

***Charlie Company,  
1st Battalion, 506th Infantry***



***May 1969 to October 1970  
Viet Nam***

## Preface

This is about C Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 506<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 3d Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Airmobile) from May 1969 until the end of October 1970. It is a story of the men, the jungle, and their enemy as they conducted military operations in the northern part of what was then called South Viet Nam. The story is based on the battalion journals or short notes of key events made by men assigned to the battalion headquarters who manned the radios. The journals recorded the time units were at various locations and key events such as engagements with the enemy. The battalion journals are the skeleton of the story and provide who, what, and where but it is the recollections of Charlie Company members, where available, that flesh out the story and provide the human and emotional context of the trek of Charlie Company throughout its assigned areas of responsibility.

Who can tell the story of Charlie Company? No one person had a vantage point from which to view the daily sequences and to record them for posterity. The infantry tactics spread platoons from a few hundred meters to several kilometers from each other. In most places, the jungle was so dense, that a person could not see what was occurring 50 meters to his front. When contact was made with the enemy, some of those who saw the brunt of the battle were either killed or wounded and evacuated and not to return to the unit.

Had Charlie Company members been brought together within a year or two of their service periods, memories and recollections would have been relatively fresh. Had the internet existed at the time, it may have served as a means of connecting company members who dispersed to every state of the union and beyond. Keep in mind that men arrived and left as individuals so that there really was not an opportunity to collect the company and review the history and the lessons learned. Motivation to connect was generally lacking shortly after men's combat tours. The war had not been popular. Wives and family members beckoned for attention. Many had a strong desire to put the war out of their conscious thoughts and to get on with life. A powerful and devious force could not have designed a better mechanism for engaging thousands of men in a hellish environment and then diminishing their ability to gather and talk to each other about what they had encountered together - to unburden themselves. Short of a mammoth and expensive research effort which has not been available, these are some reasons why the story of Charlie Company can only be told in pieces. Nevertheless, with the aid of dozens of members of Charlie Company and using what military records exist, it is possible to get one's hands around the most significant pieces of the Charlie Company story.

Why begin this effort after almost forty years? For me, family responsibilities and getting into the work force were reasons to preempt an effort to put the story together in a timely manner. Decades after the conflict, I remembered key events but was getting fuzzy about the sequence. Having recently retired from work, I had an opportunity to do some research. Writing the story of Charlie Company would help me rethink my time as an infantryman with the benefit of hindsight. More importantly, it would allow me to

appreciate better the challenges other members of the company faced, their achievements, and the price they paid. The guys in Charlie Company were special, not because they had skills or traits that quickly distinguished them from men of other rifle companies. They were special because collectively they faced a unique array of the most difficult challenges of the war and largely came out standing on their feet. They adapted to each different environment, relying on each other's skills that contributed to the successes of squads, platoons, and the company.

After Viet Nam, no jobs that I held had the intensity of my year in Viet Nam. The emotions we experienced there ran the spectrum from sheer boredom to utter terror and the latter frequently of the extreme variety. As Michael P. Kelly, author of "Where we were in Viet Nam" commented: 'Nothing in my lifetime has ever approached the intensity of emotion or heights of experience of that which painted the 11 months I spent in [Viet Nam].' Mark Hendrickson, a company member put it slightly differently, "I have often compared my experience in Vietnam to eating very hot, spicy food for a long time and returning to the "world" was like taking all the spice away making everything very bland. It took a long time to get over that feeling and I don't think I have completely gotten over that feeling, even today."

I also got used to the directness of combat – at the platoon level things were simple yet often terrifying. You settled all arguments with your weapons and skill. Later I found that "real life" was more complicated and sometimes more frustrating. Nevertheless I did adapt somewhat and did not try to solve problems with an M-16.

Another reason for the story is to provide a structure on which others could hang their recollections. Most soldiers remember patrolling, fire fights, rucksacks, their buddies, fire bases, air assaults, and Eagle Beach but might struggle to lay it out in sequence. Everyone got a different sized piece of Charlie Company. Some men were wounded in their first few months and did not return to the field. Most officers spent time in the field and the remaining time in a staff job. A number of infantrymen spent almost their entire year in the field which certainly qualified as a big piece of Charlie Company. As a platoon leader, I was one or two levels up from the infantryman and did not have a full appreciation of what the company, battalion, brigade, and division levels were encountering. Most of the time, I did not even know the specifics of what the other platoons were doing. Today, collectively, we have the potential to tell a fuller story of Charlie Company over this time period. I believe that after researching the period and communicating with company members, I certainly have a better understanding of our combat operations than I did forty years ago, more respect for the soldiers' achievements, and more empathy for the jobs of the higher level commanders.

No doubt, many soldiers have done their best to forget the horrors of combat and find it unpleasant to resurrect old memories. I fully respect this viewpoint. Nevertheless, many of us have spouses, former spouses, children and grandchildren who may be curious about their family member's service in Viet Nam. *Were you ever in a war, Grandpa? What was it like?* As an example, my father served in World War II and I have a rough idea of what he did, but we never really talked about it. I would have liked to read a story

that followed his unit as they battled to enter Germany. Perhaps this story can help others appreciate the very long year their loved ones spent in Viet Nam.

A last reason and perhaps the most important is to attempt to explain how challenging it was to be an infantry soldier in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne at that time. Pilots, artillery men, tankers, engineers and others were essential and in many, many instances, heroic. Yet I believe, day in and day out, only the infantryman on the ground fully experienced the intensity and raw emotions of the battlefield. During the height of the war with 550,000 soldiers in Viet Nam, perhaps no more than ten percent were in the field, in close contact with the enemy on any given day. I believe that describing the ordeals of the infantry soldier will help elicit the respect he deserves from a public that had little idea of the combat then and a public that probably is still uninformed of the dangers and lethality of the Viet Nam battlefield at that time and place.

Most professions have their jargon and the US Army is certainly near the top with their distinctive terminology. I'll attempt to explain some terms used in this story such as "pink team" and ARA so that the non-military person can understand the events. I'll admit that I had forgotten some of the terms and had to Google them to refresh my memory. Also, each page will probably contain military time and grid coordinates. Military time uses a 24 hour clock so that 3PM is 1500 hrs and 10 PM is 2200 hrs. Most grid coordinates in the story locate a point to the nearest hundred meters on the military tactical map (scale 1:50,000). For example, YC 313951 gives a location in grid zone designator "YC" and 300 meters East and 100 meters north of the intersections of the 31 (East-West) line and the 95 (North-South) line. It is not necessary to refer to a map to follow the story.

## Introduction

The 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division served in Viet Nam from 19 Nov 1967 to 10 Mar 1972. The division found itself in some of the most difficult areas in Viet Nam and had the second highest casualty rate, next to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The period May 1969 to mid 1970 was one of the most intense for the 101<sup>st</sup>.

Killed in Action (KIA) numbers as a measure of combat intensity were fairly evenly distributed among the rifle companies in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 506<sup>th</sup> Infantry. From May 1, 1969 to July 31, 1970, KIA's were:

Unit	KIA
Alpha Company	43
Bravo Company	27
Charlie Company	36
Delta Company	37
Echo Company	3
HHC	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>

Charlie Company also had many men wounded in 1969-1970. Some of the wounded men had traumatic injuries including the loss of limbs. For many, forty year old battle wounds limit their physical activities today and are a constant reminder of the price they paid in combat. The ratio of wounded to killed is a bit greater than 4:1. Military records on wounded personnel are much less precise than those of KIA's. The efficiency of the medical system quickly evacuated wounded men to distant hospitals, Japan, or back to the US. Morning reports and unit rosters are generally not available for that period and would not have provided much detail on those wounded. Even purple heart records are somewhat hit or miss and not as centralized as other service awards.

Charlie Company Wounded in Action (WIA)	
Hostile Fire	115
Injuries, sickness, friendly fire	44

Just being in the field without enemy contact would result in attrition of the company's field strength due to heat exhaustion, malaria, severe infections, and injuries. A rough estimate would be that the company would lose a man each day to one of these causes although the person would usually return to the company after medical treatment.

Field sickness and injuries were one category of immediate debilitation. Another category that presented itself at the time as well as later was the psychological injury category.

Today we recognize post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and note the psychological cost of intense combat long after the battles are over. It would be impossible to measure the PTSD impact on the five hundred plus men of Charlie Company (that is the total of men who passed through and served from 1969 to 1970) but it might be safe to say that all were impacted to some degree or another. Some disorders showed up in Viet Nam and some after returning to the US. As an example of the former, on April 15, 1970, "recon platoon requests a medevac for man with severe mental strain who was a danger to himself and others out in the field." Conversations with a small sample of men who served in Charlie Company indicate that there are a good number of men who have required medical treatment for PTSD and others who have symptoms but have adjusted in their own way to deal with the problem.

A comparison of the time periods on each side of this story shows that C Company lost four KIA from Aug 70 to July 71 (the war was winding down at this time and Vietnamization or pacification was the main effort); the entire battalion lost only 15 during that succeeding year. During the preceding year (1968-1969), Charlie Co lost 16 KIA from July 68 to July 69 and the 1/506 overall lost 74 KIA. For the men of Charlie Company, 1969-1970 was a rough time in a series of rough neighborhoods.

Most of the historical information presented in this story is derived from the battalion tactical operations center (TOC) journals which are maintained at the National Archives in College Park Maryland. The journals can vary from a few pages to nearly twenty pages on a busy day. From time to time, Charlie Company would be placed under the operational control (OPCON) of another battalion and those battalion's journals would record the movements of Charlie Company. Additional information is available from brigade S3 journals, those from supporting units such as air cavalry or combat aviation, and other divisional records. The reader will notice that parts of the story are very austere, listing dates and locations and some summary activity while other parts have a much fuller narrative. A presence or a lack of first-hand, supporting information is the primary reason for this difference. In the best cases, the story employs personal recollections as well as award citations to add to the journal entries while some dates only pull from the battalion records.

Like most men in Charlie Company, I wrote letters home – most to my wife and infrequently to other family members. I averaged a letter every 2-3 days. My former wife was kind enough to keep my letters and I have used them to pin down some dates and to comment on more mundane matters such as weather, terrain, and wildlife. We did not pay postage and just wrote "Free" where a stamp would go. The mail service in Viet Nam was excellent. Mail came out with resupply helicopters and outgoing mail could be given to a chopper door gunner who would mail it when he returned to the base camp. Many door gunners were former infantry soldiers and had the greatest empathy for the

guys on the ground. Packages were also received but these were normally held until the company was on a fire base or rear installation for a few days where small boxes could be delivered and enjoyed.

I worked for two company commanders from mid 1969 to mid 1970. We were fortunate to have two outstanding leaders who had a wealth of combat experience in Viet Nam. Four battalion commanders covered this same period. Much has been written about the Army policy of rotating key commanders after no more than six months on the job during the Viet Nam war (later, the Army realized the errors of its ways and does unit rotations now). No doubt this policy of frequent rotations contributed to an increased casualty rate as those battalion commanders had to learn their jobs and became familiar with their areas of operations.

CPT William Stymiest commanded Charlie Company from approximately January 1969 to June 1969. I arrived after CPT Stymiest left Charlie Company so I cannot provide any first hand information about him.

CPT Reggie Moore assumed command in June 1969 and was followed by CPT Mark Smith in late March 1970. Reggie had had a prior Viet Nam tour with the 82d Airborne Division, was executive officer to HHC, 3d Brigade, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne and ran a mortar platoon and rifle platoon in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 506<sup>th</sup>. Reggie's radio call sign at one point was "Farmer" so that became his nickname. I had not known him at West Point as he was in a regiment on the opposite side of the barracks. I always felt that Reggie was a top notch company commander and always felt secure that he was doing everything possible to provide support to the rifle platoons. He always had a smile on his face and inspired people to be upbeat or at least he did me. I happened to be on R&R in Hawaii when the company was hit hard on FSB Granite. I remember seeing Reggie as I returned and he was somewhat down after the battle losses. I should have done a better job of consoling and supporting him during that time of stress.

Mark's nickname was "Zippo." He brought a wealth of experience to the company as he had been in Viet Nam for several years. Sometimes he carried an AK-47 rifle and kept a small bottle of fine cognac in his rucksack for medicinal purposes. He spoke Vietnamese and used US firepower to maximum advantage against the enemy. He was not always diplomatic – I recall one instance with Zippo when the battalion commander flew in to discuss an upcoming operation. After explaining the plan, the battalion commander asked Zippo for his thoughts. Zippo replied, "that's the dumbest thing I ever heard of ..." and proceeded to explain what should be done. Mark was very highly regarded by the men who served with him.

Most of the enlisted men going to Vietnam went to the "Repo Depot" at Oakland California. There they turned in their stateside clothing issue and were given four or five sets of jungle fatigues. They kept this issue with them until they arrived at their final assignment in RVN. There, the men turned in those uniforms to the company supply and were issued clean clothes at each re-supply in the field.

Welcome to Viet Nam.

In July, 1969, all 101<sup>st</sup> soldiers flew into Tan Son Nhut Airbase near Saigon. I believe we flew into this air base on contract planes that were essentially civilian airliners. Mike Aird recalls flying on a Saturn Airlines DC-8 that lost an engine and had to be diverted into the Philippines; the flight attendants were somewhat matronly compared to what was the norm in the civilian industry. Buzz Buzzell remembers his arrival date as it was the same date Ho Chi Minh died, Sep 2, 1969. Tan Son Nhut was a safe area although the VC may have rocketed the air base from time to time to annoy the US forces. From there we went to a nearby base called Bein Hoa where the 101<sup>st</sup> had its initial training school, "P School," or "SERTS (Screaming Eagle Replacement Training School). Later, this school moved north to Camp Evans, the 3d Brigade base camp. The training was basic but good. I remember that we were issued M-14's for training at Ft Benning, so Viet Nam was the first place where I had an M-16 and learned to take it apart and clean it. You can believe that I paid close attention in that class. We even went on a patrol or two. P school received a rocket attack one day and everyone was encouraged to run to the bunkers. I remember seeing the smoke from the rocket impact.

The initial training was for all 101st soldiers so that most of the men that you trained with would go to other battalions. I remember peoples' faces fairly well and do recall that on my way out a year later, I recognized several men from our introductory training. I noted that most of the baby faces of 18 and 19 year old PFC's had shifted dramatically to those of battle tested veterans and realized that they would never fully regain their youthful innocence.

After P School, we flew up north to our units. The 1/506<sup>th</sup> had its rear base at Camp Evans, very near the coast and just north of the city of Hue. Probably after a day or so picking up a rucksack and weapon, the soldier was on a log bird (logistics helicopter) to the field to join the company. Soldiers spent most of their year tour in the field with only brief training periods at Camp Evans or a break at Eagle Beach.

The Army in Viet Nam used a process of individual replacements rather than unit replacements as employed today. In the field, Charlie company strength varied from a low of 45 men to a high of 105 during the period. As men were killed or wounded, individuals would come in as replacements whenever the situation allowed. During the period of this story, I have documented the names of over 500 men that had served in the unit. The company was broken down into platoons. The journal indicates that the company had four platoons until November 1969 and then only mention is made of three platoons. I recall only 13 men in my platoon around August 1969 and never got higher than about 30. Perhaps the three platoon structure made more sense and allowed the larger size platoon to break into two independent units. Toward the end of my tour, the 9th Infantry Division and others were leaving VN and soldiers recently assigned to those divisions were then reassigned to infantry divisions remaining in country. We got several from the 9th and they were not too happy as the reputation for the 101's fighting in the A Shau Valley was not what they were looking for.



Where were the old-line non-commissioned officers (NCO's)? At Ft Benning, lieutenants were told not to worry if we were not confident about some tactical procedure - that our old Army, senior NCO platoon sergeant would be there to make things work. I almost never saw a senior NCO in the field. They were all in rear areas running clubs, PX's, etc. In fairness to them, they may have spent a tour in the woods previously and decided that a rear job was preferable if they had to return for a second or third tour. I cannot fault their logic. There were exceptions and SFC Frank Foronda and SSG James Lockett were two, serving in the field during some of the heaviest fighting.

The Army figured out ways to solve the NCO problem. One avenue allowed an outstanding soldier to advance to the rank of sergeant or even staff sergeant during his one year tour and several did. We also got men who graduated from the NCO school at Benning and these were known as "shake and bakes." Many of these NCO's were very good, especially with technical knowledge of mines and explosives. My first platoon sergeant was Steven Clegg who was an excellent E5 and who had seen some recent fighting in the Ashau Valley - Currahee area. Steven Clegg distinguished himself during some of the heavy fighting in August 1969.

We wore jungle fatigues which were made of a light weight and quick drying fabric – ideal for the mostly hot and humid climate. Some men carried a "jungle sweater" which was nice to have when on a mountain top and the temperature dropped into the 40's. Another optional item was a rain jacket which was better suited to stationary positions as walking with one would cause sweating the inside of the jacket and making the wearer as wet as if he were exposed to the rain. Mostly, we were well camouflaged although we did not mark up our faces with camouflage stick routinely. The smaller recon teams may have made use of face and hands camouflage paint. We wore the non-camouflaged version of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division patch which was bright white and yellow. This must have been a macho, "in your face" look meant to intimidate the enemy.

You want it, you carry it. The infantry soldier had two levels of gear – fighting gear and the rucksack. We carried load bearing equipment (LBE) that was essentially a belt and harness to hang items such as grenades, canteens, canteen covers (filled with grenades), etc. We also had bandoleers of M-16 ammunition strung on top of the LBE. Machine gunners normally had two Rambo belts of ammo across their chest (some advised that this was not a good way to carry ammo – better to keep it clean by leaving in the ammo can). This was the fighting gear if you made enemy contact. On top of this, we carried rucksacks with food, water, ammunition, IV bottles, claymores, gas masks, etc. The rucksacks could be in the range of 50-80 pounds. Generally after a full resupply before going on a new mission, the only way to get up with a rucksack was to back into it on the ground and then have someone pull you to your feet while swearing a bit. Each soldier carried all of his food and water for a week or so in addition to the fighting gear. After climbing 1,000 meter hills all day, most of us were fully whipped by evening. One soldier commented that "there is no such thing as a mean mother f\*\*ker under a rucksack." I fully understood his meaning. Someone might be a bad-ass standing on a street corner but not after dealing with a rucksack all day long.

When we moved as a company with one platoon following another, you might hear the lead platoon in a firefight, being several hundred meters behind the element in contact. We might drop the cumbersome rucksacks at that point and maneuver with the LBE. Another angle on the heavy load was how physically tired you were at the end of the day and ready for a good night's sleep. This did not happen as security was normally no lower than 50% so half the people had to be awake for parts of the night. Soldiers got to sleep in two hour intervals. It was a rough grind.

I remember one instance where we were climbing a very steep hill in an area where the peaks were in the 900-1,000 meter range. At some points, we would need to pull ourselves up by grabbing smaller tree trunks for a hand hold. During a climb, I heard a thud, and then a "wham, wham, wham." The machine gunner had lost his footing and rolled over and over, accelerating down the hill and stopping at a spot about 100 feet below. Fortunately he was OK in that instance although the journal reports several similar falls over the year that required medical evacuation. I also recall a personal instance where my platoon was crossing a small river on smooth river rocks. I lost my footing and pitched forward with my rucksack pinning me on the rocks so that I was not able to move for several minutes. I almost felt silly since I literally could not move and was glad there was no enemy about. Most of the weight was on one fingernail that swelled up causing great temporary pain. You can see that the heavy rucksack made a lasting impression on me.

The enemy was commonly referred to as gooks, dinks, or expletives. I didn't care for disparaging the enemy for practical reasons as opposed to trying to be politically correct. My thinking was that you wanted to have a mindset that allowed you to fully respect the enemy's capabilities. Calling them gooks might cause soldiers to look down on the enemy and not be as alert and careful as they should be. You also wanted to follow the rules of war and treat them with the respect that you would expect from them if a US soldier was captured. Most soldiers had a grudging respect for the enemy's ability to work and fight – they dug some of the best bunkers and fought with minimum ammunition and were always short on food.

Medical care in Viet Nam was excellent - once you got on the helicopter. Every effort was made to evacuate the wounded expeditiously. Medevac choppers would be escorted by attack helicopters should they receive enemy fire as they did on many occasions. The main issues to the infantry forces were being socked in due to weather when the helicopters could not fly or being in such heavy contact that the birds could not safely land or hover. Almost always, the medevac pilots gave little concern for their own safety when it was necessary to extract wounded soldiers. The levels of evacuation may have been in order of seriousness of injury - C Company, 326th Medical Battalion at Camp Evans; 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai (YD879146); 22d Surgical Hospital in Phu Bai (YD 885149), sometimes 18<sup>th</sup> Surgical Hospital in Quang Tri; the ships USS Sanctuary, USS Repose, or others (assigned to the Seventh Fleet, III MAF in the waters off of the coast near I Corps. I believe the medical people on the helicopter would assess the nature of the injury and take the wounded to the level where the best care was

available. They also knew which hospitals were overloaded so they could better distribute the patient load.

