND TRAIL RUNNING N-S WHICH TM FOLLOWED. ON 171600H AT
YD130753 TM HEARD VOICES, VOICES WERE COMING FROM WITHIN A BUNKER COMPLEX

OF APPROX (100)BUNKERS. APPROX SIZE OF BUNKERS (4'X 4'X 10'). BUNKERS WERE
WELL CONSTRUCTED OF (3"-4")DIAMETER LOGS. BUNKERS APPEARED TO BE LIVED BUNKERS

AND WERE USED WITHIN PAST (30)DAYS. TRAIL COMPLEX WITHIN NEAR BUNKER COMPLEX.
WHILE SEARCHING BUNKERS TM FOUND (1)RPG RD & (8)MT MINES. ALL ORDNANCE EVAC-

UATED TO REAR NEXT MORNING. ON 170915H AT YD136756 TM FOUND TUNNEL ENTRANCE
(4½)FT IN DIAMETER. TUNNEL WENT (8')DOWN AND TURNED EAST. TUNNEL NOT RECENTLY

USED. NEG ACTION TAKEN. ON 171405H AT VIC YD139754 TM HEARD (5)SHOTS FROM
AN AK-47. NEG ACTION TAKEN.

GP-4
RF

SECRET
CPO 3072-69

CCN_____ RELEASED BY_____ TIME_____ H OCT 69

ISTHMUS (3-3) 8 men; Team inserted by truck at CON THIEN and walked into RZ. At 141700H, team found a well used trail vic YD126734. After checking an area by the trail, team heard voices and observed bunker complex at vic YD137748. Fixed wing air on station ran ordnance on target area and team went into bunker complex next morning, finding (1) RPG round and (8) antitank mines which were turned in when team extracted. At 171820H team exchanged a burst of fire with (6) NVA/VC and helicopter gun-

SECRET ENC

ships ran suppressive fires as team was extract-ed at 180845H.

(2) ISTHMUS (3-3) VIC YD 140752 AT 171758H FOUND A BUNKER COMPLEX OF APPROX. (100) BUNKERS. TEAM SEARCHED (1) BUNKER AND FOUND (1) RPG ROUNDS AND (10) ANTI-TANK MINES WEIGHING (20) LBS EACH. TEAM EMPLACED SENSOR DEVICES AND WILL CALL FIREMISSION IF SENSORS ARE ACTIVATED. SAMPLES OF RPG ROUNDS AND ANTI-TANK MINES ARE IN TEAMS POSSESSION. TEAM WILL SEARCH COMPLEX AT FIRST LIGHT.

(3) ISTHMUS (3-3) VIC 4D140752 AT 171840H EXCHANGED FIRE WITH AN ESTIMATED (8) NVA/VC. CONTACT WAS INITIATED BY (3) NVA/VC WITH AK-47s. TEAM ATTEMPTED TO BREAK CONTACT WITH ~~[illegible]~~ CS WITHOUT SUCCESS. A.O. CAME ON STATION AND MADE NUMEROUS GUN RUNS WHILE RECEIVING HEAVY GROUND FIRE (SAF) FROM ENEMY POSITION. TEAM SUFFERED NEGATIVE CASUALTIES. RESULTS OF A.O. IS UNKNOWN. TEAM MOVED INTO NIGHT POSITION AT 4D 135753. TEAM IS RECEIVING NEGATIVE FURTHER FIRE AT THIS TIME AND IS DIRECTING FIRE MISSION ON SUSPECTED ENEMY POSITION.

— ADDITIONAL COMMENTS —

SENSORS USED BY TEAM ISTHMUS (3-3) ARE PATROL SEISMIC INTRUSION DEVICES SUCH AS THOSE CARRIED BY ALL FORCE TEAMS. SENSORS DID PICK UP MOVEMENT AT (VIC 4D 140752) AND FIRE MISSIONS WILL BE DIRECTED AT THAT GRID EVERY (30) MIN.

TH RD FORCE RNG CON RAISANCE COMPANY
TEAM DEBRIEF

Team Call Sign: (ISTHMUS) (3-3)
Team Leader Sgt. Patterson
CPO:

Fr. Situation
At Lower bottom of RE Army Ranger Team in operations will have to move these AO.

Arty Support : At (A4) 105 how.

Enemy Act

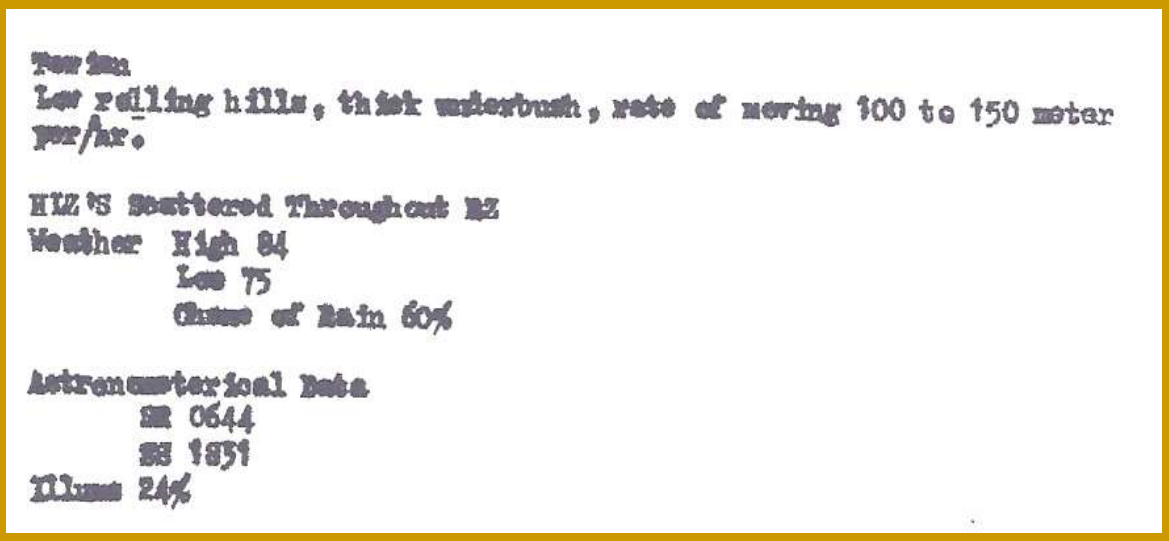
At 240930H Aug 69, Recon. Tm. Sanforize contct at YD148729
26 Sept. YH 139751 For Recon Tm. made contctwith NVA/VC
moving W-W (1 En KIA)

6 Oct Recon. Tm spotted lights moving S-W

10 Oct Radar pick up 3 Vehs moving in ukn dir at YD 189767
in witch Hyw 561

Rcmnt pos. at YD 115752

Rkts at
YD129748
128763
125753
133772
131765
116747


Terrain
Low rolling hills, thick underbrush, rate of moving 100 to 150 meter per/hr.