Sometimes convalescing in-country was a pleasant interlude from the field. Richard Hahn recalls that he and Doc Jones [probably Michael Jones and not Fred Jones; some confusion since both were medics] were sent to a hospital near Saigon to recover from shrapnel wounds suffered on August 6, 1969. Richard said that they had a “real good time.”

Sounds of battle. After a short while, most people could distinguish the difference between an AK rifle shot and an M16. If a platoon was following another at a distance of a few hundred meters and shots rang out, you could tell whether it was all M-16, AK-47, or a mix. In rare cases, the NVA used captured M16's against the US, adding confusion to the fight.

Our own little world. We operated as teams, platoons, and companies. In most of our terrain the farthest a person could see might be 30 meters. If the company was moving in a column of platoons, any one platoon could be several hundred meters from the lead platoon. You knew they were up there but you definitely could not see them. If the lead platoon made contact, you would hear it, drop rucksacks, and wait for orders as the adrenalin started to move through your system. In the field, if you were in one platoon, you had infrequent contact with other platoons. Today, I do not have a clear recollection of most of the other platoon leaders when I was in the field. My main interest was my platoon and anyone very close by – to some degree, the rest of the company was not relevant. On a fire support base (FSB), there was a better opportunity to meet the rest of the company.

A typical day found Charlie Company in the field with 70-80 men on the ground, organized into three or four platoons and a company CP (command post). Perhaps a dozen more men were in the rear at Camp Evans providing support to the forward elements or recovering from injuries or wounds. The first sergeant at Evans managed the personnel and supply support that was essential to the men in the field. There were always a handful going to or coming from an R&R break.

In the field, platoons operated separate from one another and the company CP attached itself to one of the platoons. Platoons planned their movements for the day and assigned point duty to one of the squads. Platoon leaders were focused on navigation and being prepared to employ fire support as needed. The company CP received orders from the battalion tactical operations center, planned resupplies, and fire support from nearby fire bases. The company commander had to react to injured and wounded men and coordinate their evacuation. He spoke with the first sergeant about the timing of bringing new men to the field and how to handle serious personal problems such as a death in the family which might require an emergency leave. The company commander probably allowed his RTO's to handle routine calls from battalion so that he could concentrate on the daily movement and fighting. He had to “see” the battlefield and fight off distractions from higher headquarters.

During 1969 to 1971, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division operated in the northern part of South Viet Nam. We were not far from the DMZ and rear base areas were closer to the coast while the heavier fighting was done in the mountains west of the base areas. Here are some approximate mileages in kilometers (one km = .621 miles) to different areas of operation mentioned in the story – Camp Evans to:

Hue – 26km south  
Da Nang – 113 km south  
Saigon – 630 km south  
DMZ -80 km north  
Dong Ap Bia – 40 km southwest  
FB Granite – 26 km southwest  
Mai Loc – 65 km north  
Hanoi - 355 km north

Also, Quang Tri is 24 km east and Khe San is 26 km SW of Mai Loc

## **Chapter 1 – Operation Massachusetts Striker, Apache Snow, and Montgomery Rendezvous (May 1, 1969 to July 14, 1969).**

*During this period, nine US were killed and 26 wounded. Known enemy killed - 48.*

The NVA started moving troops into the A Shau Valley area in 1964 and developed a logistics base in and around the valley. The US countered with several Special Forces camps – A Loui in the northern valley, Ta Bat in the central valley near an abandoned French air strip, and a camp in an abandoned Pacoh village in the south, A Shau. The distance from A Loui to Ta Bat is about 24 km and from Ta Bat to A Shau is about 18 km – the valley runs about 42 km NW to SE.<sup>1</sup>

In 1965, the NVA began to encircle the SF camps. The South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) fled at the end of 1965 abandoning A Loui and Ta Bat. In March 1966, the NVA attacked the A Shau camp, killing hundreds of South Vietnamese and several green beret soldiers. The NVA then ruled the A Shau Valley from 1966 to 1968.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division assaulted the A Shau in April 1968 to attempt to regain control. They opened the airstrip at A Loui and C-130's began landing April 26, 1968. The Cav lost numerous choppers in their initial assault. They captured trucks, 37mm guns, and stockpiles of ammunition. When rain washed out the airstrip, the Cav was unable to stay and pulled out in May, 1968.

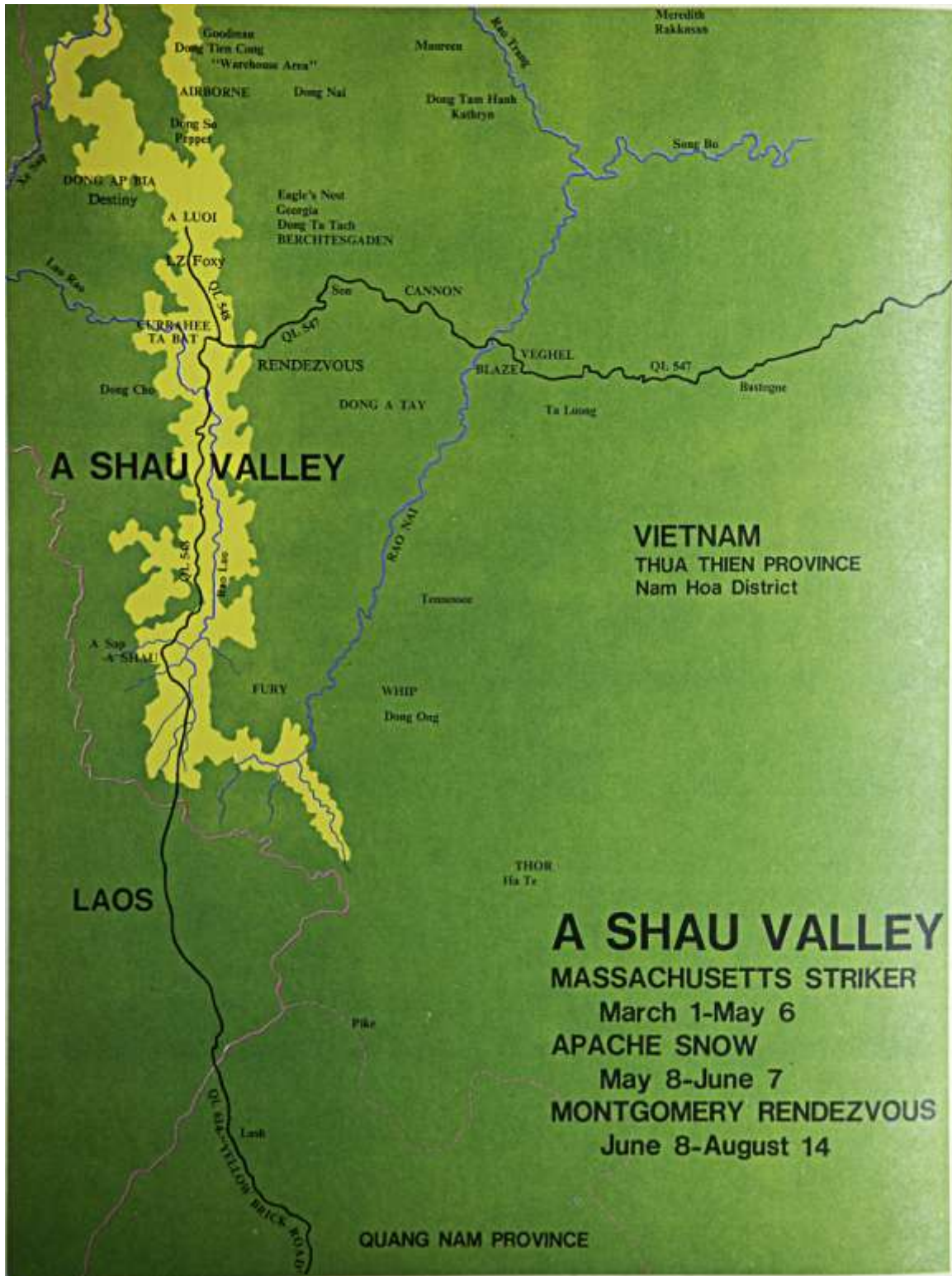
In August, 1968, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division goes into the A Shau for the first time with the 2/327<sup>th</sup> Inf, losing six attack helicopters, a LOH, and one phantom jet. They killed a few NVA but the operation was generally unsuccessful. In fall, 1968, the 101<sup>st</sup> started construction of a road (Route 547) from Camp Eagle to the A Shau. At the end of 1968,

the road was through to a point, seven miles from the valley but could not continue until the US controlled the valley.

In Feb, 1969, the Marines attacked in the Da Trong Valley 40 km northwest of the A Shau and captured 73 AA guns, 16, 122mm guns, 1,000 AK's and stockpiles of food and ammunition.

In March 1969, the 2d brigade of the 101<sup>st</sup> goes in near the southern A Shau and opens FSB Whip (29 km SE of Hill 937). The 1/502d Inf opens Veghel (22 km E of Hill 937) and fights a battle at Dong A Tay "Bloody Ridge" and suffers 35 KIA and 100 wounded. The 2/327<sup>th</sup> Inf captures 20 trucks and two bulldozers. The 1/502d Inf near FSB Lash (51 km SE of Hill 937) captures a large cache consisting of trucks and rifles.

From April to May 1969, the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (a mechanized unit with tanks and armored personnel carriers) is given the mission of clearing Route 547 (originating at Camp Eagle) and pushing it into the valley. This is in support of an upcoming major assault into the A Shau valley area.



On May 1, 1969, Charlie Company's mission is securing an engineer effort along Route #547 which probably included mine sweeping, road grading, and clearing landslides. Bravo and Charlie companies were situated on or near Firebase Blaze. *Some elements of*

*the battalion may have gone to Cocoa Beach which may have been in the vicinity of Cam Rahn Bay. Eagle Beach opens May 1, 1969. This was a relatively easy mission with little enemy contact.*

May 2, 1969. Line # 121 evacuated as a heat casualty (For security reasons, men assigned to rifle companies were assigned numbers with higher numbers going to the more senior ranking men. Using the "line number" list, radio communications could report that line #57 had been wounded without mentioning his name. Unfortunately, we do not have the line number lists today to tell us the names of those mentioned by 'line number.'). The CP is at 493033.

May 3, 1969. The company's mission is to secure FSB Blaze and to conduct local RIF's.

May 4, 1969. The battalion is at FB's Cannon, Bastogne, and Arrow in addition to Blaze. This disposition corresponds to Route 547 and extends about 25 km in length. Some discoveries imply that the NVA used route 547 in their 1968 Tet offensive where they employed heavy equipment including trucks and towed artillery pieces.

May 5, 1969. The battalion CP is at FB Cannon. Charlie Company had four men wounded when a warrant officer accidentally discharged an M-79 grenade launcher in the Engineer mess hall. Lines 9, 114, 113, and 61 are wounded.

May 6, 1969. The brigade S3 is looking for battalion size staging areas between Blaze and Cannon. Clearly this is for the upcoming operation in the A Shau valley.

May 7, 1969. Four battalion staging areas for upcoming operation are found: at grid coordinates 524024, 515029, 528024, and 518031 - all very close to FB Blaze.

May 8-9, 1969. Charlie Company is in its staging area near Blaze. Delta Company is securing FB Currahee as 105mm and 155mm artillery is brought in. Artillery support for the A Shau operation came from Firebases: Bradley, Airborne, Currahee, Berchtesgaden, and Cannon.

May 10, 1969. **Operation Apache Snow begins.** 0730, the combat assault begins with A, B, and C companies being inserted into the area of operations. D company is securing FSB Currahee and recon platoon is supporting 3d brigade headquarters at FB Berchtesgaden. Charlie landed on LZ Red following Bravo company and preceding Alpha company. Charlie had operational control of the battalion 81mm mortars and provided security for the battalion CP. Charlie moves into its night defensive position by 2030 at 312949.

B Company kills one NVA officer at 312937 and captures an ammunition bunker at 321929 (finding several weapons and ammunition rounds). This is about 5 km south of Dong Ap Bia (Hamburger Hill).





Charlie Company locations May 10-20, 1969. Dong Ap Bia is “Hamburger Hill”

May 11, 1969. Charlie’s location in the AM is 317950. Bravo company finds 1,200 pounds of rice and 40 pounds of TNT. Alpha company finds a cable across the river probably used to sling supplies across.

Telephone lines are found in the area. Normally telephone lines indicate that a large NVA force has set up defenses in the area and can be expected to defend their positions to the fullest extent of their ability. 1300 hrs, C Co is at 310951. 1425, from the journal, Charlie Company medevacs line #67 - an old tree falls on him producing head contusions (about this time, CPT Stymiest and Jimmy Thorp are injured when a large tree branch falls on them. Stymiest had a large scalp wound and was medevac'd and out for a day or two. Not sure what the circumstances were causing the tree to fall).



Bravo company on Hill 996 finds a ladder going up a tree. This must have been a tactic used by the NVA snipers in this area as the 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry encountered numerous snipers high in trees near Hill 937.

At 1600, C Co is at 312929. 16:30, the battalion S3 (MAJ Dale Burroughs) and his pilot are wounded while flying in a LOH. At 1715, C Co receives mortar fire from the west, vicinity 280930. The NVA mortars are about two km inside Laos and about six km from Charlie Company. The mortar attack lasted about one hour and 15 minutes. Among the wounded are Robert Love, David Canter, Richard Mooney, and Levering Rector. Levering Rector and Allan Klatt are cited for administering first aid and dragging the wounded to safety, despite the danger to themselves. 22 men are medevac'd to FB Currahee and some are evacuated further - most casualties are from the mortar platoon. Wounded from C Company: lines 10, 78, 111, 87, PIO, and interpreter. Wounded from E Company: 8, 13, 30, 35, 41, 43, 61, 84, 85, 91, 94, 96, 104, 106, 108, and 114.

A description of the mortar attack from Dave Canter: "The events of the early part of the day (May 11, 1969) are cloudy and unclear (mostly due to the 40 years since), but the events of that evening are crystal clear in my mind. I believe I was the acting platoon leader of the 1st Platoon. My job kept changing because I was an E-6 and I was either the platoon leader or platoon sergeant, during most of my stay in country. I remember helping my RTO and another man dig our foxhole as we began to settle in for the evening. I had not been briefed on the operations orders for the next day, but can remember the mortars being set up in the middle of our perimeter and a lot of work being done to provide an LZ for helicopters to come in the next day.

As I was watching my men dig in and cut fields of fire, I heard the company commander call in artillery to a hilltop in front of me. The first rounds hit off to the right and he was making adjustments to the top of the hill when I heard explosions off to my left. It sounded as if they were about 200 or 300 yards out. I was familiar with the sound of mortars and knew that the enemy was firing at us. I told everybody to get down and yelled "in-coming" but was totally ignored because of all the activity and noise around the hill at that moment. The first few rounds landed right out in front of my position, about 100 yards in front of our perimeter, but still nobody took notice. I heard the mortars once again, but this time there were many rounds fired in succession so I stood up to get my men to take notice and get into their foxholes. One of the first rounds to hit the hill landed about five or six feet behind me and I was blown forward and unconscious for a few moments and can't tell what happened during that time period. My field gear which was beside me was badly damaged and a hammock I had set up between two trees near us had big holes blown in it.

I never took an actual count, but it seemed like over 100 rounds of mortar fire came in over the next 30 to 40 minutes. My RTO quickly called the medic and he came to me in the midst of all that fire and administered what first-aid he could. The medic went from position to position with total disregard for his own safety and helped many of us who were wounded. I don't know what his name was but the 1st platoon medic should have earned an award for valor that day.

During one short break in the attack I was told to get up to the top of the hill to await extraction by chopper for medical care. I had about 25 or 30 pieces of shrapnel in my right arm and my back and needed to get out of the field. I went to the top of the hill and began to look for a place to wait when the attack started again and there was no hole to hide in. I lay on the hill as close as I could to a fallen tree (only about 8" in diameter), trying anything I could to stay alive. I was only 30 feet from our mortar position and witnessed their attempting to provide return fire to knock out the enemy mortars. The men with the mortars were not familiar to me, but I watched as they stood their ground in the midst of an almost constant barrage and returned fire, one mortar after another in the direction of the sound of the enemy. They fired so many rounds that the base plates of the mortars were sunk into the dirt almost half the height of the tubes. While I watched, one of the mortar men was loading a round into the tube and an enemy mortar round landed between him and me (about fifteen feet from each of us, and he took a small piece of shrapnel directly between his eyes. He was knocked backwards and immediately got back up and continued to return fire in the direction of the enemy.

Finally, after what seemed an eternity, the attack began to slow down and medical evacuation choppers began to land on the small LZ we had cut at the top of the hill. I wasn't one of the more seriously wounded men so I opted to wait for a later flight. I was probably on the third or fourth chopper out and we had at least one body bag with us and some other badly wounded men with us as well. From there, we were all transported to what appeared to be a MASH unit several miles from our unit [perhaps at Currahee]. There were so many of us that came in at the same time that they assigned a corporal to work on me. He gave me a few shots of Novocain in various parts of my body and began to try to remove as much of the shrapnel and other foreign matter as he could. I was sent to several hospitals over the next two months, but was allowed to return to my unit in an attempt to pick up my personal belongings before final evacuation to a hospital in Japan, and then home.

Some of the wounded are listed on purple heart orders. Joseph Thompson of Charlie Company went to 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital. The 101<sup>st</sup> purple heart orders include David Canter and Richard Mooney of Charlie Company; Dale Burroughs (battalion operations officer) of headquarters company; and, James Retzer, James Witte, Richard Callahan, Donald Dennehy, Charles Solomon, and Stanley Celmer of E Company (most likely mortar men).

May 12, 1969. At 1145 the company is at 315935. 1315, the company medevacs three men for hepatitis, hernia, and high fever. Line #'s not clear: 128, 120 and 17? And 2? 1700 location is 317942. The 81mm mortar platoon may have been extracted this date. It appears that having the mortars in the field was not successful and that Charlie Company is tied down with the mortars and the battalion CP, not allowing the battalion to fully deploy Charlie Company as a rifle company. There may have been reasons for the battalion CP and mortars to move on the ground but generally mortars needed to be in a secure area where they can be easily resupplied and the battalion CP was a good size group that made a lot of noise and required protection.

May 13, 1969. 1120, the company finds two old French rifles and some crosscut saws. At 1234, 3/1 ARVN find a major cache - Russian trucks, crew served weapons and individual weapons about 10 km NW of Hamburger. At 1250, brigade headquarters instructs 1/506 to reinforce 3/187. This is about the time that 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry meets major resistance and begins to suffer numerous casualties.

May 14, 1969. Charlie Company still has the mission of securing the battalion CP. Apparently, Charlie is the trail company in the battalion formation. (There were very few times in the war when an entire battalion was deployed together but the Dong Ap Bia operation was one of the larger undertaken against the NVA). 1530 - Alpha company has a point man killed. Charlie times and locations are not indicating much movement: 1100 - 321952, 1400 - 321956, and 1700 - 320952.

May 15, 1969. 1100 - 320959. 1425 - B Co receives sniper fire from a tree (similar to 3/187 experience). At 1630 a medevac is called for a man with a possible broken back. The medevac is completed at 1722.

May 16, 1969. 0735 - A Co has one KIA and seven WIA. 1045 - B Co has one KIA and eight WIA from vicinity of Hill 916 (about two kilometers SW of Dong Ap Bia). Three B Co WIA are from friendly fire - US artillery. 1600 - A Co has two injured by lightning. This must be the same violent weather experienced by the 3/187<sup>th</sup> Inf and mentioned in the Hamburger Hill book.

May 17, 1969. 1010 - A Co is in contact at 328968 and suffers one KIA and one WIA. 1630 - B Co is in a fight with one KIA and seven WIA. 1905 - C Company at 317961 reports enemy .51 cal fire. Charlie company is clearing bunkers south of Hill 800 (about 1.5 kilometers south of Dong Ap Bia). 2000 - C Company is at 326964 (vicinity Hill 800) with the battalion command post. C Co is still securing the battalion CP.

May 18, 1969. Alpha and Bravo Co receive RPG and small arms attacks in the morning. Charlie is at 328968 and moving east of Alpha Company to assist with the assault of the hill. This is the first time that Charlie Company gets into the fight. Charlie had been following Alpha but swings to the right toward Hill 900 from the southeast. CPT Stymiest is back in command. LT Ian Shumaker (third platoon) attacks on the left and LT Timothy LeClair (second platoon) on the right. first platoon and the CP follow. 1232 - B Co has 12 WIA. The fighting is getting much more intense for the 1/506<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

The above journal entries do not do justice to the intensity of combat experienced by the rifle companies of the 1/506<sup>th</sup> Infantry. I had very limited first hand recollections of this time period and was forced to rely primarily on the battalion journal entries to report what transpired. Although the Hamburger Hill book focuses on the 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry, it does cover the Charlie Company fight and gives a more visceral portrayal of the battle.