HLZ'S Scattered Throughout AZ
Weather High 84
Low 75
Chance of Rain 60%

Astronomterical Data
BR 0644
SS 1851
Illum 24%

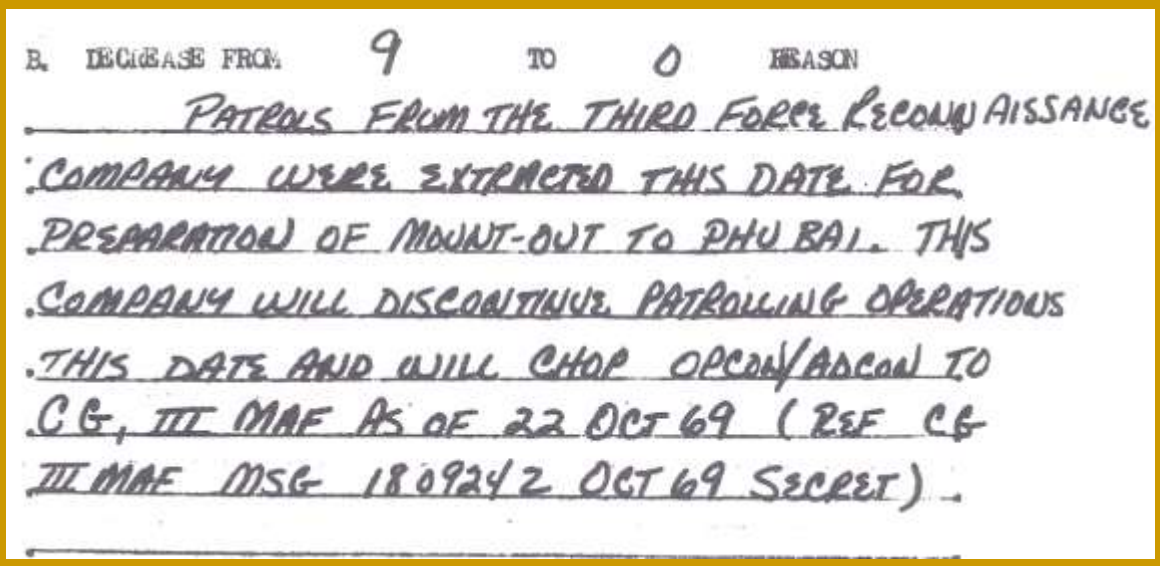
With the afternoon inserts and extracts almost complete there has been no problems. All teams working are boot or in OPs checking out their assigned recon zones.

As our countdown of days slowly moves forward, I know for the Recon Marine going to the bush, it is going to be tough. With few days left, each man in the COC is hoping for the best for all who patrol the jungles in search of Charlie. I am sure missions will probably be much harder for the Force Recon teams knowing that they will be staying in Vietnam and possibly moving farther south. I am sure that things are not going to get any better and probably are going to get worse. Marine Recon, being the eyes and ears of the division, is definitely a difficult task. These men have seen and experienced some of the heaviest fighting in the war. The war up along the DMZ has been different in that in this location we are fighting division size North Vietnamese Army units that are well trained and well equipped with Soviet and Chinese artillery which in many cases outguns and out ranges our own. The only advantage we have over them is our air power but in many cases, they

nullify that by using the dense mountainous jungle vegetation to camouflage their presence.

As the day closes without incident, teams working the bush are secure at this time. With the teams now moving into their night's harbor sites the day is at a close. 2215 hours

The 19TH has gone without problems. Most of the day I was in and out of the COC checking on the teams and then running over to help with the packing of equipment for the pullout. It was a long day but we seem to have gotten a lot done.


B. DECREASE FROM 9 TO 0 REASON
PATROLS FROM THE THIRD FORCE RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY WERE EXTRACTED THIS DATE FOR PREPARATION OF MOVE-OUT TO PHU BAI. THIS COMPANY WILL DISCONTINUE PATROLLING OPERATIONS THIS DATE AND WILL CHOP OPCON/ADCON TO CG, III MAF AS OF 22 OCT 69 (REF CG III MAF MSG 180924Z OCT 69 SECRET).

OCTOBER 20, 1969

With the start of the 20th, inserts and extracts are well underway at this time. Today all Force Recon teams will be taken out of the bush. They will be making their move south to Phu Bai to start operations out of that location. I can only wish them good luck.

I have thought about asking if it might be possible to join them working in the COC or getting with a team. I kind of made mention about it to Major B. but he just looked at me and said, "I think you've

done enough Smitty, it's time to go home." Maybe I should leave it at that. These men are very important to me and wish I could carry on in some way to help. I came back to the Nam in hopes of maybe saving lives. I was too late to help with Robert, Danny and Fred and somehow believe, had I stayed behind, the outcome would have been different. Even so, the hate and revenge run deep within me. I would have never got enough paybacks for the pain and death suffered by my friends.

With no changes in the war situation, battalion will still shut down on November 5, 1969. There still has been no word of any change on the 20th or 22nd pullout date. There has been talk that we will be going to Okinawa.

The day has gone very well as of 1800 hours with all teams secure at this time. As grid plots take place, teams are preparing to move into their night's harbor sites. Two or three more hours and it will be another one down. As the day closes, all in 3rd Recon Battalion are short. Only sixteen days and a wake up left until November 5th.

OCTOBER 22, 1969

With 14 days of bush time left, the day is off to a start. Inserts and extracts are underway as the team's line up for their turns to be inserted into the jungles. It seems almost impossible that in just 14 days our teams will all be taken out of the bush. With every tick of the clock, it's like waiting for the big one to make a direct hit right on your head. The tension these men have on them right now cannot be described. I sometimes watch them as they come off the birds after a long patrol and for young men being haunted with death every day, their faces appear aged much beyond their years.

Most of the day has gone without incident. There has been a brief sighting made by two teams but due to the thickness of the jungle in which the teams were in, the enemy forces are undetected at this time. After chow there is much map work to take care of as the teams working move about their assigned recon zone in search of the enemy.

1401 Hours – Suddenly the radio blasts with, “Contact, Contact, Veneer Contact, taking heavy small arms fire and ChiCom’s at this time.” There is a “Roger Copy” as the team returns fire. Team Veneer is in contact with approximately 15 NVA and is requesting AO and gunships. As the firefight continues, Veneer comes back with, “be advised we are taking more ChiCom’s and have one WIA at this time.” “Roger copy, one WIA. Be advised AO and gunships will be on station in one zero”—“Veneer copy.” As the firefight has somewhat lightened, the AO and gunships arrive overhead with 46s standing by for extract. As the perimeter around the team is worked over with 7.62 and rockets, the team still takes light enemy fire. With no time wasted, the gunships drop in and strafe the area while the 46 makes an inbound to extract the team. With gunships taking most of the enemy fire, the team with wounded are able to get on the chopper and out of the hot landing zone. At 1710 hours, all are secure as they return to Quang Tri Recon for debriefing. With wounded dropped off for medical attention, we hear that the wounded team member will be okay. Veneer was lucky today things could have been much worse. With our pullout so close, to lose any member of our battalion would be the saddest departure of all. All teams working are secure at 1800 hours.

With teams now moving into their night’s harbor sites, the CO’s briefing has ended my day at 2250 hours.

With several uneventful days in the battalion and the bush, it is now October 31, 1969 and the day is in full swing. All inserts and extracts are underway, having no problems as of yet. There is still a full contingent of teams in the bush but I am sure most of them are trying to keep a low profile. With the close of this day, it's four days and a wake up yet the war for us still goes on. We have only four more days but if you're in the bush, that's a lifetime away.

We have gotten the word that Okinawa is where we definitely will be going and we will all be going by ship. I have only been on one ship and that was when I was medivaced out on my first tour to the USS Sanctuary. The food, the beds and the comfort on the ship was great. The only bad thing was it was loaded with suffering wounded from this war. I can remember many good things but I will never forget the cries of pain throughout the day and night of the men on my ward. I hope the ship we will be going on will have real plates and pillows. I guess I will have to get used to good cold milk, pillows and not having to walk 200 yards to take a shower. My pillow is an old milk bag aired up and plugged with a wooden dowel stick. Once put inside an old laundry bag it worked. I think the hardest thing we will have to do is to get back to the stateside routine of shining your boots and keeping uniforms squared away. There are no bush Marines, especially recon bush Marines with shined bush boots. Since November of '67, I was always told there were two things that a Recon bush Marine never does and I mean never. One, is shine your bush boots and the second is letting someone else wear your bush hat. And may you be damned to hell if you should ever wash it. The monsoon will take care of any washing that is needed. It was bad luck to go against these two traditions and over here, who needs bad luck? I guess for anyone that can sleep on

the ground in the rain for days on end, put up with steaming 130-degree jungle heat and eat cold food out of a can, anywhere but here would be, heaven. I just hope wherever we end up, there are no anti-war demonstrators. We have suffered enough.

With the day going without problems, it looks as if we may have skated through another one. All working, are secure at this time. 1800 hours.

With team plots to be made on the maps, the day is not over yet.

1803 Hours – Team Barcroft 1B1 has movement. The team is in the Cua Viet area and this area is infested with enemy troops.

1840 Hours – With movement getting closer to the team, it happens. "Contact, Contact, Barcroft Contact, taking heavy enemy fire. Be advised, approximately 20 NVA, request AO and gunships." (1845 Hours) With air support now on the way to the team's location, Barcroft still in heavy enemy contact, is now taking ChiCom's. With a Roger copy, the team comes back with, "be advised we have one WIA at this time." With the key of the handset the heavy fire and incoming grenades can be heard as they rumble around the team's position. With a fire mission now impacting in the team's aid, the enemy is held at bay for the moment. As the contact progresses, PBR's (boats) have made attempts to move in close to the team's position by way of the river in hopes of aiding in the enemy contact but the team is too far inland and they are of no help. As arty pounds the team's perimeter, the enemy are very close to the team and Barcroft is still taking heavy enemy fire. At 1940 hours, Barcroft is advising that the team is taking more ChiCom grenades and at this time have taken two more WIA's. (2000 Hours) Barcroft, still in a battle for their lives, have not only heavy arty support

around their position, but are having illumination being fired in hopes of seeing where to adjust their fire on the strong enemy force. With a check fire on the arty, the air support has the team's location and is inbound. As gunships drop in over the team's position, they let loose with as much 7.62 minigun fire as possible. Door gunners aim in on enemy targets just feet from the team as the pilots put their rockets on target. With the area around the team riddled with massive gun fire, the illumination has stopped. There will be an extract attempt as the 46 drops into the hot location. As gunships cover for the inbound bird, the chopper sets in the zone. Once in the zone, the enemy opens fire on the team and bird as Barcroft shoots their way to the chopper and the bird lifts to the sky. They're out and they have taken heavy fire on the extract. As of this moment, it is not known if anyone else was hurt. With wounded team mates being dropped off for medical aid, the remainder of the team will be brought back to Quang Tri Recon for debriefing. With the team out at 2040 hours, I am thinking that's a hell of a way to end the month. To say the least, it sure wasn't any Halloween party, it was worse, this time Death was there looking for a soul to steal.

With all working teams in their harbor sites, all remaining teams are secure at 2230 hours. Four days and a wakeup.

NOVEMBER 2, 1969

The word on November 1st was that Barcroft's WIA's were treated and released. It is good that all team members are okay. Today we have had a few inserts. Tomorrow will be the last day for teams to be put in the bush unless there is a change in mission. The next extracts will be it

and all teams will be out of the bush. At this time all working are secure and there have been no enemy sightings or contacts.