Around Hamburger Hill, all of the NVA bunkers were supporting each other and had an entrance offset from the main area so that you could not toss a grenade straight into the

main compartment. The company was provided with TNT cans about the size of a coffee can and they were fuzed. The men learned to throw a smoke grenade into a bunker first to blind the NVA and then follow with the TNT which would explode before the NVA could find it.

1400 - A Co at 327968; B Co at 321974; C Co at 331969. As the grid coordinates indicate, the companies are getting closer to each other. 1410 - C Co has one WIA and kills two NVA. A few hours later, Charlie kills two more NVA. Other records show two men from Charlie Company are wounded this day: Joseph Thompson and Richard Mooney.

May 19, 1969. C Company found two .51 cal machine guns and a 122mm rocket tripod and documents. 1220 - D Co sends a platoon from FB Currahee to reinforce A Co. Alpha Company had taken numerous casualties and its field strength may be as low as 40-50 men. 1340 - C Co moves to take the lead from A Co. 1430 - C Co links with A Co at 327974. Alpha Company reported 20 enemy bunkers with two men in each. At 1715, A Co reaches the peak of Hill 937. 1739 - A and C companies report 60mm mortars impacting nearby. A Co is at 327974 and B Co at 324976. At the end of the day, Charlie Company reports having killed ten NVA. Phillip Stanley recalled about this time the US fought for a while with gas masks on but the humidity made it difficult to see. The CS gas was deployed from helicopters or artillery.

There may be slight errors among the available records. Seven men from Charlie are cited for actions on May 16, 1969, yet the main fight appears to have occurred on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The battalion journal indicates that Charlie has a fairly quiet day on the 16<sup>th</sup> with more activity on the 19<sup>th</sup> although the journal seems to miss most of the action. I'll summarize the award citations as taking place on the 19<sup>th</sup> as that seems to be the correct date. Randall Mee was killed by an RPG while assisting other wounded men nearby. Paul Skaggs silenced a bunker with a grenade at great risk to himself. Joseph King killed an NVA who was about to flank and grenade the men nearby. Phillip Tierney led his fire team against the enemy bunkers despite intense fire. Danny Williams also destroyed an NVA bunker with a grenade. Michael O'Brien led his squad against enemy bunkers and knocked one out with grenades. John Young was LT Timothy Le Clair's RTO who, despite heavy fire on his position, kept up communications with the company CP after his platoon leader suffered a fatal head wound. Howard Peterson was killed by small arms while dragging wounded men of his squad to safety.

Although the 1/506<sup>th</sup> Infantry fighting had not been as heavy as the 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry, it had increased considerably in intensity. A Co killed 18 NVA; C Co killed 10 NVA; A Co suffered two KIA and 19 WIA. C Co KIA's were Timothy Le Clair, Randall Mee, and Howard Peterson.

May 20, 1969. The NVA appear to be withdrawing to the southwest. 1/506<sup>th</sup> Infantry moves to the southwest to block the enemy escape route. 1/506<sup>th</sup> also plans to clean up Hills 900 and 916. At 1625 the company locations are - A Co 328976; B Co 324970; C Co 327968. 1730 - C Co has two WIA. 1945 - C Co links up with elements of the

ARVN force. At 2015, C Co has two WIA - Lines 96 and 116. B Co kills 5 NVA; has one KIA and seven WIA. Alpha Co NDP is at 327977 and Bravo Co at 326971. Charlie company men mentioned in award citations: Roy Holmes is cited for exposing himself to enemy fire to cover the extraction of wounded men. As a fire team leader, John Jackson moved forward under heavy enemy fire to pull one of his wounded men to safety. Robert Moore was also cited for moving under enemy fire to save a wounded comrade. About this time, Phillip Stanley remembers seeing reporters and photographers on the hill.

May 21, 1969. 1300 - A Co and C Co find 27 enemy bodies in bunkers. 1410 - A Co 327977; B Co 329967; C Co 327968. 1610 - C Co is at 324973. 1620 - C Co receives RPG and small arms fire. As with 3/187<sup>th</sup> Inf, some of the NVA were motivated to die in defense of Dong Ap Bia and made counterattacks against superior US force. 1820 - C Co has 5 WIA: lines 4, 47, 69, 125, and ? who are sent to 22nd Surgical Hospital. These are: William Kearby, Phillip Tierney, Thurman Wigglesworth, Robert Stinger, and Jeffrey Kanouse. LT Ian Shumaker may have been line #4. He was cited for leading his platoon against well defended enemy positions, calling in artillery and directing small arms fire. As he redeployed his platoon, he was hit by an enemy claymore mine. C Co has three KIA: William Smith, James Ralph, and Robert Goodner. Clearly, the battle for the "Hill" continues.

May 22, 1969. Approx 30-40 NVA bodies are found. 1500 - C Co at 327971. 1520 - 2/501 finds the body of James Ralph of C Co killed on May 21. 1620 - C Co recovers remains of three MIA from May 20 and 21 - probably Timothy Le Clair, Randall Mee, and Howard Peterson. The fighting must have been very intense as under most circumstances, every effort would be made to retrieve US bodies as soon as possible. The 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry also left bodies temporarily due to extremely intense fighting. What to do would be a judgment call at the time. For the US soldier, it is very important to know that your body would be recovered should you die in combat. At the same time, it might not make sense to risk other lives to recover lost soldiers who were known to be dead.

Some assorted memories from Phillip Stanley: In the vicinity of 937, Phillip saw an NVA base camp with hooches, running water via bamboo pipes and a latrine built like an outhouse. This was in a saddle short of the peak of Hill 937. Phillip remembers leaning up against an NVA bunker thinking that it had been cleared. There was a wounded NVA inside (who was later captured?) This was after the main assault on 937. He described the top of Hill 937 as being like a pile of pick up sticks as a result of the air strikes and artillery. He remembered a US flag and a Confederate flag flying on the top of Hamburger Hill.

May 23, 1969. 0640 - air strikes go in on Hill 916. 1030 - Charlie company location is 325972. At 1415, Charlie finds 5 dead NVA from the previous days fighting. 1450 - engages a bunker and kills one NVA. C Co has four WIA. 1555 - At 318971, C Co is hit by ARA and has five WIA (B Co has 3 WIA from ARA). C Co wounded: Lines 76, 123, 102, and LT Williams (2nd plat leader). The four line numbers are probably Thurman Wigglesworth, Jeffrey Kanouse, Larry Rogers, and Robert Stinger. The ARA

coordination must not have been very good at this time as the 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry was also hit by US helicopter gunships on several occasions.



Hamburger Hill in July 1969 shows the complete destruction of the hill

A green ledger book (unofficial) used by the division awards section indicates the following men were wounded about this time: Gary Dolharuide, Philip Tierney, Richard Hembold, Bobby Jackson, Phillip Robinson, David Hicks, Fred Rinehart, and Henry Ybarra.

May 24, 1969. 0820 - B Co finds a weapons cache. 1015 - C Co finds a smaller cache at 324973 and destroys weapons and ammunition.

May 25, 1969. Seems like a quiet day - staying in the same location all day. Most likely the company was resupplying and reorganizing after suffering significant losses.

May 26, 1969. 1245 - C Co location is 329964. The company is beginning its march of about seven km from the Hamburger Hill area to FB Currahee to the southeast. The battalion CP must still be moving with C Co. The battalion Cdr was awarded the Silver Star at FB Currahee for action on May 20th (the battalion history says LTG Zais, the corps commander, presented the award for commanding the battalion in the assault of Dong Ap Bia). 1514 - Company finds bicycle tracks on trail - probably used to move supplies and finds high tension wires with insulators. 1727 - At 337963 the company finds a bunker complex with minor amounts of enemy ammunition.





This map shows the route of Charlie Company from Hamburger to FB Currahee

May 27, 1969. 1545 - C Co finds a 25x25 corn field. The company NDP was at 348961. The next day their 1445 loc is 348961 and NDP is 355964.

May 29, 1969. 0930 - Finds old bunkers at 356966. 1222 - loc at 361973. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, Alpha Co had switched with D Co on providing security for FB Currahee. Most likely, Alpha Company suffered the most in the recent fighting and could better reorganize at Currahee. A conservative estimate would be that 30-50% of the 1/506<sup>th</sup> Infantry rifle companies were comprised of new replacements within two weeks of the Hamburger Hill battles.

May 30, 1969. Most operations are halted due to Buddha's birthday. Charlie NDP is 369966. Commentary: such observations may have made sense to the other brigade of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne that was primarily involved with pacification efforts along the coastal region. Charlie Company members probably cared little for Buddha but no doubt, were happy to take a day off from the fighting.

May 31, 1969. Nothing significant is reported in Charlie Company. Delta had some contacts with five men wounded. NDP is 379962.

June 1-2, 1969. Charlie is in the Ashau Valley floor area, southeast of the recent fighting in the hills. 0945 – 384962; 1245 – 391957. A newly arrived soldier remembers how thin and ragged the company looked after the Hamburger fighting had taken its toll. The company arrives at Currahee at 0830 on June 2 and stands down with showers, clean clothes, equipment repair teams, and ice cream.

June 3, 1969. In the AM, first platoon had been at 369963 and second platoon at 399965. Main mission was securing Currahee.

June 4, 1969. The company is at Fire Base Currahee. Some local patrols are sent out - third platoon at 396952.

June 5, 1969. The company moves to Eagle Beach beginning at 0915 and all arrive by 1020. This must have been a very welcome respite from the recent weeks' fighting.

June 6, 1969. The company returns from Eagle Beach midday. PFC Terry Moyer has accidentally shot himself in the foot and is medevac'd.

June 7-8, 1969. The company is at Currahee – some local RIF's are conducted. At midnight on June 8, Apache Snow terminates.

June 9, 1969. The company medevacs one man for severe chest pain. 1010 - Currahee received four, 122mm rockets. At 1115, Charlie combat assaults to an LZ at 414033. This is on the eastern side of the A Shau Valley near FB Eagles Nest where the hills quickly rise to over 800 meters elevation. Charlie Company will spend the next nine days in this area. Phillip Stanley remembers going in to an elephant grass LZ about this time where the grass caught fire and some ammo that had been kicked out of a helicopter, caught fire and exploded. C Co evacuates line 91 for heat exhaustion.

June 10, 1969. 0900 – 402040; 1300 – 396043.

June 11, 1969. 0845 - at 392043 with third platoon at 389046. 1045 - company completes a one ship LZ. 1415 - CP and first platoon at 386048.

June 12, 1969. 0955 – A Chicom grenade booby trap is tripped - no casualties. 1125 - found bunkers and hooches six months old. 1300 - gunship working for Charlie spots 10 NVA at 400063 and kills one. 1430 - a medic with third platoon, last name starts with "F" is accidentally shot in the thigh; line #155 is evacuated due to heat. Company is constructing some LZ's.

June 13, 1969. The new airstrip in the valley is completed by the 326th Engineers. Caribou aircraft start landing. Route 547 cuts into the A Shau this day. 0750 - second platoon, fourth platoon, CP at 394057. 1640 - two men are medevac'd - one for heat exhaustion (line #125) and one for fractured knee cap (E Co mortar FO). 1735 - At 402064 gunships covering a medevac see three NVA and engage.





Map of area east of the Ashau Valley where Charlie Company operated June 14-17, 1969

June 14, 1969. B Co on Berchtesgaden defends against a sapper attack, killing 60. No friendly KIA's. This was one instance where a "mad minute" caught the NVA sappers by surprise. (A "mad minute" is a designated time early in the AM when security goes to 100% and all personnel fire their weapons on likely enemy attack routes). 0620 - first platoon remains at 399057 to ambush and the company moves out. 0655 - At 401060 finds a recent camp fire and trail with an animal trap located by scout dog. 1145 - receives SA fire from across a gully. Line #76, Jerry Austin, is shot in the leg and medevac'd to 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital.

June 15, 1969. 0930 - 410072 finds a black shirt hanging out to dry. 1300 - second platoon is at 405067. 1400 - medevacs line #16 for high fever and # 143 for heat exhaustion. A combination of high temperatures and steep terrain made movement by

foot very difficult as seen by the evacuations for heat exhaustion. 1600 - At LZ, 407066 found garden plot with corn, tomatoes, squash, watermelon and some bunkers.

June 16, 1969. 0900 - At 411069 the company finds a trail with steps cut, logs, and bamboo hand rail. No recent use. 1230 - 412070 medevacs line # 79 for heat exhaustion. 2224 - OP hears movement and tosses two grenades; receives one RPG round. Negative casualties.

June 17, 1969. 0850 - At 412070 and looking for an LZ. 1125 - first platoon is setting up radio relay at 413069. They found a tame pig with VC communications wire used as a harness. They tried to catch the pig but could not; they shot the pig so the VC could not use it for food. 1345 - Finds hooches and bunkers at 415071 and one old rifle. 1700 - FB Currahee gets rockets and mortars from 398933. 1755 - there is one heat medevac from 410069.

June 18, 1969. 0910 - At 406067, the company receives small arms fire; Peter Blazonis, line #82 is shot in the chest. He was cleaning up by a stream when he was shot; was medevac'd to 22d Surgical Hospital at 1015 but must have died in the hospital. This was still in the vicinity of FB Eagles Nest. 1445 - LZ Currahee. 1530 - Currahee receives a few rockets and mortar rounds; Derek Montey is injured in groin by piece of bamboo and is medevac'd. 1640 - Currahee receives a few more mortar rounds. The company would spend the next four days patrolling within a few kilometers of FB Currahee.

June 19, 1969. 1545 - At 398945 - Company conducts a RIF in the vicinity of Firebase Currahee. 1825 - Reports butterfly mine 397939 - one exploded and wounded line # 156, Loren Klene, with shrapnel in lower back. Butterfly mines were small, anti-personnel mines that would be dropped in mass by air to blanket an area where enemy were known to traverse. It is not clear how long these mines had been in the area but with hindsight, it did not make sense to deploy them in an area frequented by US forces.

June 20, 1969. 3/5th Cav and elements from 9th ID and 1st Cav enter the A Shau (Ta Bat air strip) from route 547 having started at Blaze and Cannon. 0715 - the company is at 399945. At 0820, the company commander requests that a medical officer check five men who need to go to the rear for treatment. At 1000, the company combat assaults to a cold LZ at 391930 (suspected mortar position a few days earlier). 1145 - At 395930. 1545 - first platoon at 393929; third platoon at 395929; second platoon and CP at 393930. 1745 - At 393930, finds old 75mm rounds and has a four ship LZ. It appears that the east side of the Ashau Valley did not have the recent enemy activity as did the west side which was closer to the Laos sanctuaries. The west side may have housed NVA forces while the east may have been more VC.

June 21, 1969. 0800 - first platoon at 392928; third platoon at 399930. 0905 - found two recent mortar positions at 398930. 1145 - CP and first platoon at 388929; second platoon at 388929; third platoon at 390930. 1523 - third platoon at 403927. 1805 - first platoon at 395930 finds two bunkers and 60mm mortar fuses two weeks old. 1830 - finds mortar FO bunker at 396932.



June 22, 1969. 3/3 ARVN is at the new Ta Bat airfield. 1245 - At 402931. 1535 - second platoon at 401927 to construct an LZ.



Charlie Company locations June 20-22, 1969 south of FB Currahee

June 23, 1969. From 0752 to 0837, the company moves by air to an LZ at 322917 (south side of Rao Lao River, 2 km from Laos and seven km WSW of FB Currahee). The hills rise steeply from the river and reach elevations of 700-800 meters almost immediately. Charlie Company will work this area for the next five days. 1110 - the company finds many fresh trails at 322917. 1317 - first platoon at 320920 finds one very new trail three feet wide. 1540 - medevacs line #91 for heat at 329919. [Employing helicopters for medical or resupply purposes had the disadvantage of telling the local enemy forces that US forces were nearby, losing the benefit of surprise and allowing the enemy to take the initiative if they so chose.] 1745 - first platoon and CP were at 325916; second platoon at

321918; third platoon at 324917. 1800 - first platoon engages enemy at 325916. In the fight, LT Joseph Kenney, first platoon leader was toward the front of his platoon, directing fire against the enemy. LT Kenney was hit by small arms fire and his RTO, James Bishop, aggressively returned fire on the enemy in order to allow the platoon to aid LT Kenney. Bishop received a head wound and went down. SGT Steven Clegg, squad leader, moved his men forward against the enemy and killed one NVA soldier. Both LT Kenney and James Bishop died of their wounds. Bishop was with the Kansas national guard.

Phillip Stanley remembers when LT Kenney was killed. Kenney was first platoon leader and had been there only a few weeks. SGT Clegg had just alternated point with Stanley. Clegg called for Kenney to come forward to confer about the route when they encountered the NVA.



Area of firefight June 23-June 27, 1969

June 24, 1969. 1100 - first platoon, second platoon and CP are at 325917; third platoon is at 324918. 1700 - At 326916. 1735 - finds hooch and bunker two weeks old.

June 25, 1969. ARVN were operating about 2 km due East of Charlie. 326th Engineers had an element with Charlie working to construct an LZ.

June 26, 1969. 2/17 Cav spotted a large force of NVA vicinity 334873; Air Strikes were called. 0955 - A platoon leader (line #6?) was wounded in the knee cap and medevac'd. Charles Clark may also have been wounded in this incident. 1510 - A CA was conducted

- only covered a few hundred meters to 332911. Perhaps the short flight was to test a new PZ or to deceive the enemy.

June 27, 1969. 0950 - first platoon is at 328908. Air strikes go in on bridges professionally made over smaller streams and perhaps under some canopy at 339875 and 342874 near the Laos border; - the result is partial destruction of bridges. 1410 - the company finds recent bunkers and hooches at 335909.

June 28-30, 1969. It appears that Charlie Company is providing security for FB Berchtesgaden and will remain in this area for the next 12 days.

July 1, 1970. 1456 - medevacs line #93 for high temperature.

July 2-3, 1969. Copperhead is call sign for Cdr, 1/506th Inf. This corresponds with the arrival of the new battalion commander, LTC Arnold C. Hayward.

July 4-9, 1969. Company still has the mission of securing FSB Berchtesgaden.

July 10, 1969. Company LZ on Currahee from Berchtesgaden at 1606. 1820 - medevacs SFC Trutt for heart problem. Charlie Company will be securing the firebase for the next 14 days. The only exceptions are three and two days respectively OPCON missions by first and second platoons to 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry.

July 11, 1969. One man is medevac'd due to an accidental claymore injury. A flare ship, possibly a Chinook is standing by on Currahee - intelligence suggests an attack was likely. LTC Arnold Hayward, the battalion commander was killed at 313939 - his CP was attacked by NVA with RPG's; he had a squad from D Co securing him in the vicinity of Hill 996 (about 5 kilometers S-SW of Dong Ap Bia). Bravo and Delta take numerous KIA and WIA. It was unusual for battalion commanders to die in combat and shortly after this time, they spent most of their time in helicopters or on firebases.

July 12, 1969. The fight continues around Hill 996. Several air strikes go in. The intensity seems similar to the Dong Ap Bia fight in May. Delta Company has 8 KIA. Mike Aird recalls, "I joined my platoon on FSB Currahee. I only remember pulling guard at night and details during the day. On the second or third day I was sent to the chopper pad for a detail. Upon arriving, I was told to help unload several body bags of KIA's from Delta Co. I felt very uncomfortable. I believe Delta Co. had eight KIA on July 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> and I think these were them."

July 13, 1969. Brigade instructs 1/506 to hold Hill 996 for five days to construct a three ship LZ. 2320 - C Co observes an NVA squad at 386932 moving toward Currahee.

July 14, 1969. Alpha Company had been OPCON outside the battalion and Bravo and Delta had been in major contact.



July 15, 1969. Alpha Company - at Eagle's Nest YD 406036). Bravo Company - at YC 308938; Delta Company - at YC 315942

From July 10 to July 23, 1969, Charlie Company's main mission is securing FB Currahee. Because the company had a relatively new company commander and a number of new replacements, CPT Moore used some of this time to train his company by patrolling to the west of the firebase. Mike Aird recalls, "On FSB Currahee I remember a river nearby and going down to it for a bath. After several days on Currahee, the CO, R. Moore, decided that as there were many replacements in the company, he would take the company out for a several day training patrol. We walked out of Currahee heading toward Laos. After walking all morning into the afternoon we were well into the mountainous terrain west of Currahee. We began encountering numerous well travelled trails. We began to follow one trail and as the slope up the mountain trail increased, we found that the NVA had planked steps into the trail and built hand rails for an easier climb. I was completely stunned by this vision and remember thinking, 'holy f\*\*k, Mike, you'll never leave here alive.' The A Chau Valley was a true hell on earth. The enemy had built every mountain top, ridge, and hill into a virtual fortress from which they could ambush, fight, and when necessary, withdraw to another defensive position from which they could repeat the process. My impression of being on point, i.e. the point man and slack man, was that these people were expendable, their deaths were acceptable consequences of finding and engaging the enemy. A very, very good and a very, very lucky point man may be somewhat successful but it was a real crap shoot. I had spent a good deal of time exploring and hunting, as a boy, in the forests and wood of northern Wisconsin. I found this experience quite helpful in Vietnam. After my first patrol, an experienced sergeant approached me and asked if I had hunted 'in the world'. It was evident that my hunting experiences were obvious, were recognized, and would be valuable. It also had the effect of moving me up to the point position, a real negative consequence.