The remainder of the day has gone well and as of 1800 hours, all teams are alpha sierra. As the work on plotting the teams in the bush continues, soon the day will be at an end. The CO's briefing will close this day with only two more and a wake up before it's over. 2124 hours

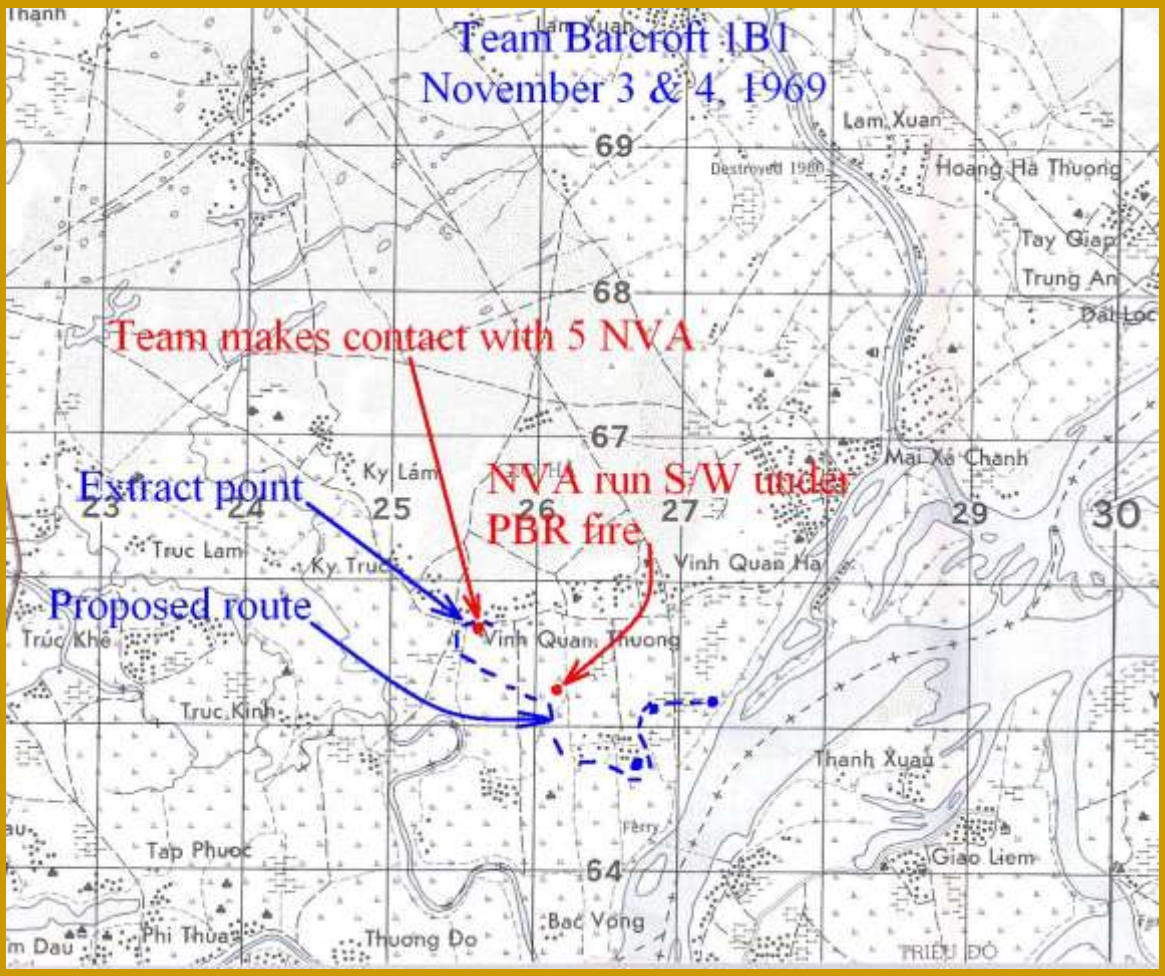
NOVEMBER 3, 1969

Our day is off as usual. I can't believe my eyes. Barcroft is being put in again. Man, if anyone deserves to skate, I would say let it be them. With everyone now down to counting hours, we all continue to keep our fingers crossed.

With the early morning inserts, it appears the teams in the bush are all doing fine. At this time there have been no sightings or contacts. As the morning hours slowly move by, the plotting of the teams working goes on just like any other day in the war. We're still not out of the woods on this deal and we all know that at any second any one of the teams working could be in a world of shit.

As the morning of the 3rd proceeds, it happens. It's Barcroft 1B1 again and they have made a contact with approximately seven NVA and are now exchanging fire which results in one enemy KIA and one WIA. The exchange of fire is heavy and Barcroft has also incurred WIA's but nothing serious. As the team pulls back from the enemy contact, the team's support pushes the enemy into a tree line. Now with air support overhead, gunships drop in to support the team. A reaction force is quickly dropped in to aid in the search for the NVA. At this time all teams are secure. (1605 hours)

The following is the report of that mission:



DRAFTED BY: JMD: ptm
SEC S2 PH 3D REC 2
CWO_____

IMMEDIATE/ROUTINE 050503Z NOV 69

FM: CG THIRD MAR DIV (REIN) (-) DGH
TO: CG XXIV CORPS PHB
CG III MAF DNG

INFO: CG ONE ZERO ONE AIRBORNE DIV CHE
FIRST BDE FIFTH INF DIV (MECY) QTR
FOURTH MARINES
TWELFTH MARINES
MAG THREE NINE
SR. ADVISOR QUANG TRI PROVINCE
THIRD RECON BN

COPY TO:
G-2
G-3
GSV
COC

CONFIDENTIAL
RECON DEBRIEFING REPORT (U)

1. RECON TEAM: BARCROFT (1B1) (6 MEN) OPO 3141
2. DTG INSERTED/EXTRACTED: 030930H/041040H NOV 69 (24 HRS)

3. ROUTE: FM YD273652 TO YD269651 TO YD267647
4. TERRAIN: RICE PADDIES, 1-3' ELEPHANT GRASS, RATE OF MOVEMENT

UNLIMITED, NUMEROUS OP SITES, POOR COVER AND CONCEALMENT.
5. HLZ'S: ENTIRE RZ.

6. ENEMY: 031045H AT YD256657 TM SIGHTED FIVE (5) NVA/VC MOVING E
EN INITIATED CONTACT W/SAF. EN CARRIED THREE (3) AK-47'S, TWO (2) EN

CARRIED LARGE PACKS. TM RET FIRE. EN STARTED RUNNING SW. 031100H
AT YD256657 PBR'S CAME ON STATION AND EXPENDED ORDNANCE. PBR'S PURSUED

EN BY FIRE IN TO TREELIN AT YD262653. 031120H REACTION FORCE LANDED
TM AND REACTION FORCE SEARCHED AREA W/NEG RES. EN WAS WEARING BLACK PJ'S.

7. OTHER INFO: NEGATIVE

GP-4
BT

OPO 3141
CONFIDENTIAL

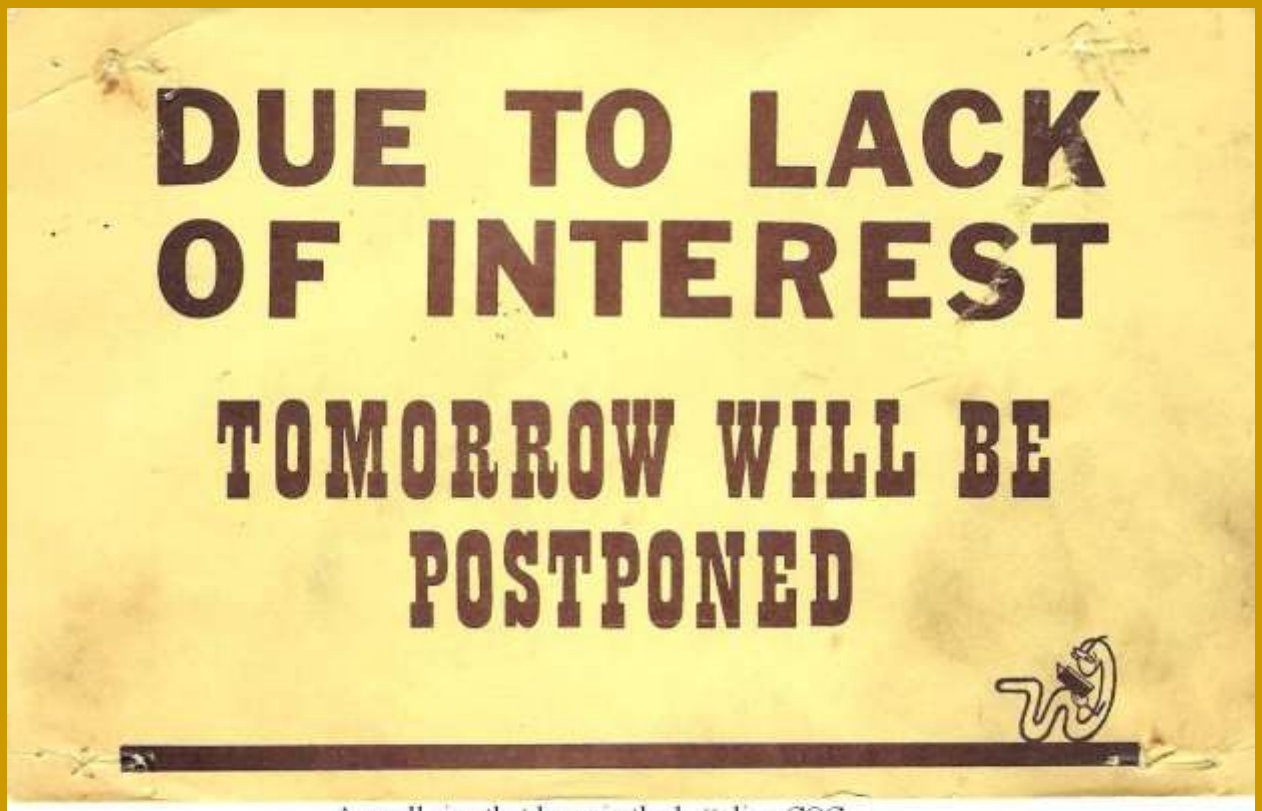
CCN_____RELEASED BY_____TIME_____H NOV 69

r. OpO 3141-69 (1R1) 030930H Nov 69 (041040Z Nov 69). At 050045H at YD256657 the team sighted 5 NVA/VC wearing black pajamas, moving east. The enemy initiated contact with small arms fire, and then started running southwest. 051100H at YD256657 PRB's came on station and expended ordnance. PRB's pursued the enemy by fire into a treeline at YD262655. At 051120H Helolifted reaction force landed and searched the area with negative results.

With the remainder of the day going without incident, all in the company area and in the bush are short and very apprehensive. It is 2100 hours and the day will soon be at a close.

NOVEMBER 4, 1969

It is early in the morning and I have arrived at the COC to find all teams in the bush to be secure. It was another one of those nights. Just one more day and I won't have to worry about this anymore. I will not have to set my eyes on six grid square boxes on this map. The radios will be silent. There will be no more requests for AO's, gunships or fixed-wing aircraft. There will be no more requests for team bravos (team locations). No more enemy sightings made. The call for extracts will be a thing of the past for the members of Third Recon Battalion. Most of all there will be no more "CONTACT, CONTACT, CONTACT, taking heavy enemy fire." No more reporting of WIA's or KIA's, it will be over and ended. I know the small sign that always hung in the COC will at last come true, "DUE TO THE LACK OF INTEREST, TOMMORROW WILL BE POSTPONED."



A small sign that hung in the battalion COC
These words came true on Noverber 5, 1969 when the last
battalion recon team was taken out of the jungles of Vietnam.
0835 Hours Bennington One Delta One, was last team out.
Last man lost in the battalion, Brian Thornton,Co "B" Sept. 69

I know it may never be possible, but if I could, it would be great to say thanks to everyone that has had a hand in the aid of our survival while in this hostile land. This goes for the pilots on the CH-46's, slicks, and gunships and their crews for all the times they have lost men and risked their lives coming into hot landing zones to save us knowing the dangerous situations we were in but nonetheless disregarding their own safety to save our lives. I thank you. These aviators were like angels to recon Marines. Without them and their extraordinary heroism, many more of us would have been lost.

I am also indebted to the fixed-wing and AO pilots. Once in close range, you have fired your rockets and dropped your bombs and napalm only feet from us to save our lives, only to put your lives on the line from heavy enemy ground fire. I thank you for your professionalism and your dedication.

To the arty batteries both Marine and United States Army, you responded swiftly and decisively to our desperate requests for support. Without your accurate support, there would be many not here today. I thank you.

To the reactionary forces, you have endangered your lives and have lost many friends to come to our aid. You have fought your way through strong enemy forces to our besieged positions. Knowing most of the team members were wounded or dead, you have brought our wounded and dead home. I thank you for being there.