I cannot adequately describe what it was like on this first patrol. I thought I was in fairly good physical condition after basic training and infantry training, but I was so very wrong. The weight of the combat gear and field gear was punishing. Add to this the terrain (3000-4000 foot mountains), the heat in the 90+ degree range, and humidity that could be cut with a knife, and a man hovered near the point of passing out. To lift the amount of weight we carried was a daunting challenge. I can remember times when it was impossible to pick up my rucksack and swing into it. I had to lie on the ground, flip over onto my stomach next to a tree, and raise my body by pushing myself up on the tree trunk. To walk carrying this weight, a man had to lean forward at an angle that allowed that weight to help push the body forward. A step allowed you to maintain balance without falling forward. This became much more difficult when climbing or descending a mountain, ridge, or hill. Keep in mind that you had to maintain absolute awareness of the surroundings at all times."

July 16-23, 1969. Most of the company is securing FB Currahee. From Jul 15-Jul 20, first and second platoons take turns working with the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cav – most likely providing security to the tanks and armored personnel carriers. The 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry had a fluid

history about this time. Originally, the unit was the reconnaissance squadron of the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. As the 9<sup>th</sup> ID prepared to leave Viet Nam in summer of 1969, the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry (mechanized) division and then to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne where it worked Route 547 and the A Shau Valley from summer 1969 to January 1970. After the 101<sup>st</sup> pulled out of A Shau, the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was reassigned to the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry (mechanized) division.

In the May to August 1969 time frame, Phillip Stanley remembers an attack helicopter being kept on Currahee to go after mortars and rocket launchers. He also remembers a valiant effort to retrieve an M-16 lost in the Rao Lao River near Currahee. An officer brought out snorkel gear to help locate the weapon but it was unsuccessful. There are more than a handful of weapons in the bottom of rivers where the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne fought.

## **Chapter 2 – Operation Montgomery Rendezvous and Louisiana Lee. Currahee, Hamburger, Close Currahee (July 15, 1969 to September 5, 1969).**

*During this period, six US were killed and 13 wounded. Known enemy killed was four.*

After picking up my equipment at Camp Evans, I flew to Fire Support Base (FSB) Currahee. Currahee was located along the Rao Lao river in the A Shau Valley and near some seasonal roads, Routes 547 and 548 and about seven km SE of Dong Ap Bia, scene of heavy fighting in May, 1969.



Location of Fire Base Currahee

I reported in to the battalion commander, LTC Leon McCall. The firebase had artillery tubes and I believe some were the larger 155mm guns. As I was meeting the battalion commander in the operations center, the artillery was firing salvos and the noise was loud. As the guns fired, I'd jump an inch out of my chair. Colonel McCall assured me that I'd adjust to the noise very soon and he was right. I learned to sleep no more than 20-30 feet from the guns. Colonel McCall was a pleasant man and told me not to get killed. I had no argument with that idea (I did not know it at the time but six lieutenants had been killed in the battalion since April and several others had been wounded). He then sent me to see the brigade commander, COL Robert Siegrist, on FSB Berchtesgaden, about seven km NE of Currahee. The flight up the valley was scenic and surreal. The green forested hills were beautiful as seen from the helicopter and rivaled any in the world. You could spot very large, circular bomb craters in the valley, filled with water - most likely from B-52's. As the chopper neared the firebase, you could see what looked like cocoons in the tops of the trees but they were white nylon parachutes from illumination rounds. Berchtesgaden just had a sapper attack the night before and COL Siegrist had a white bandage around his head. I believe he said that his Sergeant Major had shot some sappers around the CP with his .45 pistol. Siegrist told me not to be too aggressive as he was short on platoon leaders or words to that effect. I was thinking that if colonels were getting wounded, my chances were not so good.

Most infantrymen in Charlie Company would agree that the quality of lieutenants in the company was somewhat spotty over the period of this story. Almost by definition,



lieutenants are inexperienced and some found themselves in Viet Nam due to draft pressures rather than a desire to lead men in combat. Nevertheless, several lieutenants rose to the occasion under the pressure of combat, exhibiting leadership and bravery under difficult circumstances.

After returning to FSB Currahee, LTC McCall sent me out to shadow an experienced platoon leader in another company for a few days. This was about July, 24. I remember having one contact with an enemy trail watcher. The other lieutenant acted like John Wayne and may have been wounded in the engagement. He must have had good eyes as I could not see where the fire was coming from.

Charlie Company had been pulling security at Currahee. Things were generally quiet there although movement was heard after dark on several occasions. The FSB also received mortar and rocket fire on a regular basis, probably from the high ground to the south toward the Laos border. Most mortar and rocket attacks caused limited damage.

A rifle company always served as the security force around a fire base. The “population” of a FSB could be from 150 up to 400 people. Typically, there was a headquarters with radios, artillery, engineers, and pathfinders (to control the helicopters, especially those bringing in large loads of ammunition, fuel, or water). It appears that first platoon and second platoon alternated on OPCON missions, most likely with the 3/5 Cavalry. *There was no shortage of adolescent humor as the brigade S2 selected "vomit" as the code word for Jul 23, 1969.* On July 25, the company moved about 2 km to the west on RIF (reconnaissance in force) operations. A RIF was simply moving in the jungle to engage the enemy, preferably on your terms. The RIF found two NVA graves 60 days old at YC 374922 and 11, 3x5 bunkers 90 days old – both dating to the Hamburger Hill battle time.

Perhaps in preparation for the Hamburger Hill battles, the US had dropped “butterfly” bombs around Currahee. These were anti-personnel mines that may have fired a .22 caliber round when disturbed. They were light and could catch in grass or shrubs. Richard Hahn discovered a butterfly bomb and brought one back to show CPT Moore.

From July 26 until August 4, Charlie Company was OPCON to the 3/5th Cavalry Squadron. 3/5 Cav was not really suited to this part of Viet Nam. They had tanks and I believe armored personnel carriers (APC's) that are more suitable to flat, wide open areas. The tanks had a secondary use in this area escorting convoys but were not the best at that. They must have come in on route 547 which was just opened and was probably passable at this time of year before the monsoons hit and landslides frequently closed the road. Route 547 originated near Camp Eagle, headquarters of the 101<sup>st</sup>. The route then went to FSB Bastogne and on to the A Shau Valley (where Charlie Company linked up with the 3/5 Cav). I recall one use of tanks – they were frequently idling to charge their batteries and their rear exhaust was like a warm, diesel smelling blower. If your poncho liner got wet, a few minutes in the tank “dryer” would have it ready for use.

C Company arrives on "Hamburger Hill," Hill 937 - YC 328981 mid day July 26. A rough estimate would be that no more than ten to twelve men of the company remained in

the field who had fought the original battle of Hill 937 in May. Even at company level, the constant turnover diminished the combat experience and lessons learned the hard way.

The company's mission was to secure the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry mechanized elements, tanks and armored personnel carriers, (primarily at night) and to conduct local patrols for security. Three LP's (Listening Post) are placed out a short distance at the 3/5 Cav NDP (night defensive position). *Alpha company is hit by sappers - has 8 KIA and 22 WIA YC 313941- about 5 km south of Hamburger.* The battalion normally operated with companies separated by a kilometer or more. In relatively rare cases, elements of one company would reinforce another that had been hit hard. One reason for the separation was to cover more of the AO with the forces available and knowing that aerial support was readily available. A reader of the journals cannot help but notice that there are many cases of one company getting clobbered while the others are perfectly quiet. (I'll note battalion significant activities other than Charlie Company as they occur and place them in italics in order to give a sense of the intensity of action within the battalion's area of operations). Through July 28, the company does patrolling within a few hundred meters of Hill 937 (also known as Dong Ap Bia). During the May battles, the enemy had countless bunkers and supplies throughout the area and most of the large trees around the hill had been turned into toothpicks from B-52 bombing, air strikes, and artillery.



Hamburger Hill area with Hill 996 at bottom left of map

0955 July 29, the company found 10 graves at YC 310988 (approx 2 km west of Hamburger toward Laos). The bodies had been killed by small arms and were about 60 days old. The company also found an RPG launcher and a Chicom claymore. The company was back at the NDP by 1648. *The company field strength is 71.*

The B-52 strikes made on Hamburger Hill area created a lot of debris from all of the trees that were knocked down. I recall that my feet were in agony after patrolling all day on branches and irregular surfaces. We also took short trips into Laos - the border was only two km west of our NDP. Once, I needed to check out an area that was in Laos so we crossed the border. Of course, the jungle in VN looked pretty much like the jungle in Laos.

About this time period, Jim Orms recalls the fourth platoon working for a few days with the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry's armored personnel carriers and a bulldozer, to cut a new road to the valley floor. Apparently, the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry split its cavalry troops to conduct separate missions in different areas. Afterwards, the fourth platoon was lifted to Firebase Berchtesgaden on or about August 4<sup>th</sup>.

The next few days were spent in local patrolling east and west of Hill 937 and pulling security at night. I was first platoon leader and the field strength was 31. On August 1, I went to Mass on the hill – sometimes combat makes one more religious. At 1120, the company found 27, 60mm rounds, 2 RPG rounds, and 18, B40 rockets. Most likely these were left from the battle in May 1969. The next day at 1155 - YC 334982 - the company found 18, 82mm mortar rounds 90 days old in a 4x4 bunker; at 1830 - YC 327973 they found miscellaneous ammo and medicine. Since the NVA were always short on supplies, it is surprising that they had not sent small units back to the Hamburger Hill area to retrieve some of the ammunition still there. On Aug 3, 1750 at YC 336981, one of the platoons finds 3 dead NVA and an AK 50 (folding stock AK 47) - all about 90 days old. August 4 is the last day of OPCON to 3/5 Cav.

About this time, there was a VIP show from Hamburger with artillery firing WP rounds to mark the Laos border for those seeing the display. This demonstration was probably staged to garner support for the war from visiting congressional delegations. Most company members thought that these efforts would have been better spent firing at known enemy locations.

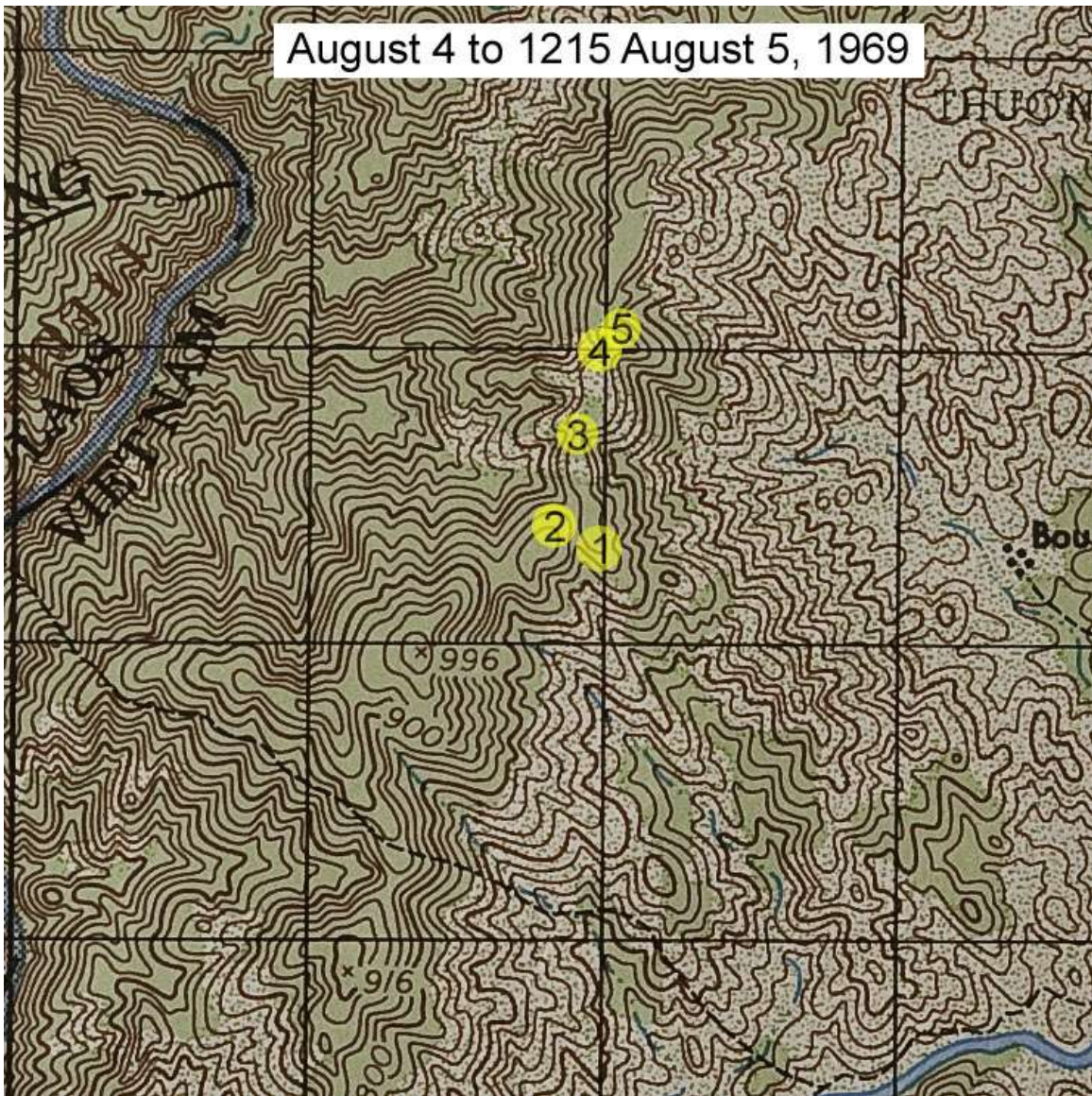
At 1612 Charlie Company moves by air a few kilometers south of Hill 937 toward the Laos border and north of the Rao Lao river. The pickup zone (PZ) was at YC 345997 and the landing zone (LZ) at YC 320943 (not far from where Alpha company was hit a few days earlier). This is about as deep as you can be in NVA territory and still be in South Viet Nam. At 1900, 4th platoon CA's (combat assault or helicopter move) from YD 379004 to FSB Berchtesgaden (YD 423013). Perhaps fourth platoon had a security mission on Berchtesgaden. The new company location is half way between Hills 916 and 996 and a few km southwest from Dong Ap Bia. Recent experience had shown these areas to be well populated with NVA forces.

*At one time, I recall coming across a large bomb half buried in the ground as first platoon moved along a ridge line. We didn't want to spend much time near it, in the event it was connected to a command detonation device. My memory is not clear but I want to say that it was a 750 pound bomb but reading the yellow lettering on the olive drab munition said something like "746 pounds high explosive." I thought to myself that we had some false advertising.*

*Defoliation and Agent Orange. From time to time we would be moving along a high ridge line and notice that something was not quite right with the vegetation. A quick inspection would reveal that some of the large, tall trees had no vegetation and perhaps their trunks were white. This gave an eerie look to the forest. I believe we were aware that the USAF flew defoliation missions and would spray trees with Agent Orange. When we were on a high hilltop, we may have seen the C-130's spraying the jungle, flying through some of the larger valleys. This was done to open up the jungle and to let observation aircraft have a better chance of spotting enemy movement. We never knew how long it had been since an area had been sprayed and there probably was no consideration given at the time to the health of those who might encounter an area defoliated by the chemical spray. War is tough on trees as well as men. There are several mentions of planned defoliation missions in the battalion journals.*

August 5, 1969. The company would spend the next three days in this NVA infested area. The terrain consists of very steep mountains about 1,000 meters high with triple canopy vegetation. Most movement was done on ridge lines which had advantages. The movement was more level and for the most part, you were on the high ground unless the ridge was moving up to a higher peak. If you moved in a draw or small valley, you could be engaged from several sides. Disadvantages of ridge movement is that it was predictable and that a small enemy unit could sneak up a draw and engage you from the flank or wait for you to come down the trail and ambush the lead element. 0725 - YC 319947 the company point man spotted two NVA coming up a draw and killed both, capturing two AK's. 1030 - 1 US was shot at YC 320950. 1215 - the company command post spots one NVA before he has a chance to react, killing him at YC 321952. 1247 - the company center of mass is at YC 320949. 1432 - the platoons are at YC 319944, YC 319945, and YC 318947. 1618 - 2 US are wounded at YC 319945, five enemy are killed, and six weapons captured. 1830 - YC 319944 received AK and RPG fire. The company killed two NVA and had six US WIA. Charlie Company employs air cavalry and USAF close air support. 2020, the company is located at YC 320949. 2100 - Charlie receives 4, 60mm mortars and rockets. 0100 - CP at YC 320945. This was a hectic day to say the least after several quiet ones with the tanks on Hamburger Hill.

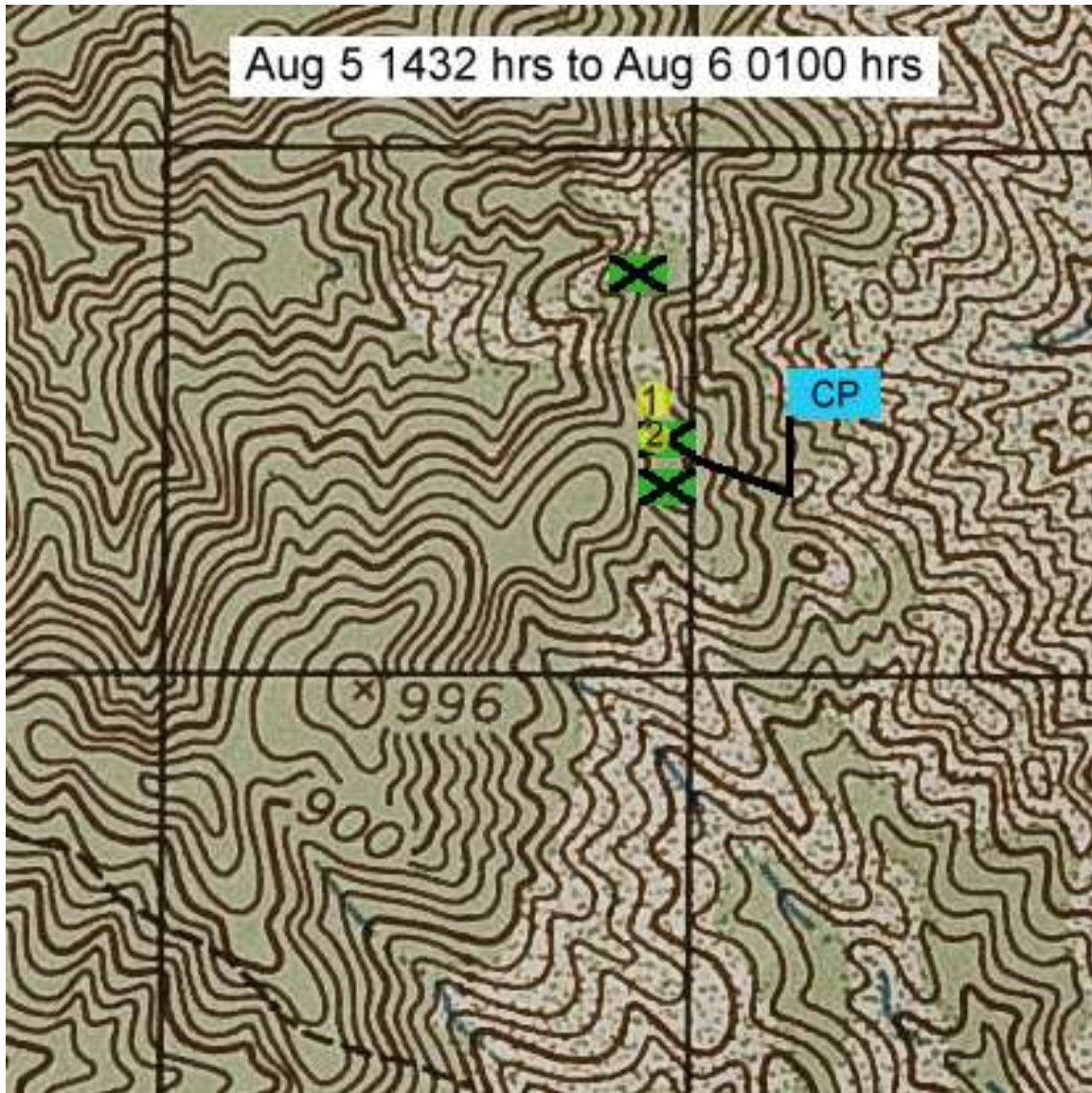




1 - initial LZ at 1630; 2 - Aug 4 NDP at 1930 hrs; 3 - Aug 5, company kills two NVA; 4 - Aug 5 at 1030 hrs one US shot; 5 - Aug 5 at 1215 hrs, company kills one NVA.