To the Combat Navy Corpsman. During battle you have disregarded your own safety to aid your fallen comrades. Sometime wounded yourself, you have run through heavy enemy fire to try to relieve the pain and suffering of men that you knew would probably not even make it. I thank you all.

To the Nurses who have stood by their wounded, holding back their tears and standing strong never letting us down when we were in need of their help, thank you.

To the radio operators on relays and in the Center of Communications. I have seen the sadness in your faces as you have aided teams in desperate enemy contacts. Your professionalism and the ability to keep a cool head while at the same time coordinating

numerous support units has been extraordinary. Without your help our missions would have been impossible to conduct. I thank you.

To the Recon Marine and the team members I have served with. You are all heroes. To each and every team member, I say you have always exemplified the Espirit of the Corps. Your code of comradeship has been unwavering. I thank you for the honor of having been able to serve with you. I would have never thought that in my life I would have been so lucky to be in a company of such dedicated and devoted men. You are the bravest of the brave. I will remain Semper Fidelis.

The day is at a close, all working, are secure at 2230 hours. A wake up.

NOVEMBER 5, 1969

It is very early as we all wait for our last Vietnam dawn. With a flicker of light, the birds are cranking their engines. As they lift to the sky, by first light the teams of Third Recon will start to be taken out of the jungles of Vietnam.

At full light, the chopper crews are busting their asses as the teams are taken out as quickly as possible. Once extracted, the teams are returned to Quang Tri Recon Battalion area.

At 0835 hours, on this day November 5, 1969, Team Bennington, One Delta One, was the last battalion recon team to be extracted from the jungles of Vietnam. All are alpha sierra and now on their way back to Quang Tri Recon, hopefully never to return to the jungles of Vietnam again. It’s over and we have done a job far harder than anyone would ever understand. This day is closed 0900 hours.

NOVEMBER 9, 1969

With our celebrations of no more patrols and our pullout of the Nam, everyone is happy and are counting the days till the 20th or 22nd when we will depart for Okinawa. Today we will have a service for the men who have given their lives in service of their comrades and country. There were 242 names of our dead read off and I knew many of these men. The reading of the names brought much sadness to all of us. Everyone had known someone who had been killed. Not to mention wounded, which was heavy, but an unknown number. I know they will never be fully recognized for the job that has been done here.

3rd Reconnaissance Battalion Killed in action



David Nipper
Lowell H. Merrell
Randall K. Campbell
Carl R. Wenzel
Joseph R. Wynn
Frank S. Reasoner
Richard L. Zichek
David T. Graham
Juan R. Garcia
Tony Vale
Raymond S. Joy Jr.
William R. Moore
Ronald P. Sisson
Charles R. Allen
James T. Egan Jr.
Jean P. Dowling
William L. Oakley
Wilbur G. Kirchoff
Thomas E. Connor
Richard A. Eckvall
Victor J. Ford
Malvin L. Nasworthy Jr.
Loring W. Carper Jr.
Randy G. Totton
Joseph W. Schuster
Richard A. Bradley
Richard F. Roach
Michael E. Hopkins
Ronald L. Longanecker
Shelton L. Eakin
Edward J. Rykoskey
Walter J. Spainhour Jr.
Dennis D. Bradley
Douglas W. O'Donnell
Daniel T. Flowers
Richard R. Herring
Walter J. Jankowski
Theodore R. McElroy Jr.
Allen P. Miller
Donald G. Reich
Paul R. Nicholas
Michael J. Scanlon
Robert L. Brown
Howard H. Dean
Robert L. Armitage
Robert L. Shafer
Robert F. Starbuck
Richard J. Carson
Curtis W. Hurlock
Richard W. Piatt
Lindy R. Hall
Allen F. Chaves
Jose A. Rosas
Heinz Ahlmeyer Jr.
Malcom T. Miller
Samuel A. Sharp Jr.
James N. Tycz
Michael A. Bodamer
John R. Cabrini
Di R. Ibanez
David F. Sherrell
Dale L. Speer
Howard H. Withey
Charles D. Chomel
Dennis R. Christie
John J. Foley III
Michael W. Havranek
James W. Koci
Jim E. Mosher
James E. Widener
David E. Boyer
Merlin R. Allen
Michael B. Judd
John D. Killen, III
Glyn L. Runnels Jr.
Andre E. Marcotte
Dennis M. Perry
Anthony Allen
Robert L. McIntire
James P. McGrath
John B. Nahan III
Jack Wolpe
Eugene Castaneda
Garry G. Tallent
Henry Granillo
James Thompson
Michael L. LaPorte
Martin W. Prather
Donald B. Dray
Gary R. Wilson
Nevitt D. Davis
David L. Eisenbraun
Nicholas L. Natzke
Alan T. Jensen
Thomas S. Richards
Gary L. Rehn
Marion L. Meggs
Rodney L. Huddleson
Gary S. Stickel
Kenneth F. Olenzuk
Gene R. Phipps
Terry A. Jones
Thomas J. Tingley
Gerald P. Gauthier
Bruce R. Harris
Francis G. Houdasheit
David L. Jarvis
James W. Miller
Terry D. Pitts
Fred E. Andrews
John G. Turk
Richard J. Healy
Randall D. Yeary
Darrell C. Lint
Charles W. Bryan
Paul M. Beddoe, Jr
Lawrence E. Bisonett
Merle C. Eicher Jr.
Thomas J. Moody
Thomas H. Retschulte
James L. Siron
William A. Polchow
Charles W. Miller
Gregory F. Popowitz
Juan A. Rosa
Gary D. Scribner
Wallace L. Reather Jr.
Thomas W. Hollis
Timothy M. Bammer
Blake W. Farris Jr.
George D. Stiehler
James K. McCann
Howard G. Vaughn
Keith D. Coon
Steven E. Emrick
Alexander Grejc
Thomas L. Little Sun
Robert B. Thomson
Alexander K. Ward
Terrance C. Graves
James E. Honeycutt
Adrian S. Lopez
Robert J. Bridges Jr.
Bruce W. Grunewald
Carl Lyons
Donald J. Matocha
Richard J. Smith
Stanley Zalewski Jr.
Edward J. Hughes, Jr.
Carlos Dominguez
Gary F. Myers
Walter L. Ensign Jr.
David E. Padilla
Neil B. Sullivan
Gary J. Thomas
James R. Young
Idus J. Conner
John C. Foy
Carl F. Hodges Jr.
Richard D. Novak
Tomas A. Barrera
William E. Wark, III
George V. Martinez
Joseph P. Naimo Jr.
Joseph F. Biber
Carl W. Myllymaki, III
John M. Anderson
Ronald R. Lowry
John C. Brown
Richard E. Latimer Jr.
Edwin R. Grissett
Henry M. Hames Jr.
Gerald G. McGinley
Dennis E. Mickelson
Raymond C. Minks
Ralph E. Ebbs
Martin R. Keefe
Brian L. Thornton
Peter F. DeWilde Jr.
David C. Ferguson
Robert H. Jenkins Jr.
Richard D. Shields
Freddie P. Chaves
Kenneth E. Gayer
Steven A. Bell
Gerald J. Bratrsovsky
Robert L. Scheidel Jr.
Robert T. Rohweller
Charles R. Johnson
John M. Shinault
Daniel Tirado
Charles M. Moe Jr.
Dennis H. Rhen
Raymond C. Wood
Douglas W. Barnitz
William A. Buck Jr.
Michael M. O'Connor
Robert L. Pearcy
Harold A. Skaggs
William M. Wellman Jr.
Paul M. Bowlin
George F. Landi
Ronald W. McLean
Michael E. Hicks
Charles H. Johnson
Jackie L. Blankenship
Henry E. Imes
Robert V. Moore
Feliciano Rocha
Ronald J. Bates
Richard A. Anderson
Roy A. Fryman
William G. Nelms, Jr.
Eugene Hunt
Bernard A. McDermott III
Jack Harris Jr.
Adam Cantu
Allen M. Hutchison
Daniel Savage
Ted J. Bishop
Arthur M. Garcia, Jr.
James M. Fuhrman
Chester A. Mollett
Henry P. Rathmell
Robert L. Brown
John F. Stockman
Dennis M. Dicke
J W. Powers
M G. Oliver
S S. Savoca
William A. Dibblee
Kelly D. Davis
Ernest A. Miller, III
Gary S. Johnson
Michael H. Ferschke, Jr.
James R. Lowe
Nicholas K. Uzenski
Matthew N. Ingrahm
Gregory S. Stultz
Daniel Gurr
Nicholas A. Sprovtsoff
Adam J. Buyes

Saepe Expertus - Semper Fidelis - Frateres Aeterni

Warriors Prayer;

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain,
I am the gentle autumn's rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush,
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry I am not there;
I did not die.

NOVEMBER 17, 1969

Today is the day I left for Vietnam two years ago. Even for a short time in the states between tours and the time I was medivaced, my life has always been here with the troops and friends of 3rd Recon Battalion, 3rd Marine Division. I will always remember the good times and never forget the bad ones. To forget anything would be an injustice to the dead and a denial to the living. I cannot and will not ever forget how gallantly they served and their unsurpassed loyalty to each other, the Corps and their country.

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW of all ACTIVITIES.

a. The period of this Chronology saw the 3d Reconnaissance Battalion slowly withdraw its reconnaissance operations from the western-most portion of the NICTZ as it secured the Divisions flanks and rear from harrassing attacks by the enemy. It was at this time that the Recon Battalion wrote the final pages to the 3d Division's Vietnamese history as it became the last Marine organization to operate in the DMZ, Mutter's Ridge, Khe Sanh, the Da Kron and Ba Long Valleys and the never to be forgotten "Rock-pile." When the Division moved into Quang Tri and Dong Ha, the Recon Battalion was given the task of reconnoitering the "backyard" area in defense against rocket, mortar and sapper attacks on the Division Headquarters and staging areas. As the Division embarked, the Recon Battalion was given the mission of securing the North Bank of the Gua Viet River by surveillance. After the departure of the Division, the Recon Bn. became the Mobile Reserve in defense of Quang Tri Combat Base, and it did not stand down until just eight hours before it embarked aboard the USS Ogden for Okinawa. Upon arrival in Okinawa, the battalion rapidly set about an extensive training program in general military training and amphibious reconnaissance. In the few weeks on Okinawa, recon units participated in Submarine Operations with the USS Menhaden, Helicopter Operations with VMO-6 and three Reconnexs in Northern Okinawa.

NOVEMBER 19, 1969

We have packed our gear and have started to depart Quang Tri, Vietnam. Now en-route to Cua Viet, we will stage, waiting to board the USS Ogden just off the coast in the South China Sea. Once all are aboard, we will depart this place.



USS OGDEN



USS Ogden

NOVEMBER 21, 1969

It is early and we are now preparing to board the ship. As boat after boat of our troops is taken from Cua Viet to the ship, there is a sigh of relief. On this day at 1135 hours, I along with several others boarded the last boat to leave Cua Viet. Once on the ship it was settle in and wait to depart.

NOVEMBER 23, 1969

Two years ago, I arrived in this country to help in a job I thought would be completed. Now we are departing this land never to return. It is over for the 3rd Recon Battalion. I know that Force Recon along with 1st Marine Division is still there, along with other branches but for us, it

is finished. As I look back across the sea, I can see the land God has forgotten. I feel I have left something back there. I have left something in Dong Ha, the Rock Pile, Khe Sanh, Calu and the DMZ. I feel I have left the souls of the dead. Most were 18, 19, and some 20 years old. You might say just kids. I say there were no kids here, only brave men. Young men, not even old enough to vote, yet old enough to die.

It appears as if thousands of young men have given up their lives for nothing. Not to mention the destruction of uncountable minds that will never be able to erase the sights of war held in their heads and deep in their hearts and the deaths of so many close friends.

To the heroes, the brave men of this war, I shall never forget you. As the ship is now underway, I see the dark clouds in the distant highland shedding the rains of the monsoons - or is it the tears of the dead that fall as if to be a beckoning call for us to return to avenge their sacrifice. To free their souls with a victory and not a defeat and to present them as the true heroes they were-men that did more than just fight in Vietnam. Men that made the supreme sacrifice in this land that God forgot, **THE 'NAM**.

JAMES SMITH

SMITTY

SEMPER FI

I would like to thank Len Rapuano for his help and research in bringing information to light, in important missions in this diary.