As indicated above, the action on August 5, 1969 was a series of fights lasting most of the day. The award citations which have been collected provide some more detailed information about the fighting during the day but at this point, it is not possible to put the individual actions in chronological order. Robert Jones was a third platoon RTO. In the morning, his platoon was attacked from the rear. Jones aided the wounded and popped smoke to mark friendly positions for attack helicopters. Later he took over an M-60 machine gun from a wounded gunner and engaged the NVA.





The unit symbols are the platoon locations at 1432 hrs, August 5. **1** - at circle #1, two US are WIA and 5 NVA KIA at 1620 hrs; **2** - at 1830 hours, 6 US are WIA and two NVA KIA. CP location is 0100 hrs, Aug 6.

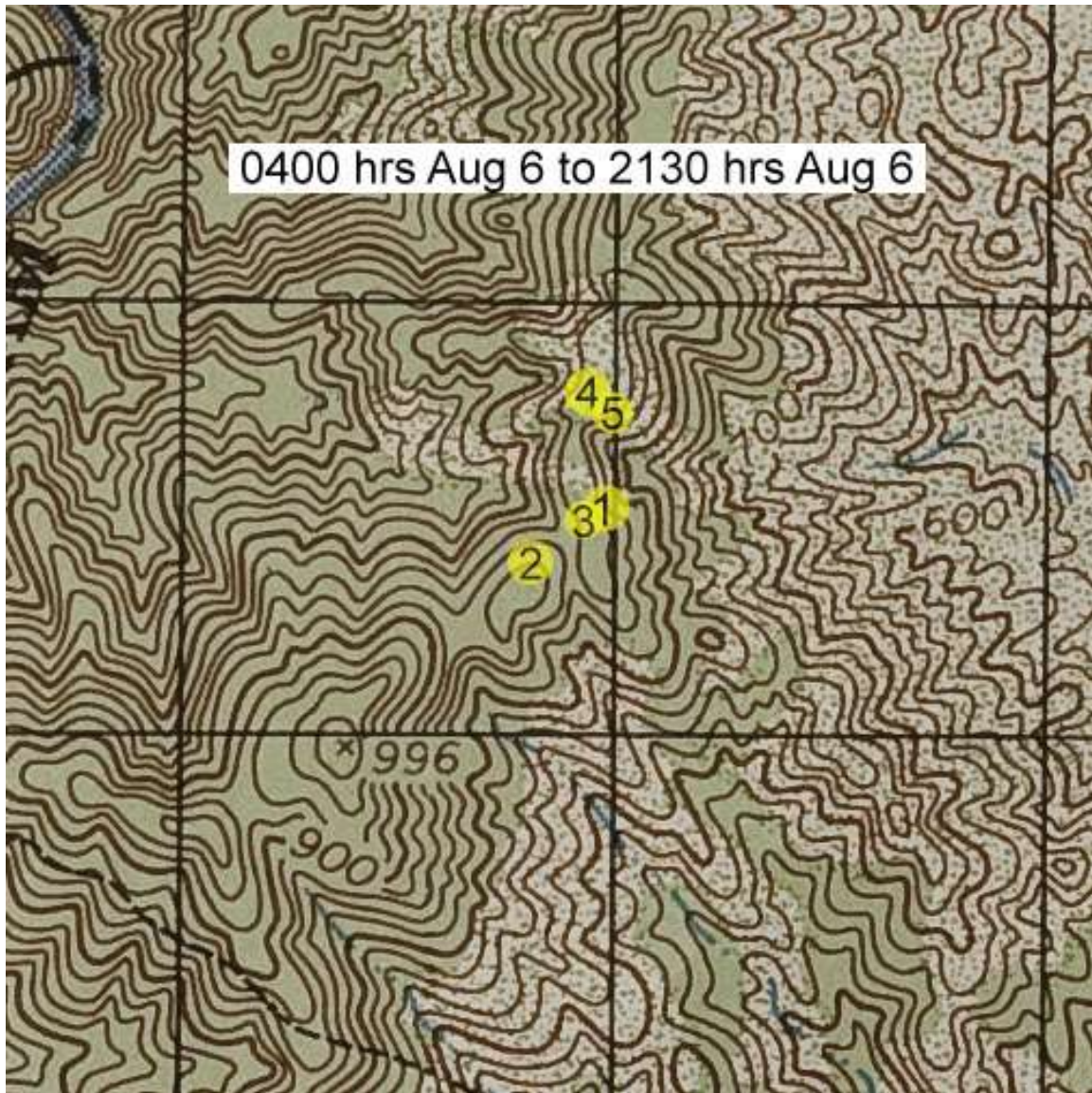
SSG Juan Duenas was a platoon sergeant who responded to an enemy attack by deploying his platoon where they were able to suppress the enemy and recover men wounded earlier. Duenas moved about the fighting without regard for his own safety. Ted Blackwell came to the aid of his point man and killed an NVA. He then placed heavy fire in the direction of the enemy attack and received wounds during this exchange. Gary Hartwig was in the lead platoon that came under enemy fire. He charged an enemy machine gun and was seriously wounded. He then tossed a grenade at the machine gun location, putting it out of action. Kutis Miner was in the rear of the lead platoon when firing broke out. He fought his way forward and assisted in pulling several wounded men to safety. While placing heavy fire on the enemy, Alan Wall noticed an NVA trying to

outflank his unit. Alan quickly fired, killing the NVA soldier. Caudle Mann fought aggressively, moving from position to position, drawing enemy fire so that his platoon could knock out the enemy positions. Michael O'Brien or "OB" was the second platoon sergeant. He skillfully deployed his platoon, placing heavy suppressive fire on the NVA. When a forward man was wounded, OB crawled forward and carried the man back to safety on his shoulders. This action inspired his platoon to engage the enemy more aggressively. Michael Jones was a platoon medic. About 1630 hrs, Jones retrieved several wounded men and assisted getting them to a safe position where he administered life-saving first aid (*on April 22, 1969, Jones had saved a man drowning in a rain-swollen stream after a tree had fallen on him and pinned him under the water. Jones pulled the man to the bank and administered artificial respiration until the man started breathing*). When a lead element encountered an enemy squad, two US were wounded. William Kearby placed suppressive fire on the enemy and marked the friendly positions with smoke so ARA could engage the NVA. Kearby carried wounded men to a bomb crater where a medevac chopper was able to extract the wounded. He continued to suppress the enemy during this evacuation. Charles Layne was a machine gunner. Despite heavy enemy fire, he suppressed the NVA until the company commander was able to better deploy his platoons and to evacuate the wounded. Marvin Thompson was second platoon leader. He maneuvered his platoon to support another platoon and killed an NVA soldier at close range, causing others to withdraw. Mark Rebrovitch was with the company's rear security element. He noticed an NVA trying to ambush the rear element and killed him – saving several lives by his actions. During one of the many isolated fights, SGT Steven Clegg charged up a ridge line and knocked out a fighting position consisting of an NVA RPG gunner and rifleman.

In one of these firefights, I was very nervous. We were engaging a pair of NVA in a foxhole about 30 meters away and they had an RPG and AK. I was calling in ARA danger close (about 25 meters) which I believe had been effective in at least wounding the NVA. I had my RTO keep lighting cigarettes so that I always had one going. He must have had serious questions about my ability to perform under pressure.

*August 5, 1969 Casualty summary: KIA Names: SP4 Robert Jones. Tour began 11/16/1968. 1030 hrs, US was shot in head by enemy at YC320950. Line #17. WIA - Two serious (litter); lines 11, 75 (Ted Blackwell and Gary Hartwig are wounded).. Both taken by medevac / penetrator to 22d Surgical Hospital. One had fragmentation wounds to the back and arm; the other had an AK gunshot in the leg. Four others slightly wounded to be medevac'd on Aug 6.*





1 - 0400 hrs center location on Aug 6; 2 - 4<sup>th</sup> platoon and recon platoon arrive; 3 - at 1230 hours, one NVA is killed. At 1250 hours, an NVA satchel charge kills one US and wounds two. At 1621 hours, NVA kills the point man; 4 - company location at 1753 hrs. At 1805 hrs, two US are KIA and three WIA; 5 - recon platoon location.

After reading the battalion journals for the year, certain patterns come out clearly. One point is that the closer you move to the NVA major supply line (Ho Chi Minh Trail) and the closer you get to the Laos supply and transport areas, the more likely you will encounter enemy forces. The US knew where the enemy could be found but failed to aggressively pursue and destroy the enemy, despite the preponderance of fire support available. Some would argue that the US did not have adequate forces to cover the populated coastal areas and also pursue the enemy along the border areas.



August 6, 1969. I believe the company commander concluded that there were sizeable NVA forces in the vicinity and chose to bring his platoons close where they could better support each other. We made a night move which was not routinely done. Things can get chaotic in a hurry in the darkness where it is difficult to distinguish between friend and foe. This may have been the time when my RTO was carrying a canister round in his M-79 and followed me in the column. For safety reasons, the M-79 barrel was kept open. A vine must have snagged his closed and I heard a loud noise. We were both half asleep while walking and my RTO explained that the canister round had gone off accidentally. Fortunately, no one was injured.

0135 - second platoon closed with the CP. 0225 – the company starts moving to the south. 0400 - Company center of mass is YC 320945. 0715 - the company is at YC 318944 which is an LZ. 0912 – The fourth platoon arrives from FB Berchtesgaden. 1112 – the company moves out from the LZ. 1230 - Charlie engaged 3 NVA vicinity YC 319945, killing one; the company employs artillery to the front and ARA to the flanks. 1250 - NVA attacks from the rear with small arms and satchel charges, one US KIA (line #63) and 2 WIA (line #125 and a medic). 1621 - YC 319945 – two or three NVA initiate contact wounding the point man who later dies. 1753 – the company is at YC 319948. 1805 – Charlie is in contact at YC 319948. The enemy engages C Co with small arms fire; two US are killed in a draw area and three are wounded. ARA is employed. Charlie Company receives 10-15, 60mm mortar rounds. First platoon maneuvers to assist extracting casualties. 0345 - medevac complete with lines 27, 68, and 70 going to the 22d Surgical Hospital.

Jim Orms had recollections after the arrival of the fourth platoon: “We were told the rest of the company made heavy contact on Hill 996. We were told the company was pulled off of 996 and B52's were to make an air strike on the hill [plans may have changed as the rest of the company was not pulled off of the hill]. After that the 4th platoon along with the rest of the company would make a combat assault on the hill in a 30 hour raid. Most of us only took 2 or 3 meals. I remember the LZ on 996 was very small. We pulled security for the engineers who were planting C4 in order to increase the LZ size. One of the other platoons started moving along the ridge and got into a fire fight. I understood the point man was KIA. Then, as I understood it, another platoon took the lead and got into a fire fight and again their point man was killed. Then it was our turn. We followed the trail until we came to what I believe was a large bomb crater in the middle of the ridge. We split-up, our squad went left and the other right. The right side ran into a machine gun. The squad on the left saw nothing. I fired a few rounds down the left side of the hill just in case. I was facing down the left side of the hill when another platoon moved in front of us along the side of the ridge to flank the NVA. At that time the NVA start walking mortars up the hill towards us. Someone said the rounds were coming from Hamburger hill. I had no idea what direction was what. Anyway we were told to pull back to where we had started. As I started back the machine gun opened up on me. A large tree next to me took the rounds. All I remember is bark flying everywhere. I did a very low crawl back up the side on the trail. We then waited until dark to recover the bodies. I was right next to two dead NVA that night. Boy did they stink. I swear you could hear the insects eating on them. I was one of the guys told to recover the bodies.

You know how dark it was that night [the moon was waning and would be a new moon in a week]. We felt our way to the KIA's. I know we thought we had 3 KIA's, but I can't remember if all three were to be recovered or one was already recovered. We got one in the poncho and started back with him. I was told the guys checking the bodies had to feel for wounds because of the darkness. The next thing we know, one of the KIA's started screaming. The guy was laying face down, wounded, all that time. When they turned him over the screaming started. I think everyone just about shit themselves. I spent the rest of the night next to my dead NVA friends.”

As with the prior day, the award citations can offer some additional insight into the fights that took place this day. Third platoon was engaged by the enemy. David Smith spotted an NVA attempting to flank the platoon and killed him with a grenade. He then retrieved one wounded man and returned to retrieve another. Smith was then killed by small arms while extracting the second wounded man. David Finger was point man for second platoon. He spotted two NVA and killed both of them. Proceeding up the trail he spotted an NVA bunker. He attacked the enemy position with grenades and killed another enemy soldier but was killed by small arms shortly thereafter. Robert Jones was RTO for third platoon. The company was attacked from the rear and several men were wounded. Jones immediately reported the tactical situation to the company commander and marked his location with smoke for supporting fires. He pulled wounded men to safety and later manned an M-60 machine gun. While manning the M-60, he was killed by small arms fire. At noon, the fourth platoon was moving down a hill to secure an open area. As the platoon entered the open area, the NVA engaged the platoon. Fred Rinehart got behind a log to return fire. A man next to Rinehart was wounded. Rinehart began to evacuate the wounded man but was killed in the attempt. Akke Timmer was walking point. He noticed the reflection of an enemy bayonet and signaled his platoon to take cover. He placed fire on the enemy to allow his platoon to move to good fighting positions. He noticed an NVA moving toward the US platoon and killed him. Then he noticed a wounded US soldier nearby and was killed trying to move the man back to a safer position. Steven Hollar maneuvered through heavy fire to reach two wounded men who were brought to the medics. Carroll Turpin assisted his machine gunner (Wayne Wasilk) in placing heavy fire on the enemy, allowing his platoon to deploy without further losses. Gregory White was on security guard for a resupply when he heard movement. He alerted those nearby, allowing the platoon to kill the NVA attempting to ambush the platoon. As a platoon leader, Charles Squires skillfully maneuvered his platoon to engage the enemy and killed an NVA in the process. Michael Edmondson volunteered to walk point where two US were wounded earlier in the day. Upon reaching that spot, the enemy engaged Edmondson's platoon. Edmondson returned fire, killing one NVA and allowing the platoon to retrieve the wounded men. Tony Carnett distinguished himself in numerous firefights during the day. As an M-60 gunner, Wayne Wasilk charged from the rear of his platoon to lay down suppressive fire, killing an NVA and allowing his platoon to flank the enemy position. Throughout the day, the NVA were aggressively trying to detect weak points in Charlie Company's formations and the result was a series of platoon level fights lasting much of the day. The company employed artillery, a pink team, and air strikes throughout.

After a series of contacts, the company was low on ammunition and would request a resupply. If there was no prepared landing zone or if enemy were in the area and able to engage helicopters, the resupply would be performed very quickly. I remember one about this time where ammo and water (in artillery canisters) was “kicked out” of the chopper from a height of about 30 feet. A box of ammo might be twelve inches by six by six and weigh 30 pounds or more. When the box hit the jungle floor, it was traveling with very considerable force. One of these boxes landed about 10-15 feet from where I was standing and I could not help but think that had it hit me on the head, I would be long gone. I’m not sure the people in the resupply choppers could see that clearly where the canopy was thick. Despite the inherent danger of this method, I don’t recall any injuries from this type of resupply, just close calls.

Here is some more detail on Gregory White who was mentioned a few paragraphs earlier. Gregory was very jumpy and was frequently hearing what he thought was enemy movement. Perhaps he was right and the rest of us were just not as observant. We were on a hill getting a resupply and White came up to me very excitedly saying he saw an enemy soldier. I kept reading the Stars and Stripes and asked one of our very reliable soldiers, Richard Hahn, to go with him to take a look. They both returned a minute or two later, having confirmed the sighting. The rest of us grabbed our fighting gear and moved to the area where the enemy soldier was. We were on a small hill and the NVA was about 20 feet down the side of the hill and behind a large tree trunk, perhaps two to three feet in diameter. I think he started digging in behind the tree in desperation. We were able to get an angle on him with grenades and M-79's. We placed a large amount of fire on his position, quickly killing him. I remember that the whole top of his skull was blown off and his brain was lying on the ground. In a way, you feel sorry for the NVA who got himself in an untenable position but most likely, his goal had been to infiltrate near our position and do the same to us. In retrospect, our fire discipline was not the best, having expended much more ammunition than necessary. Had a larger enemy force initiated contact soon afterwards, we may have wished that we had that ammunition.

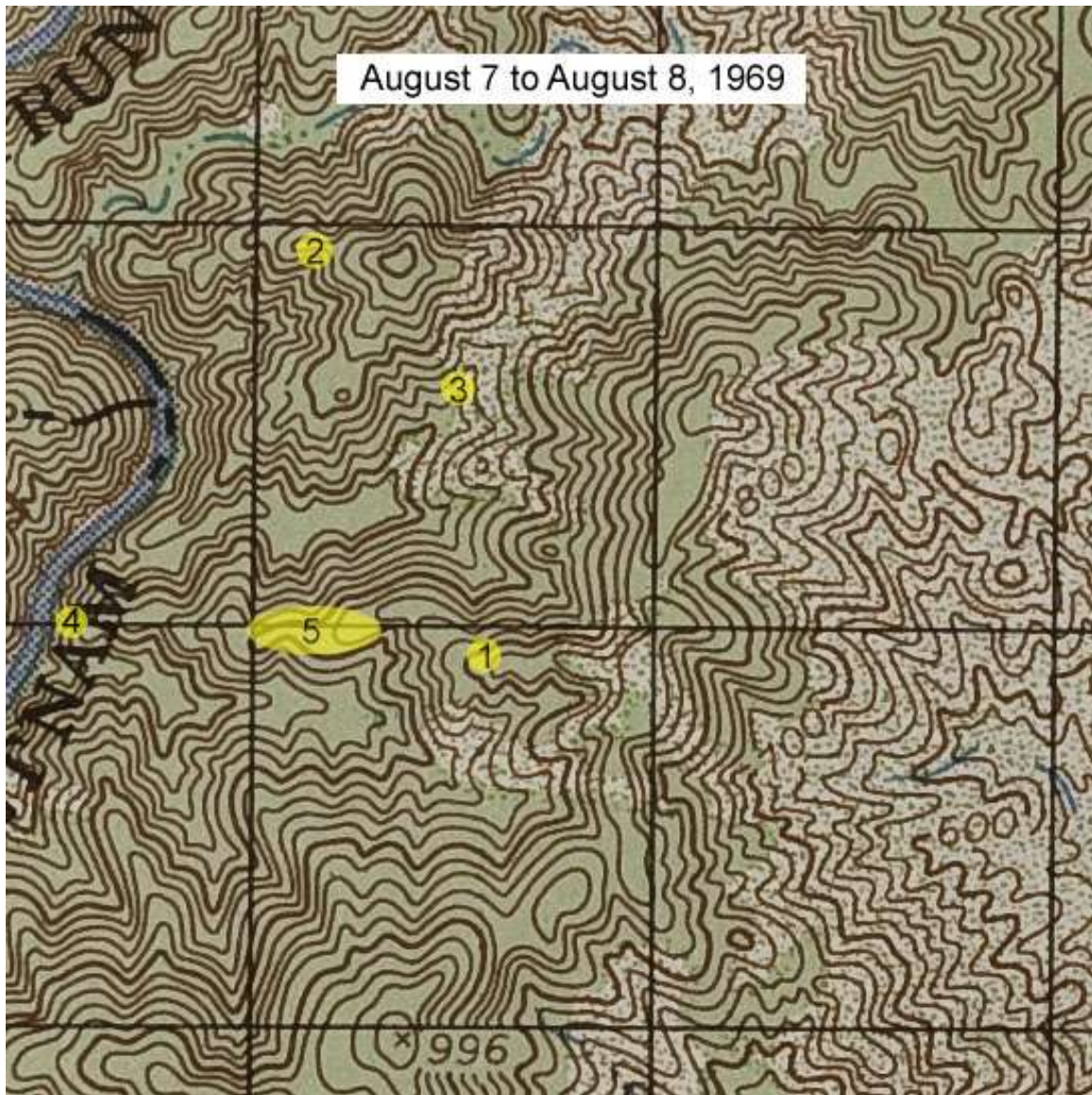
At times like this, there were “negotiations” with the soldiers in the platoon. When danger was high, there was a general reluctance to be too aggressive. SGT Steven Clegg was my best squad leader at the time and in fact, he was the “negotiator” for the men in his squad. If the company commander gave us a dangerous mission, Clegg might shake his head and say that he would have a hard time getting the men to execute the order. This may have been his way of suggesting that we take a conservative course of action rather than an aggressive one which might result in unnecessary casualties. Once everything was lined up, SGT Clegg would do what it took. On several occasions, he personally led his squad up a hill to attack an enemy bunker. I recall one time when our jungle fatigues were pretty worn after an extended period without resupply. I watched Clegg attack an enemy bunker with his bare butt showing where he had worn away the seat of his pants! Too bad we did not have an AP photographer on the spot.

Somewhere around this time, we were notified to get low as "fast movers" were coming in to drop some 250 pound bombs. I remember being in a ravine as we heard the bombs go off and felt the ground shake. Within a second or two, I heard a fragment hit my M-16 which was between my legs and against my chest. The fragment put a good crack in my upper barrel guard. Had it hit my shirt, I would have had a nice cut but certainly not fatal. Sometimes you just need to be lucky.

*August 6, 1969 casualty summary: KIA Names: SGT Fred Rinehart (tour began 11/11/1968), PFC David Smith (tour began 5/19/1969), SP4 Akke Timmer (tour began 5/21/1969), CPL David Finger (tour began 5/22/1969). Among the wounded are Toby Deal, Ronald Ringeisen, Timothy McGuire, Douglas Wehrle, Michael Jones, and Richard Hahn. Ted Blackwell was at 18<sup>th</sup> Surgical Hospital on August 7<sup>th</sup> (PH orders) – he may have been wounded on August 6<sup>th</sup>. An unofficial record shows that Loren Kleene, Levering Rector, and Jeffery Burr may have also been wounded at this time.*

Records show who was killed but we cannot associate the wounded casualties with the incidents because the battalion log is not definitive. Apparently the company had a list that matched each person with a code or "line number." I think I have seen a pattern where the higher line numbers are higher in rank so if line #3 was a casualty, he would most likely be a platoon leader. Casualty reports were sent by line number although from time to time, the full name is written on the report. On this date, we just have line numbers. SGT Rinehart was probably a squad leader and most likely did not walk point although there are exceptions to that practice. Perhaps in the future, a company member will be able to clarify what occurred during these contacts.

I remember Phillip Stanley, a first platoon machine gunner during one of the fights on August 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup>. Once or twice during firefights, Phillip would work his way next to me and start firing long M-60 machine gun bursts from the hip. When I say close to me, I mean about two feet. The noise from the machine gun was deafening and I was trying to talk on the radio while Stanley was firing. Sometimes I was not able to hear the other person on the radio. After one engagement, I was very close to being temporarily deaf for about 30 minutes due to Stanley's fires. He did a good job of suppressing the enemy – I suppose you definitely need to take the good with the bad. You could not help but like Stanley as he had a pleasant, disarming manner and did not shrink from combat.



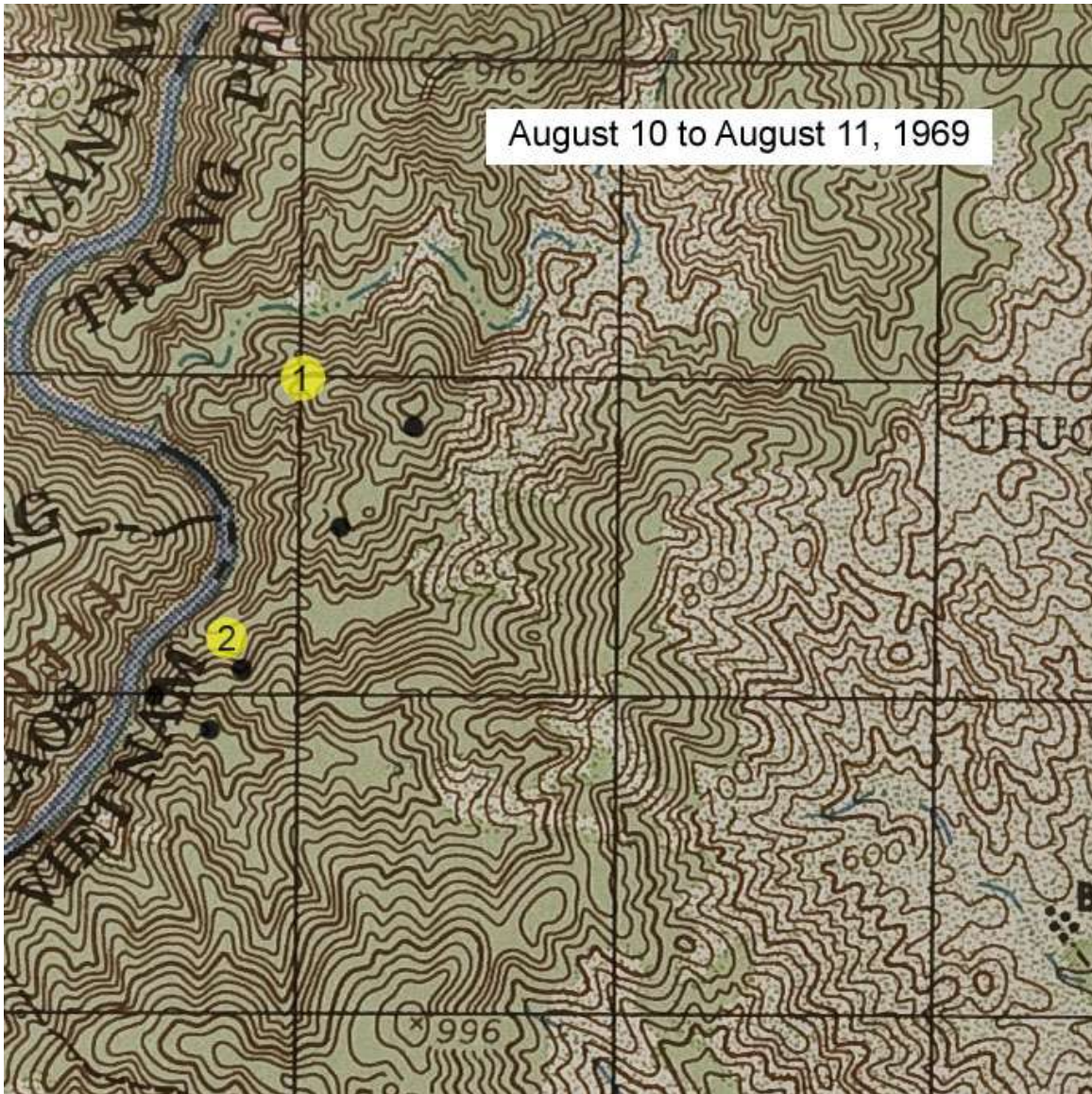
**1** - NDP by 0230 hrs; **2** - air strikes (16, 250# bombs and 4 napalm); **3** - 1122 hrs, receive 50-60, 60mm mortar rounds from circle 3; an air strike (20mm and napalm) also goes in at circle one and gets secondary explosion. The company completes an LZ at circle one at 1730 hours; **4** - air strike (20mm) goes in at 1737; **5** - NDP location at 2010 hrs.

August 7, 1969. 1122 – the company receives 40-50 rounds of 60mm from YC 315956. A pink team and air strike (20mm and napalm) are employed. This results in a secondary explosion and a bunker destroyed. At 1430, the company finds ten, 4x4x4 bunkers at YC 315949 containing miscellaneous ammunition and a dead NVA. 1621 - the company center of mass is at YC 315949. 1722 - the company completes construction of an LZ at YC 315948. 2010 - Charlie is at YC 310950. The company is in its NDP at 0200. Most of this day was spent in local patrols and construction of an LZ for extraction the following day.



August 8, 1969. 0830 - first platoon, second platoon, third platoon are at YC 313951. 0940 at YC 312942, the company spotted one enemy on a high ridge nearby and employed air cav. 1710 - PZ (pick-up) YC 312950 and LZ (landing) at Caribou Air Strip, YC 404976 by 1800. Caribou Air Strip is a few kilometers north of FSB Currahee. Caribou were fixed wing aircraft that could land and take off on very short runways. Probably Caribou Air Strip was mainly a large LZ and marshalling area. Regardless, the company is out of the "hot" area and spends the next day recovering from the recent contact. I noted that my platoon strength was down to 15. August 9, I wrote that it was cold at night but may have been referring to the night before in the hills rather than at Caribou.

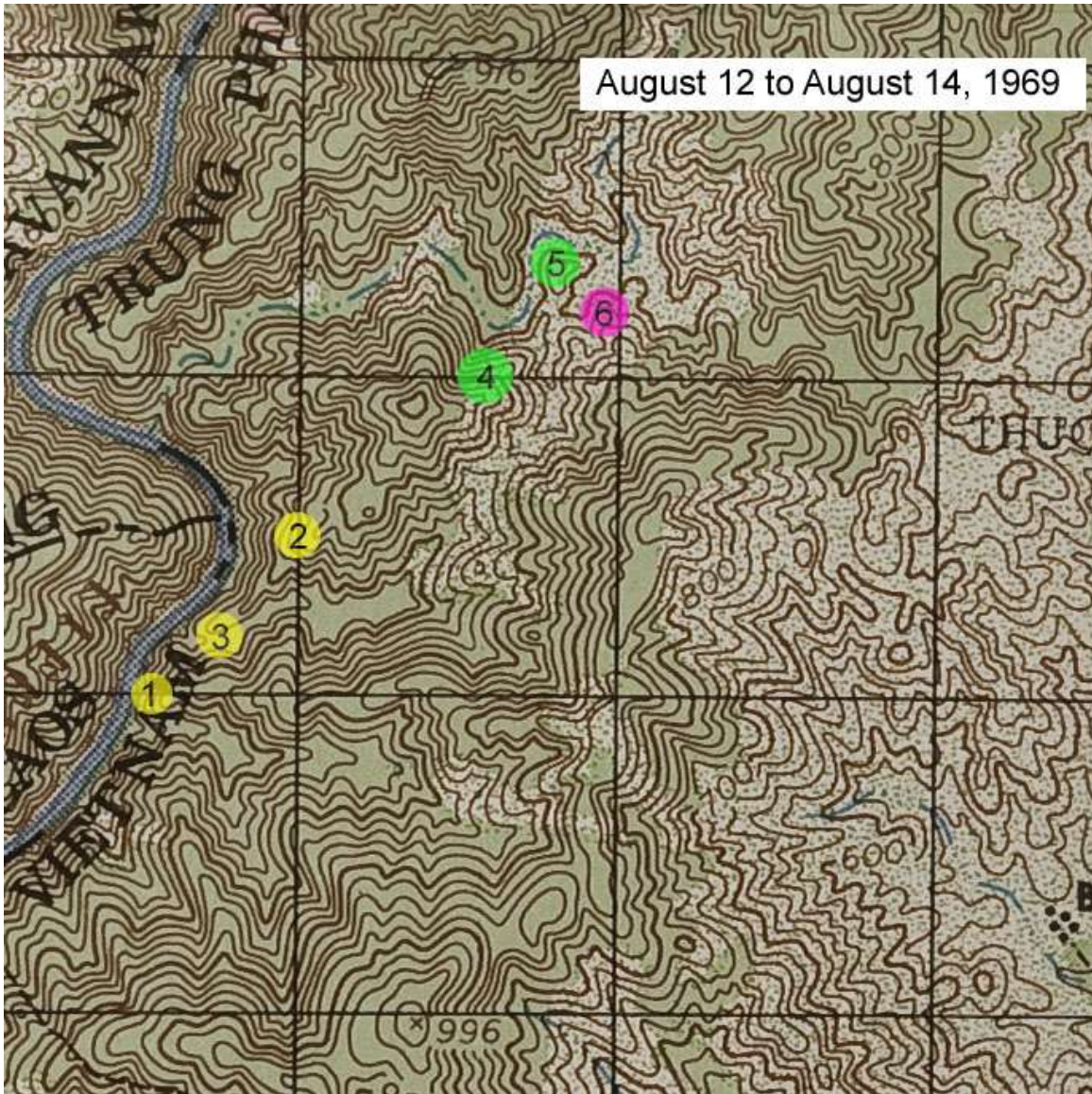
August 10, 1969. The journals are a little thin in explaining what is going on. FSB Currahee took 44 mortar rounds but no major hits. Charlie Company moves back to the area crawling with NVA where it will spend the next five days. The initial CA may have been confused with at least one chopper going to the wrong LZ.



Map notes: **circle one** is company location August 10, 1638 hrs; **circle two** - company kills one NVA August 11, 1535 hrs; black dots are platoon locations Aug 1. From top to bottom: CP and 4<sup>th</sup> plt, 2045 hrs; CP and 4<sup>th</sup> plt, 1930 hrs; third plt, 1930 hrs; second plt, 1930 hrs; first plt, 1930 hrs.

August 11, 1969. Platoon locations are reported: 0820 first platoon YC 317953, second platoon YC 318955, third platoon YC 316958, and fourth platoon - CP at YC 310958. 1535 - two NVA came upon third platoon's position and one was killed at YC 307952. Maximum platoon separation is about one kilometer.





Notes: **Yellow circle one** is first and second platoon location 12 Aug, 0950 hrs; **yellow two** is CP, third and fourth platoons 12 Aug, 0950 hrs; **yellow three** is first platoon contact at 1102 hrs, 12 Aug. **Green four** is company location Aug 13, 1106 hrs; **green five** is where company receives small arms at 1810 hrs, Aug 13. **Circle six** is Aug 14, 1100 hrs location prior to extraction to Currahee strip.

I did not use artillery support as much as I should have. I believe the general restriction was that initially, it could be brought in no closer than 600 meters from friendly forces. It would then take some time to adjust it by dropping 100 meters at a time. Most of our contacts were such that the enemy was within 50 meters of the lead element. I'm sure if we had encountered a large enemy force the fires could have been brought in closer and more rapidly. I remember registering artillery for a night position in steep terrain - high ridge lines with deep draws to the side. I expected the adjusting round to land several hundred meters to my front. It landed about 100-200 meters to my rear! I cut off the

registration as I did not have confidence in the accuracy of the artillery. It is possible that I did not have a good read on my own location but there is no way of resolving that now. No one was injured. One advantage of artillery was that it could be employed in bad weather when the helicopters could not fly. Generally, I preferred ARA where you could bring it in close (25 meters with your initials). The ARA was much more responsive than tube artillery. The norm for adjusting fire from attack helicopters was no closer than 75 meters or thereabouts. They would come in closer to about 25 meters if the ground leader gave his initials to OK the responsibility in case the fires hit friendly soldiers. I gave my WJH on at least a couple of occasions. There are instances in the journal where Charlie Company soldiers pick up some shrapnel from ARA.

August 12, 1969. 0950, first platoon is at YC 306950. The first platoon was coming off a ridge line to cross a small stream to head up a ridge on the other side. Allan Wall and Steven Hollar were on point. The lead squad crossed the water without incident when a small group of NVA opened fire on the next squad. 1102 - YC 307953 enemy engaged first platoon from 30 meters on far side of a small draw. One US KIA and one WIA (see the orange square in Map 1 above). This was the first time that my platoon took any losses. I recollect that we were moving down the side of a draw to cross a stream and head up a ridge on the other side. The NVA were in position and opened fire with small arms and possibly a light machine gun.

In the Colletto fight, Mike Edmondson remembers about 8-10 men ahead of him in the file. The enemy opened up with a machine gun and Mike dove to one side of an earthen river bank to get cover from the fire and pulled Richard Kukucka with him, probably saving Richard's life.

Here is another recollection of that fight from Steven Clegg: "We had just left second platoon at the top of a hill and the first platoon was proceeding down a trail and was crossing a stream. At the bottom of the hill along the stream bank were some large rocks. The first two thirds of the platoon had turned a corner at the bottom and had proceeded either along the stream or started to cross. Colletto was directly in front of me. Shiltz, I believe, was immediately behind me and was my RTO. Behind him was a new guy, James Halsey, who had joined the platoon the day before or so. Colletto was almost at the bottom of the stream when Halsey yells "gook." Before anyone can ask where or react all hell breaks loose. I can identify three NVA 15 meters directly up the hill from us, behind trees and cover, firing. Shiltz and I open up on the NVA immediately in front of us; I remember my weapon jammed and I had to hit the forward assist to fire it. Halsey cries out that he is hit. Just as Shiltz or I take out the NVA in front of us, the NVA to my left does a series of three or four somersaults and comes up in sitting position right in front of Colletto who is standing and firing canister rounds from his M-79. The NVA stops five feet from Colletto in a perfect sitting firing position and shoots Colletto. I fire and so do the the soldiers at the bottom of the stream, killing the NVA. I turn my attention back to the third NVA and see him take cover farther up the hill behind a large tree; another M-79 gunner lobs a few rounds up behind the tree and LT Higgins calls in a Cobra to fire on him and I know he was killed. Halsey was wounded when a round struck his helmet exited through the rear, and along the way grazed his forehead. He was

extracted on a jungle penetrator (This is a harness attached to a cable in the helicopter that can be winched up when there is no place to land) but we could not get Colletto out as the tree cover was too thick for a basket. We carried Colletto in a make shift stretcher until we can get him extracted.

Al Colletto was a seasoned soldier and very popular in the platoon and company. Everyone took his loss very heavily. I remember corresponding with his parents a few times – they wanted to know everything associated with his death. Colletto was two or three men ahead of me in the column – just a matter of luck on whom the NVA chose to engage first. KIA's are normally not medevac'd and are removed with a log bird during resupply. We prepared a litter for Colletto and carried him until he could be extracted. When carrying a man's body, it is necessary to redistribute his gear among the other members of the platoon – the rucksack and weapon have to be given to someone else and people have to trade off carrying the litter. In this case, we had to go up a very steep slope and very strong young men were straining to make this happen. Had we taken a few more KIA's, it would have been extremely difficult to continue moving and to protect the bodies. The US almost never left anyone behind in Viet Nam and went to great lengths to recover bodies. This was a big morale factor for the living.

Prior to the contact, the nervous factor was pretty high. We had some “old timers” who only had a month or two until DERO (time to go back to the “world”) and they were very focused, nervous, and not happy that their last weeks were spent in heavy fighting.

*Casualty summary August 12, 1969: KIA - Name: Albert V. Colletto Jr. (tour began 1/27/1969), WIA – James Halsey and Robert Buscetto were wounded.*

August 13. Charley company is still in the “hot” area. One of my letters indicated that we got a good look at Laos. 1309, one man, line #77, is evacuated to 22d Surgical Hospital in Phu Bai for a heart attack. John Torves was evacuated with acute anxiety from FB Currahee at 1115 hrs. (The company may have left sick or injured people back at the FSB to pull security.) Some people do not adjust to combat and there were numerous instances of psychological injury as indicated by Torves' acute anxiety. 1106 – the company location is YC 317960. 1810 at YC 318964, Charlie received small arms fire from one NVA and returned fire with negative results. The journal is replete with reports of “negative results” after a fire fight. This means that no body, weapon, or blood trail was found. The enemy may well have taken losses but it may not have made tactical sense to scour the area for signs. In some cases, the US point man and the NVA soldier were surprised to see each, both firing wildly with the NVA running back to his comrades. At one point the higher headquarters people could not help but notice these reports of encounters. One day we received paper plates in a resupply and conducted target practice aiming at the plates. I did better than I thought, putting several rounds in the center of my target. Another reason for the negative results was that the NVA went to great lengths to recover the bodies and equipment of their soldiers. They wanted to deny the US the feeling of having accomplished something by killing the enemy. They also wanted to deny the US the intelligence value from the body and to redistribute supplies and equipment in short supply. Months later, the journal has one instance of finding an



NVA rucksack with body parts, implying that they were being removed from the battle area for burial elsewhere.

Payday. All of my military pay went to my wife. I think I got about \$2 per month, left from the payday allotment. Young soldiers would get at least \$100 per month on payday or whenever they got to a firebase or to the rear. Some were real gamblers. I recall one time in the woods during a quiet period when we were taking a short break on the trail. My RTO asked me if he could go back to talk to a man about 25 meters back in the column. He returned about 5 minutes later - I asked him how he did - he said he lost \$400 gambling but that it "don't mean nothing." Perhaps he was right.

August 14, 1969. The company is back at Caribou Strip by the end of the day.

Some parts of the jungle were peaceful and scenic. One day, first platoon encountered a secluded waterfall and pool. The waterfall came from a small stream and fell about 15 feet into a pool that was about 25 feet in diameter and just knee deep. We were pretty grungy and decided to take advantage of the natural shower. We put out security to watch for enemy and took turns getting cleaned up a bit. I'm sure that pool is just as scenic today as it was then.