My appreciation also goes out to team mates, Paul Stover, Mike Green, George Boks, Dale Watchorn, Steve Laktash, Jerry Beasley, and other team mates that sent in their photos and supplied me with information. My gratitude goes out to all of the recon Marines whose stories are relayed in this diary. Their bravery and sacrifice lives in this document.

I would also like to thank Ellen Boks for the many hours she put in stitching together and editing this work.

THANK YOU

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDED READING:

USMC/Vietnam Helicopter Association:

http://www.popasmoke.com

3rd Reconnaissance Battalion Website

http://www.3rdrecon.org

3rd Recon Vietnam as well as Recon Marines of today…..

http://www.3rdreconvietnam.com

Marine Reconnaissance Unit Documents

http://www.clemson.edu/caah/history/FacultyPages/EdMoise/marspec.html#docs

The Long Run Impact of Bombing Vietnam:

http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/macarthur/inequality/papers/MiguelVietnamBombs.pdf

BOOKS

GREEN GHOSTS……Lt. Col. W.C. Floyd USMC (Ret)

NEVER WITHOUT HEROES……Lawrence C. Vetter, Jr.

EYE OF THE TIGER……..John Edmund Delezen

Swift Silent Deadly……..Norman VanCor

Matterhorn……Karl Marlantes

HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION, HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS, WASHINGTON, D.C.

VOLUMES IN THE VIETNAM OPERATIONAL HISTORIES SERIES:

U.S. Marines In Vietnam, 1966, An Expanding War

U.S. Marines In Vietnam, 1967, Fighting The North Vietnamese

U.S. Marines In Vietnam, 1968, The Defining Year

U.S. Marines In Vietnam, 1969, High Mobility And Standdown

September 3, 1967 – Dong Ha Ammo Dump Hit By Enemy Artillery Fire



Photo taken by William E. Lyell, Sgt. USMC (Ret), 11th Engineers, 3rd Marine Division. Photo was sent to me upon request from the USMC/Combat Helicopter Association.

This picture epitomizes the violence of the war along the DMZ.

Team members of Team Three Charlie One 2022.



PAUL STOVER



DICK VANCE



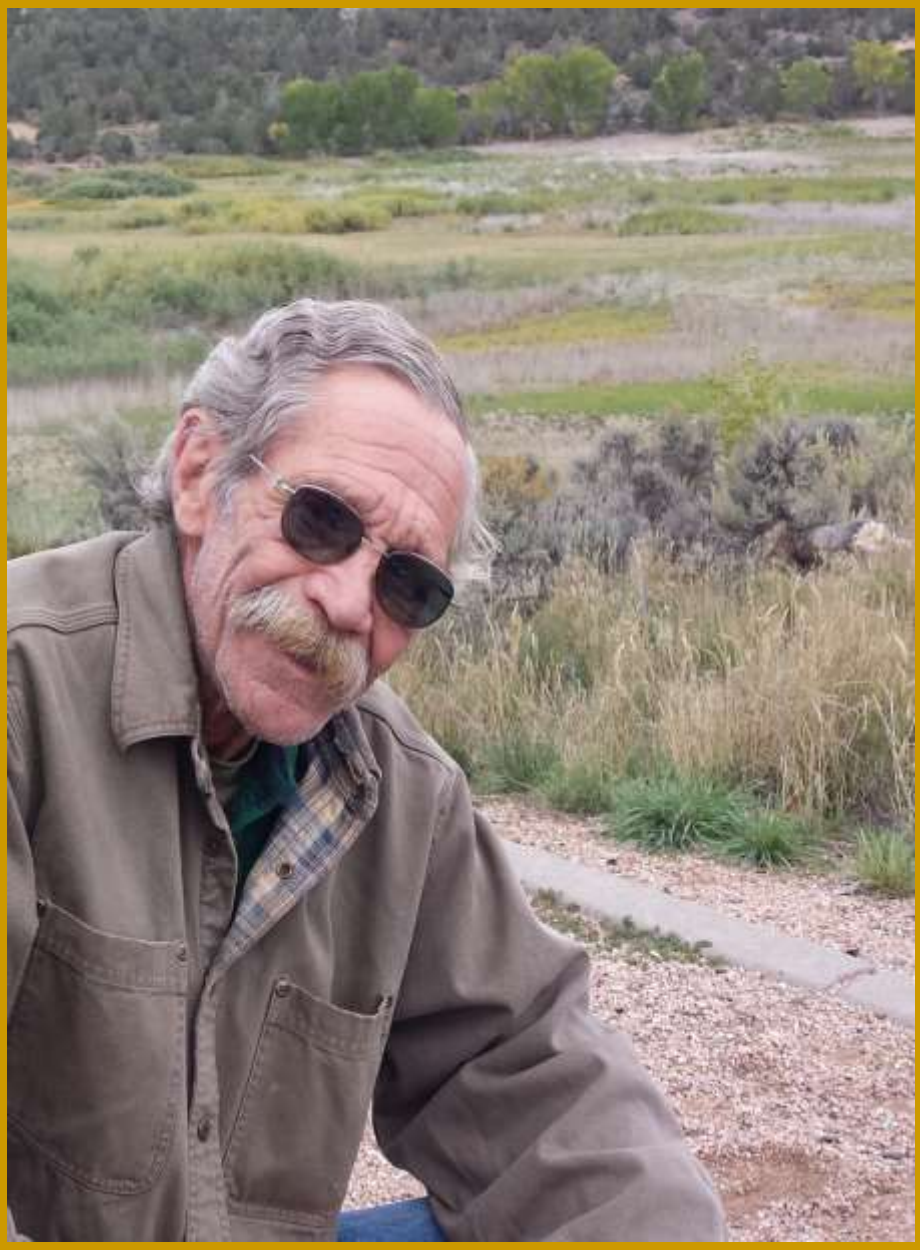
TONY COSGRO



DARRELL SCHOKMAN



STEVE LAKTASH



JAMES DARRELL KING



DONALD H. BOSWELL



GEORGE BOKS



Donald Boswell



John Romero



Mike Green



Wayne Thompson



Jerry Beasley



AARON L. MOORE



Dale Watchorn (Corpsman)



Randy Rhoads



Robert Jenkins



Danny Triado



Fred Ostrom



James Smith

Diary of JAMES M. Smith

Copyright January 30, 1998
Registration Number;
TXu 840-581 United States Copyright Office