August 15-18, 1969. The company CA's (combat assault by helicopter) to an area a few kilometers north of FSB Currahee. Second platoon is about 10 km east of the rest of the company. During this time, there are quite a few CA's just moving relatively short distances. Not sure if this was a deception operation or just practice. We had received a new battalion commander and he may have been getting accustomed to his staff. Aug 16, recon team #5 at YC 332910 0720 finds 3 hooches and 8 bunkers and destroys them. The battalion had a strategy of placing small reconnaissance teams out to observe for enemy activity and then to call in artillery on the enemy without direct engagement. On August 17, fourth platoon is sent to FSB Rendezvous. Their purpose could have been for firebase security or a work party. There are quite a few instances where a platoon is pulled from Charlie Company for work elsewhere. At this time we were using PSID's (electronic intrusion detection devices). A letter comments that monkeys in the vicinity caused the devices to indicate movement - something that got everyone's attention.

Between August 15 and August 20, Charlie Company had inserted a six man recon team back in the Hill 996 area which continued to be well populated with NVA. Apparently the battalion recon platoon was short one team as they normally performed this type of mission. Steven Clegg, Mike Aird, Tom Williams, Carroll Shiltz, Steven Hollar, and Toby Deal were the team members from Charlie Company. There are some differing recollections on some aspects of this team but the key elements seem to be in agreement. The team was inserted in the dark on August 15. Charlie Company had just left the Hill 996 area and was on Caribou Landing strip near Currahee. Most likely, the recon team was picked up from Caribou (the rest of the company went on a mission to the lower elevation hills north of Currahee). The recon team did not take steel helmets or cigarettes - items that might lead to their discovery by the NVA. Mike Aird said he was mostly troubled by the smoking ban. The chopper slowed at a point on a ridge line and the six

men jumped out. They assembled and moved a few hundred meters on the ridge to rest for the night. The next morning the team moved a few hundred meters and stopped when they heard Vietnamese speech coming from the hill. Steven Clegg called in a fire mission on the enemy location that evening. Clegg made radio contact the next morning and decided to remain in place. Apparently the patrol was under the control of Charlie Company. The recon team remained in place until August 20 when their extraction was planned. At about 1400 on the 20<sup>th</sup>, the team hears activity and the sound of metal clanking. Next they heard some people advancing on their position. Two NVA appeared, carrying canteens on a bamboo pole. There were 25 canteens on each end for a total of about 100 – evidently a good size force drinking water up on the hill. Toby Deal killed the first NVA with his M-16 and Mike Aird wounded the other with his M-79 canister. The wounded NVA started to call for help. About this time as Mike Aird remembered, ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE. The patrol began to take heavy AK and machine gun fire. Mike was firing HE rounds into the trees which quieted the NVA for a moment. About this time, Steven Clegg had gotten approval to leave the rucksacks and make a dash to the chopper. Mike Aird kept firing to cover the withdrawal and had backed himself into a large rock. About this time, an AK round or RPG fragment ricocheted off the rock into his butt. Fortunately, Mike was able to walk and the group headed toward the pick-up zone. ARA came to the rescue and fired on the ridge in addition to artillery (Clegg had pre-plotted artillery targets but unfortunately they were no longer valid since the artillery battery had moved in the past few days – he had to create a new fire mission). Steven Clegg coordinated a pickup on the side of a hill by a large bomb crater. The chopper had arrived about 5-10 minutes before the recon team arrived at the PZ. When the UH-1 hovered, one side was about seven feet from the ground. Tom Williams, a tall, strong guy, must have gotten inside first and was pulling the others into the chopper. Clegg may have been the last to board and Williams and the door gunner pulled him aboard. Steven Clegg remembers thanking the chopper crew profusely when they were safely delivered to Currahee. The team members were debriefed although Clegg thought it unusual that he was not asked about the patrol.

Mike Aird went to 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai but their electricity was out due to a rocket attack. He then went to the hospital ship USS *Repose* for 24 days. Mike Aird: “We arrived at the hospital and medics came out with a stretcher and took me inside. I was put on an IV and then the hospital lost power as it was hit by NVA rockets. The hospital staff could not even X-ray my ass so they called in a dust-off and took me out to the Hospital Ship *Repose*. I was taken to a surgical ward and operated on. The surgeon was annoyed to be sent this relatively minor case. I didn’t think it was so minor. I must have interrupted his evening dinner. He began cutting on me before that anesthesia took effect and I rose about six inches off the table and screamed. He then waited for a longer period of time.” Toby Deal may also have been wounded in the back.

August 19-26. Charlie Company comes back to FSB Currahee to assist in closing the FSB. I don’t recall exactly what was involved in closing a fire base. In general, the idea was to not leave anything that could be useful to the enemy, including old C-rations. I think we even removed the concertina wire and engineer stakes. Ammunition supplies were either expended or backhauled. In many cases, the US was closing the FSB for the

season when the monsoons made it difficult to resupply them. Many fire bases were closed and later reopened. The infantry units supplied most of the labor for a closing mission.

On August 23, 1969, the elements remaining at FB Currahee received a mortar attack. I remember this clearly because I was in a foxhole at the time, trying to get as close to the wall of the foxhole as was humanly possible. I was thinking that it was totally up to fate – if the round landed in your hole, you were dead. Unfortunately, a mortar round did land in one of the foxholes occupied by SSG Juan Duenas, killing him instantly. It is likely that Thomas King, John Buscetto, James Halsey, and Levering Rector were also wounded during this attack.

Phillip Stanley's recollection: "I remember you talking about getting mortared and rocketed there. Do you remember when we were cleaning up the FB, getting ready to move out? It was the first time I had seen ice cream over there and just as I got the spoon to my mouth someone yelled "incoming" and the rockets starting coming in. I had to run 75 to 100 yards to my bunker. We had a lot of ammunition, white phosphorus rounds, mortar rounds, and all kinds of loose stuff piled behind our bunker. Our Kit Carson scout, Tran, was in the bunker with me. I was telling him the NVA were # 10,000 and couldn't hit the broad side of a barn in sign language and about that time, one hit the back of the bunker and all the stuff caught on fire, and we had to run out. Thank God that was about the last one. Later, in the road, on the inside of the perimeter was a six foot long rocket stuck in the ground, that had not gone off. I later was told that one of our sergeants and a medic, that I remember well, had a direct hit in their foxhole. I didn't go to look. I also wondered what that ice cream would have tasted like."

*August 24 - B Company has contact with KIA and WIA.* At various times, Currahee is hit with 60mm and 122mm rockets. All hit outside the perimeter with no effect. On August 25<sup>th</sup>, Charlie Company had three recon teams: wheat - YC377920, barley - YC356934, corn - YC355945. These are in the hills a few km SW of Currahee. A letter mentions eerie cries at night and we find tiger tracks. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, some of us went swimming in the Rao Lao river and washed up for the first time in a while. Richard Hahn remembers getting cleaned up by swimming in the river near Currahee. Some guys would throw hand grenades into the river (perhaps fishing?) and Rich could feel the pressure waves.

Our medics were responsible for giving each person his malaria pill. On Monday, we got an orange malaria pill and then a white pill every day - perhaps for two types of malaria. Malaria was not uncommon among soldiers and the symptoms were a body temperature of 103-105 degrees. These pills were not popular as they sometimes caused gastrointestinal distress. Battalion journals are full of men being medevac'd with high fevers. My guess is that these were malaria cases. The fix was three weeks in a hospital which was seen by many as more desirable than humping a rucksack and getting shot at. Fred "Doc" Jones, my platoon medic, was very good at getting people to take their pills but we discovered that he did not take them himself and he contracted malaria, winning the three week vacation.

While at Currahee, Chinooks (large CH-47 helicopters) are coming in to the firebase to unload and extract equipment. We were always sweating while working and the choppers blew loose dust that caked on to the sweat in layers. Maybe that is why the swim felt so good! The CH-47 also killed my air mattress by blowing it into the concertina. Another humorous / sad Chinook story: a soldier was following the call of nature on a three hole "shitter" (an outhouse-like device without the house) and was blown off by a Chinook downdraft producing a slight fracture of his arm.

For a short while in the Currahee area, we had a dog team (German shepherd and dog handler). The dogs were trained to smell the enemy and then "alert." The jungle was tough on dogs as it was hot with their heavy coats and they had to jump over blown down trees and other obstacles. The handlers MO was to be up front and once the dog alerted, report it and move to the rear of the formation. My suspicion was that the dog handlers wanted to spend as little time as possible up front so that I became suspicious of the frequent alerts. Sometimes the dogs would get leaches in their nose and have to go to the vet in the rear to have them removed. The dogs also belonged to a union and could not work more than a few hours at a time. No doubt there were some superlative dogs and handlers but we did not get much out of them at that time.

About 1600 each day it rains hard for 30 minutes. That's one way to stay clean. Fog rolls in at night. Flares or illumination rounds are used for security. It is a very eerie setting. We are on guard all night and then sleep from 0600 till 1200 the next day.

August 26. Currahee is closed and most of the company moves to FSB Rendezvous by 1810. Rendezvous is just a few kilometers NE of Currahee and astride Route 547. The company leaves two ambushes out just north of Currahee. This may have been a common practice. The NVA were short of just about everything. They would scavenge our old locations looking for C rations and anything else useful. The purpose of the ambushes was to observe Currahee and call in artillery if they saw any enemy forces.

August 27. Most of the company was at FSB Rendezvous, about four km NE of Currahee along Route 547. First platoon had two ambushes in the vicinity of Currahee. I was with one of the ambushes. Again, our mission was to observe for enemy activity and then call in artillery. We were in position and I think I had my boots off to air out my feet. I heard a rifle shot close by and jumped for my rifle. Richard Hahn recalls jumping into a sticker bush - some of the stickers stayed in his hand for years. In a minute or two, I learned that a PFC in our ambush had shot himself in the foot so we would have to medevac him. The other soldiers were not too happy with this guy as he had jeopardized our position. They took the good stuff out of his rucksack (like canned pears) and then made him walk about 50 meters on his wounded foot when the medevac helicopter came in. I believe the PFC spent a short while in LBJ (Long Binh Jail) before being returned to the unit. Our company and other companies had further such incidents - Charlie had at least three or four.

August 28. The entire company is at Currahee. It may have been a "police call" thing. Someone from the brigade or battalion staff would fly by the closed fire base and spot

some items that should have been removed or destroyed. The infantry would then be called back to clean up. This happened most of the time after closing a firebase.

August 29. We were back working on FSB Rendezvous. My platoon was down to 13 and the company only totaled 68. There were a lot of medical issues sending people to the rear, especially bad teeth. During the day, the company moved from Rendezvous to Berchtesgaden. Perhaps another police call agenda although a few NVA were spotted running about Berchtesgaden by chopper pilots. A letter noted that I got a shower and change of clothes. Guys from the rear brought a few warm beers. This must have been at Rendezvous. I think Rendezvous was one of the larger firebases in the 300-400 population range. A smaller, more temporary firebase might total 150 people.

There may have been ARVN soldiers on Rendezvous. Generally we had very limited contact with them. In the company, ARVN had a reputation for stealing things and I think they ripped us off at least once. I remember one soldier was very angry and threatened to "blow away" some of the ARVN. In general, they did not give me much confidence compared to the NVA who seemed to be highly motivated - either by nationalism or fear.

The South Vietnamese were not inherently poor fighters and many units distinguished themselves during the war. Nevertheless, a good number were poorly led and were not motivated to fight for a politically corrupt system where they were not treated with the respect and consideration found in US units.

August 30 - Sep 1. Charlie Company had a two day mission quite a distance away – about 20 km SE of Rendezvous. There must have been a need for intelligence about that area. On the 31<sup>st</sup>, the company found some signs of activity but not significant: 1425 - found a water collection device and fresh human excrement YC 604811; 1715 - found an animal trap YC 601813 - about 7 days old; 1910 - found Montagnard religious symbol (YC 600813).

Leeches would show up from time to time. Not sure what kind of environment favored them - perhaps close to streams. You could not feel them attach themselves to you however the bug spray that was issued to us helped to get them off. I remember one guy getting a number around his socks and when he took his boots off to wring out his socks, the liquid was mostly red. Another guy had several around his private parts and was freaked out a bit. There is nothing like waking up and knowing that your first task is to de-leech your body.

Sep 1 - 0615 - company has LZ at YC 593817. 0850 - finds a trail at YC 592818 with recent use. 0937 - YC 592818 finds a garden with sweet potatoes and corn. Apparently a staple crop for the enemy was the sweet potato. Of course, they also ate rice but sweet potatoes were vital to their sustenance. 0957 - YC 591817 - receives AK fire; returns fire and kills one NVA. 1605 - the company is at YC 593817. 1630 - YC 591817 finds seven hooches 10x20 with bunkers. 1735 - PZ YC 593817 and back to Rendezvous.



September 2 – 6. The company is at FSB Rendezvous and makes “day trips” to FSB Berchtesgaden. It’s not clear what the purpose of these trips is. On September 4, the company moves from Rendezvous to Berchtesgaden, arriving 0912. 0927 - a platoon spotted NVA by the helicopter pad and engaged with negative results. Bravo Company killed an NVA on Berchtesgaden and located an NVA wounded by ARA. Unfortunately, the wounded NVA died before B Company reached him. 1857 - Charlie arrived back at Rendezvous.

C Company arrives at Eagle Beach the evening of September 5 and stands down the following day. Eagle Beach was a wonderful camp NNE of Hue on the Gulf of Tonkin where units normally spent two days getting cleaned up, issued new clothes, and getting their weapons serviced. The food was very good and there were clubs with beer and shows. The female band singers (from the Philippines perhaps) were funny as they could not pronounce some English words. I still remember “Proud Mary” by the Creedence Clearwater Revival – the part about ‘Rolling on the River’ came out as ‘Lolling on the Reeve’ but then who cared after a few beers. Eagle Beach did a lot to enhance the morale of the soldiers and to give them a few hours of escape from combat.

**Chapter 3 – Louisiana Lee (cont’d) – Blaze, Engineers and NDP’s.  
September 7 to September 19, 1969. *There were no combat casualties during this period and no contact with the enemy.***

FSB Blaze was about 15 km NE of Currahee and near the confluence of the Song Bo and Rao Nho rivers. It was along the path of Route 547 and the general marshalling area for the May Hamburger Hill battle. What a difference a few kilometers makes. 20 km back to the SW was in the heart of NVA country. Around FSB Blaze, life was quiet. There were three NDP’s near Blaze. All were close to each other about seven km west of Blaze. I believe the NDP’s were used by the vehicles that moved up and down Route 547, a place to stop for the night and to circle the wagons. Charlie Company had the mission of providing security in this area.

September 7. Arrives at Blaze and choppers to NDP#2. The company is OPCON to 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry battalion.



September 8. The company is at YD 458998. Recon teams corn, wheat, and barley are still out, probably some distance away and under battalion control. The company establishes LP's out around NDP#2. Tanks are moving up and down the road. Their mission was providing security for convoys along route 547. First platoon pulls a mine sweep patrol in the morning. My recollection was that combat engineers were the scruffiest and most profane of any soldiers I had encountered. We camped next to the engineers and they started their day with yelling obscenities for half an hour. Cuss words are not a stranger to me but these guys were priceless. When securing the engineers, I observed an engineer soldier carrying his mine detector on his shoulder instead of hovering it above the road - his explanation was that it did not work but his platoon sergeant told him to take "all of the f\*\*king mine-sweepers!" They also walked too fast. We infantry were accustomed to a deliberate walk while visually inspecting the area ahead. I told the engineers to go ahead if they wanted and that the infantry would catch up at our pace. Fortunately, there was little danger in this area.

September 9. My platoon strength was 19. The US called a cease fire for the day out of respect for the late Ho Chi Minh. Combat assaults became "admin moves."

We carried our water when in the field. As you'd expect, water is not light. When we were in the mountains, we'd cross scenic streams where the water looked to be clean and fresh. We were given iodine tablets to disinfect the water - perhaps adding the tablet, shaking to dissolve and waiting a few hours was the recipe. Right before R&R, I had a

bad case of dysentery where I was past having the runs and had major stomach cramps. Someone told me that peanut butter was a good fix.

September 10-12. More of the same. The company patrols in the vicinity of the NDP's. First platoon air moves from NDP #1 to YD 478013 at 0818 and back to NDP #1 at 1740. The mission was to secure pathfinders blowing an LZ. The first platoon medic, Fred 'Doc' Jones, returns after recovering from malaria (he's the one who passes out the pills and skips himself). Jones was a conscientious objector. He served with us in the field for a while and carried a D-handle shovel. He was good about digging foxholes. Doc was a very pleasant, easy-going guy who was also diligent about medical matters. He had us carry extra IV bottles as he knew these could save lives under some circumstances. We all felt more secure having Doc with us.

A letter comments that we hear a lot of monkeys but they keep out of sight. Charlie Company came back under 1/506<sup>th</sup> control on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Starting September 13, it appears that the main mission for the company was securing the road (route 547) as convoys would begin to use the road during the rainy season.

39th Transportation Battalion plans a convoy daily from Birmingham (YD 704101) to Rendezvous starting Sep 15. 1/506 has responsibility from Blaze forward. Convoy departs Birmingham 0800, arrives Blaze 1000 and Rendezvous 1200. Sounds like a bus schedule. Frequently in Viet Nam, events arose to supersede plans.

Two of the platoons spend the day on LZ construction – perhaps securing pathfinders or engineers blowing LZ's.

September 14-19. Landslides are reported on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> requiring bulldozers to clear. I recall at one point along the road, there was an M-60 tank that had gone off the road and rolled down the slope a few hundred meters. Most likely it is still there. The battalion commander visits on the 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss future missions. More mine sweeps and LZ construction. Letter comments: we were getting a lot of replacements as our veterans (those who had survived eight or more months) were scheduled to DEROS in November; I met an engineer officer friend, Tony Dodson, riding up the road in a jeep no less - small world; reported fish in a nearby stream over a foot long; it rained the night of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the road turned into a mess. It is getting close to the rainy season when the NVA get more latitude to the west as the US cannot easily sustain its forces by air or road.

#### **Chapter 4 – Operation Norton Falls. Evans Training and Mai Loc. (September 21 to November 4, 1969). *Seven US wounded and two NVA killed.***

From September 20 to September 29, Charlie Company was at Camp Evans for battalion training. The training was extended a day or two due to bad flying weather up north, the location of our next mission. This week (+) was occupied with range firing and other training classes. At Evans, we lived in "sea huts" that might be found at summer camp - screened walls and cots to sleep on. When in the rear, we did not have procedures for

securing our weapons and ammunition. For the most part, we kept our weapons, ammunition, and rucksacks next to our cots. I can remember opening the door to my hut and the door causing a hand grenade to roll across the floor. Fortunately, the grenades had a safety pin as well as a main safety. We were lucky that there were not more ammunition related incidents while at Camp Evans.



At Evans there was a good amount of beer consumed in the evening. One of my soldiers had a few and then decided he needed to buy something at the PX. Unfortunately, the PX was closed when he got there. He went back to his sea hut and grabbed his rifle and returned to the PX where he proceeded to shoot up the building. Apparently the MP's saw him but did not want to get too close. They determined that he was from Charlie Company and ultimately that he belonged to me. I went down to the PX unarmed of course and had to spend ten minutes convincing him that the PX would open for him in the morning. I have to admit that the pucker factor was high for a few minutes as he would not give up his rifle right away. I believe he turned out to be a fine soldier in the upcoming months, after a rough start.

From a letter: I saw two West Point classmates while we were at Evan - Charlie Lieb and Joe Dart. I commented that it was hotter at Evans than in the hills and that you can see the dunes at the beach from Evans. The fun was over and it was time to head North.

Our upcoming mission, 60-80 km north of Camp Evans and near the DMZ, was to deny the NVA access to Combat Bases at Vandergrift (YD003488) and Elliott (XD982542),



both about 10-12 km west of Mai Loc as well as to protect Highway 9 up in Quang Tri province. Charlie Company moves by C-123 aircraft - departs Evans 1047 and arrives at Mai Loc 1140. The distance from Camp Evans is approximately 50 km. If my memory serves me correctly, the division band was at the departure airfield, playing military music. The bandsmen seemed a bit out of place.



Sep 30 – Oct 2 1969. The company remained at the Mai Loc special forces camp waiting for the weather to improve so that we could air assault into our area of operations. Apparently there were Montagnards in the Mai Loc vicinity – generally they were friendly to the US as the Vietnamese had persecuted them.

Oct 3, 1969. Charlie Company air assaults about 15 km from Mai Loc to LZ Shrapnel. We are welcomed at Shrapnel by 23 incoming 82mm mortar rounds but they do no damage. An ambush patrol is established a few hundred meters outside Shrapnel. The area around Shrapnel is hilly and forested with numerous ridge lines, valleys, and streams in the low land. It is not quite as dramatic as the A Shau Valley where some peaks were well over 1,000 meters elevation; here the peaks were in the 700 meter range.

One soldier shoots himself in the foot and is evacuated to Camp Evans. Perhaps he was intimidated by our upcoming operation not far from the DMZ between North and South Viet Nam. No doubt rumors existed that we were going into an area with large scale NVA forces and that a minor wound to the foot was a good insurance policy. At this time, I had been in country for about 60 days. Some of the combat in the A Shau Valley



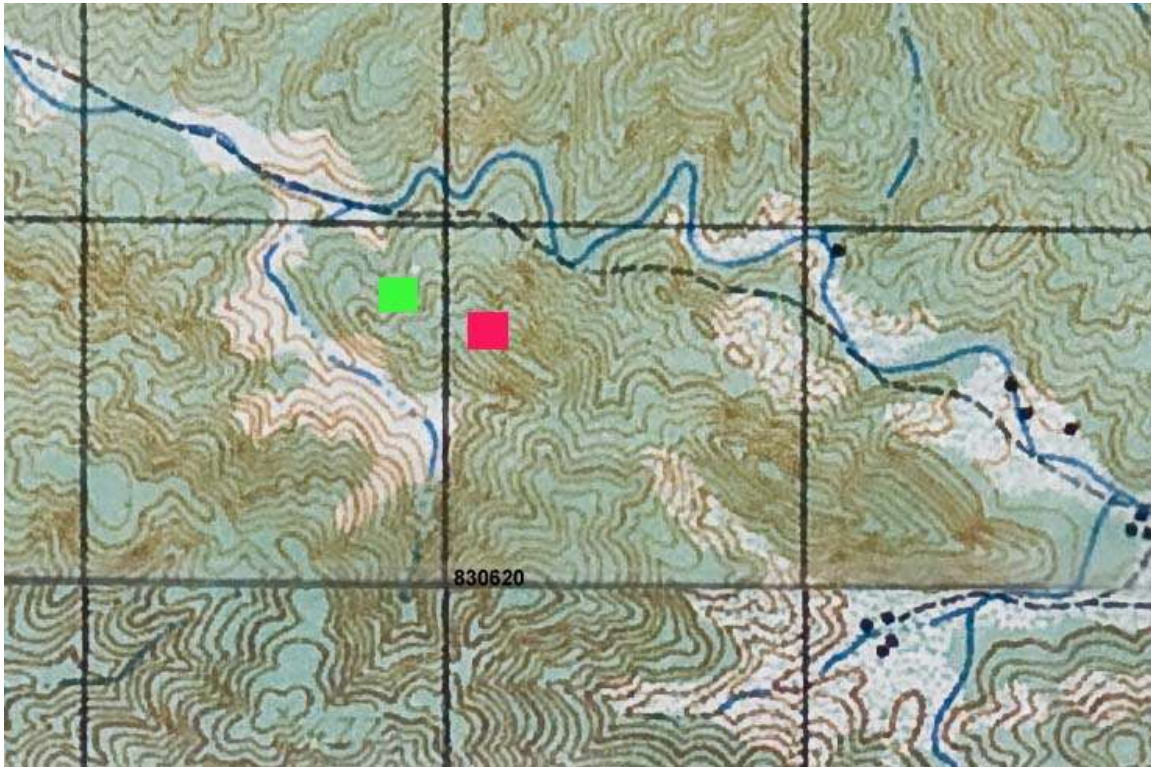
area was pretty intense while the time around FB Blaze was uneventful. It was difficult for me to extrapolate that experience over the upcoming year and to determine if most days would be intense or slow. I can see where a young draftee would have good reason to be concerned. As it turned out, there were many “quiet” periods to counterbalance the high intensity moments.

Oct 4, 1969. 0035 – The day began as Charlie Company was providing security for the elements at LZ Shrapnel. LP#2 at Shrapnel saw 12 enemy and threw a grenade – the listening post received AK fire but no one was hurt.



The “blues” element of the 2/17<sup>th</sup> Cav made contact in the afternoon a few kilometers west of Shrapnel. The Cavalry was a reconnaissance unit designed to see what was out there and to make contact while not getting decisively engaged. The blues element was engaged with the NVA and decided that it was too much for them to handle so they passed the information up to higher headquarters and Charlie Company was given the mission of investigating the area of contact and engaging any enemy forces present. One disadvantage from Charlie’s perspective was that you had lost the element of surprise and the enemy was expecting your arrival. At 1732, C Company linked up with 2/17th aero rifle platoon at XD 823633. Charlie Company had moved a short distance when they started receiving small arms and 15 RPG’s at XD 828628 (green square, Map 1 below), about 500 meters from the landing zone. The lead element was hit by RPG’s after landing near a rocky area. We returned fire. Robert Alley had a serious injury (RPG shrapnel in legs, face, chest, and back) and six had relatively minor shrapnel wounds.

Alley had been leading his squad and positioning his men when he was hit. Edwin Murray was cited for leading his men under the intense fire. Louis Dicampoli was an RTO who moved forward to drag some of the wounded back to a safer position – he was wounded by a sniper. I was close to an injured soldier at one point after dark and recall Thomas Dill, one of the company medics working, hard to stabilize him. The man was losing a lot of blood and Dill was giving him IV fluid in the dark. The medic's stress level at this time was about 110 on a 100 scale. The US serious injury was evacuated to the ship USS Sanctuary that was in the waters off the coast. The medevac was completed at 2305 hrs. A flare ship came on station to provide illumination.



Map 2

The area of contact had numerous rock outcroppings. They provided some cover but also allowed RPG rounds to impact, spraying shrapnel in all directions. Most likely the RPG's caused most of the wounds in this contact. Jim Lee recalls hearing the NVA talking to each other that night as they were evacuating.

October 5, 1969. We probably did not sleep much the night of the 4<sup>th</sup> because we did not know the size of the enemy force that had engaged us. The next morning we began to sweep through the area of contact to see what was there. At 0805, our Kit Carson scout, killed one NVA lying on the ground (I recall his name but will use 'Tran' in the event the Vietnamese government still holds grudges). He had a US partner who went through some training with him. The scout's English was very poor but he seemed like a nice fellow, maybe 30-35 years of age. I was about to say that we should capture the NVA. Right at that moment, he pumped about 10-15 shots into the enemy soldier. That was

what most of our soldiers would have done but I always felt suspicious of the scout's motives after that. I thought he might be silencing the NVA so that he could not provide intelligence to us. Ascribing negative motives to the KCS was probably due to my inexperience with these fighters.

Kit Carson Scouts were former Viet Cong (VC) or NVA that had gone to the US side. In some instances they were useful in recognizing signs along trails and sensing how large an enemy force might be in the area. I never saw a great benefit arise from the use of these scouts but others did. To digress for a moment, the scouts were allowed a day or two each month to visit their families. We got free sundry packs containing miscellaneous items such as cigarettes, candy, stationery, small cans of WD-40, and so on. No one smoked the Pall Mall's so Tran could take all he could carry. Tran amassed US cigarettes that he was able to sell on the black market – everyone did what they had to do to survive under difficult circumstances. Tran spoke hardly any English and had a buddy who went through training with him. If Tran remained in country after the NVA victory, he may have had a difficult time. Richard Hahn was friends with Tran. They swapped dog tags each taking one of the other's. One time later, Tran caught a large rat and cooked it – offered some to Rich.

At 1200 the company found one NVA supply cache. Upon reporting to Brigade, the company was directed to salvage the enemy rucksacks, papers, and marijuana (maybe the brigade headquarters people needed to relax)? On a side note, if any of my soldiers used marijuana in the field, I would have been surprised. The soldiers were primarily interested in survival and saw marijuana use as reducing your alertness in the field. No doubt there was MJ use when we were at Camp Evans or Eagle Beach. When reading the battalion journals, there were several mentions of MJ being captured with other enemy supplies. Perhaps this was one of the few creature comforts the NVA could offer their soldiers. It was light weight and I believe it grew wild in our AO.

At 1730 – From XD 833626 first and third platoons spot six enemy a few hundred meters out. Artillery is called and one NVA is killed by artillery. In searching the area, we found more caves and saw at least one 82mm round - to be further checked the next day.

I recall either the first or second night in the “caves” area, seeing lights at a distance of several hundred meters. We probably engaged with rifles and possibly artillery. Most likely, the NVA were evacuating their most valuable equipment. They might have had mortar tubes and radios in the caves.

October 6, 1969. At 0750 - First and second platoons begin to check out the caves (red square, Map 2 above). 0840 – the company found 122mm rockets in one cave. 1250 - fourth platoon arrives from Shrapnel. During the day, we found numerous items in the caves. I recall that one of our soldiers went down a ladder into a cave without his rifle, saw an enemy and reversed his direction very quickly. We tried to get the NVA to come out but no luck. We may have tossed a concussion grenade into the cave which knocked him out and then captured him at 1522. On one later cave exploration, a CS (like tear gas) grenade was thrown in (by mistake) and the CS quickly spread among the platoon

causing us some minor distress! First platoon ran for its gas masks and thought the enemy might be gassing us.

October 7, 1969. There were about ten caves that we discovered in the immediate area. Major items found included:

- 12 motors for 122mm rockets
- 7, 122mm rocket warheads
- 111, 82mm mortar rounds
- 30, 60mm mortar rounds
- 17, Chicom claymores
- 20, Chicom grenades
- 4, one pound satchel charges
- medicine
- rucksacks
- uniforms

All items not destroyed were evacuated on Oct 7, 1969.

The captured items made a photo opportunity for the Stars and Stripes. There seemed to be an inordinate amount of PR associated with the Mai Loc mission. In general, the mission involved little fighting but was publicized as the US withdrawing some of its forces and turning over some fighting to the ARVN. There were a good number of photographers snapping pictures around Mai Loc and FB Victory. The fighting in early August in the A Chau was very intense and difficult by contrast and saw no news coverage whatsoever.

October 8, 1969. Things are quiet in the caves area. I commented in a letter that it had rained continuously for four straight days. Most of us had rain jackets but most everything was wet. It was almost impossible to find a dry match to light a cigarette. I remember that my fingers had pruned up similar to when you soak in a bath tub for too long. We slept sitting up in a crouched position to minimize the rain soaking our bodies. The temperature was a bit cool so it was not pleasant at this location.

I had an RTO named Mike Edmondson. He was an experienced soldier, good with the radio and had a pleasantly sarcastic manner. We got along fine although he always called me "Higgie." I explained to him that he should call me "lieutenant" or "sir" or something like that. He never did but he was overly familiar in a nice way. When we got mail, sometimes we'd get a copy of the Army Times or the Stars and Stripes. Edmondson would always ask, "Higgie, you want to read a copy of the lifer times?" Edmondson also had an interesting story about how he was drafted. He had been married but separated or divorced his wife. He started seeing another woman in his small town and perhaps ran into his wife with the new woman at the local bar. Apparently the wife told the draft board that he was available and sure enough, he was soon drafted. He used to say, with a smile on his face, "I'm going to go see her when I get out of here."



Once we were at a PZ and the battalion commander was on the ground. I had very little contact with LTC Pinney but in this instance he reprimanded me for allowing people to sit on the edge of the UH1 with legs hanging freely outside. I had observed everyone doing this since I arrived and thought it was the way to operate. He told me that was wrong but did not explain why. I suppose the reason is to expose less to the enemy to minimize wounds in the legs. I was not able to sit cross-legged and sitting with legs out allowed you to fire your weapon more easily as you came into the LZ. The chopper pilots had a different priority and wanted all rifles on safety with magazines out. That was not going to happen if the LZ was potentially hot. Apparently they had experience with M-16's going off in the birds. LTC Pinney was probably correct about the legs. It is funny how you remember little things.

October 9 – October 18, 1969. On the 9<sup>th</sup> we moved by helicopter to an area about 20 km to the southeast. On the 10<sup>th</sup> we must have done an air move about 10 km to the northeast of October 9<sup>th</sup>'s location. Mike Aird describes his chopper ride about this time, "On October 9<sup>th</sup>, we apparently made a CA to somewhere. I believe this is the point where, during the CA while I was sitting as one of the two men in the center of the slick, three rounds came up through the floor of the chopper and struck some engine components. We had flown over an adjacent ridge at low level and taken the rounds from small weapons aimed at the bird. The engine cut out and we crashed (more like a very, very hard landing) near the edge of the LZ. If we had crashed 20-30 meters further out the incident could have been much worse as the chopper was at a precarious angle where it landed. When the rounds came up through the slick's floor, my mouth dropped open. The door gunner was looking back and forth from the holes in the floor to my face. His chin had dropped several inches also. I instinctively grabbed between my legs to make sure everything was still in order. As we hit the ground, the door gunner began screaming; "get out, get out"! After running to the LZ and taking up a position, I looked back and watched as the pilot restarted the engine and flew away. I was awarded an air medal on this date for meritorious action in aerial flight."

A letter comment was that the terrain was very steep and had high elephant grass. The elephant grass would slice exposed arms and then the minor cuts would frequently get infected. Cellulitis was a common problem among the infantry soldiers. Most minor cuts and scratches became infected. Razor or elephant grass and vines in the jungle could create minor nicks. Most infections were not too bad but some soldiers had some really bad ones - normally about the size of a half dollar. The command did not like to send people to the rear for these problems as they would have depleted units by 10% on most days. One of my men, Steven Hollar, had an infection on the top of his foot and after cleaning out the pus, you could see down to the bone. Another had a deep infection in the center of his back where his rucksack rubbed. I can't remember if I was able to get these serious cases back to the rear. Earlier on the 11th, 3d and 4th platoons rejoined the company. Not sure from where. A letter comment is that the terrain is hilly with very nice scenery.

NDP's: 2d platoon is located with the CP; 1st platoon is at XD912523; 3d platoon at XD915519; 4th platoon XD915524.



Air assaults or moves by UH-1 helicopter were a frequent occurrence. Some LZ's were not well prepared and had stumps and other obstacles. In these instances, the UH-1's or "hueys" would hover 8 to 10 feet above the ground. The door gunner would yell at us to get out of the chopper quickly as it was most vulnerable at this point. The best way to get out was to drop the rucksack, lower yourself on the skids and jump. There could be injuries at the LZ even before the battle began.

The 13<sup>th</sup> is "animal" day. At 0930 there is a report of a dog barking at XD 914520 and at 1010, roosters at XD 896487. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, the platoons move into ambush positions. We are on some higher ground overlooking the Khe Giang river. The 15<sup>th</sup> sees two platoons do short air movements of no more than two km. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, one platoon goes to Mai Loc – perhaps for security or a work detail. A letter comment on the 17<sup>th</sup> is that this area is infested with bugs and that we crossed a 20 foot stream during the day. Through the 18<sup>th</sup>, the company has platoons out in ambush locations with no enemy sightings.

The company's frequent moves of 10 to 20 kilometers every few days must have been intended to survey the area to ensure that the NVA did not surprise us as we were covering the withdrawal of the 3d Marine Division.

On October 19, the company moves to the Mai Loc staging area and goes to Eagle Beach. This may have been a reward for finding all of the enemy equipment as we had just been to the beach in early September. The brigade and division levels really enjoyed laying out the captured equipment and taking photographs to show tangible signs of success.

October 21 – November 3, 1969. Around mid day on the 21<sup>st</sup> we left Eagle Beach and landed at Mai Loc and then flew later to FSB Victory. Our mission at Victory was firebase security. Victory was a small fire base with a battery of 155mm howitzers from the 2/11<sup>th</sup> Artillery. The views from Victory were excellent (you could see the ocean about 20 miles away – it would have been a nice place to visit had there not been a war going on. During the day, we periodically sent out a platoon to patrol the immediate area. One ambush patrol was sent out about 20 km to the east on the 24<sup>th</sup>. There were minor enemy sightings but nothing significant. One day, the artillery must have been bored and lowered a tube and did direct fire on a hill a few kilometers distant. I think that President Nixon was scheduled to make a speech in early November about Viet Nam troop withdrawals. Many of us would have been happy to head to Bein Hoa the next day. Someone must have had a radio and we picked up the armed forces radio station – we were disappointed that Nixon's speech did not shorten our tours. Toward the end of October, the weather started to cool off and the nights were almost cold. Victory was "socked in" weather-wise for four straight days during one interval. Small field mice ran across us as we slept in our bunkers. I think Tran caught one and fed it C-ration candy to fatten it up.



There was a reported Chu Hoi attempt but it failed as someone shot at the person. “Chu Hoi” was the term for NVA or VC surrendering to the US or ARVN forces. Life was difficult for the VC and NVA and in some instances, they defected to the US side. In this case, the guy could not win.

About this time, I remember seeing a US jet fighter flying overhead and in a small-minded way, was jealous that the pilot would be back at the club that evening and probably taking a warm shower. I was overlooking the numerous times when their efforts had taken the heat off of our company and kept the enemy at bay.

## **Chapter 5 Republic Square and Randolph Glen. Teams near Camp Evans and miscellaneous side trips (November 5, 1969 to February 15, 1970)**

*Four US wounded by booby traps. No known enemy killed.*

In general, this is a period without much enemy contact. The monsoon season has begun and helicopter operations toward the NVA strongholds are not feasible. No doubt the NVA took advantage of this time and moved weapons and ammunition and prepared bunkers for the next fighting season.

November 4 was a quick stop at Camp Evans. Mike Aird remembered that the company came in at the helicopter pad and looking across the pad and seeing a jeep and two men standing next to it. "I couldn't discern who these people were. The company left the chopper pad and walked to the company area. By the time we got there, I estimate about five minutes, CPT Moore was waiting and he was hotter than hell. It turns out one of the men at the chopper pad was the division commander and not one man saluted him. The company commander chewed on us for what seemed like an eternity. We were then provided with C-rations and were back on the chopper pad going out to the field within an hour of arriving and going back out to the bush. Shortest stand-out in battalion history!" [Most likely the short turnaround was planned and was not related to the saluting matter.]

November 5 to November 14, 1969. The main mission was securing the 14<sup>th</sup> Engineers who were building a road and clearing vegetation about 10 km SSW of Camp Evans. This was probably the Rakkasan road from FB Jack through rocket ride to FB Rakkasan. This was low terrain not too much above sea level and full of mosquitoes. The first platoon made a few trips back to FSB Victory. As in the past, this may have been to secure people who were extracting equipment and supplies that should have been removed earlier. The platoons also conducted some RIF operations in the general area of the engineers. We had another shot in the foot incident on the 10<sup>th</sup>. About this time I become the company executive officer with duties at Camp Evans.

Weather report – rainy and cool on the 12<sup>th</sup>. I see a note that Camp Evans received 73 inches of rain in October, perhaps a record. This sounds a bit high.

Another animal report – a unit nearby shot a 400 pound tiger.

About this time, the company organization changes from four rifle platoons to three platoons. I would have to speculate on the reasons: shortages of officer and NCO leaders or fewer soldiers in the pipeline so that it was not possible to fill up four platoons.

On Nov 12, CPT Moore had to go in for emergency dental surgery. I filled in for him for a day or two. One of the days involved a combat assault in the area just north of the hills south of Camp Evans. The battalion commander, LTC Pinney, had me ride with him in his command and control (C&C) helicopter. We inserted one platoon and all seemed quiet. A short while later, chaos reigned. Someone in the platoon on the ground had kicked a hornet's nest and the bees attacked furiously. Some of the men dropped their weapons and ran to a nearby stream to get away. We could see some of this activity from the chopper. I sensed that my military career was quickly coming to a close – you get a chance to run the show and get overrun by bees. Several men had to be medevac'd due to extreme allergic reactions. Jim Lee was with the platoon on the ground and recalls that some men were bitten about 100 times and were nearly unconscious. Fortunately, there was no enemy in the area to take advantage.

Thomas Stubbs received a purple heart for an action on November 13, 1969. Not sure where this took place. The journal mentions some movement at a platoon NDP where M-79 and mortar rounds were employed - perhaps Thomas caught a fragment.

November 16. I am assigned to the Camp Evans base defense staff so my reporting will be solely from the journals until early January, 1970 when I return to Charlie Company. I think I realized it in a general sense at the time - leaving the field robbed me of continuity with the guys in the platoon. To some extent, it was like being pulled from your family and being put in a foster home.

The base defense job was to coordinate the defense of Camp Evans, mainly perimeter security. Each unit had responsibility for a sector and put guards out at night. The discipline of the soldiers at Evans was not the highest (the field units sent their underperformers to the rear) and among support units, there were some cases of drug overdoses while pulling guard duty. Camp Evans had a 40mm "Duster" anti-aircraft weapon that had quad 40's and could put out a spray of ammo. It also had searchlights that could be bounced off of clouds to give some illumination. I believe Evans also fired a lot of artillery in the H&I mode each evening - about 800 unobserved rounds that was highly inefficient. No doubt most of this shooting was to no effect. New Year's Eve was interesting at Evans. Many soldiers grabbed their weapons and filled the sky with tracers, regular ammunition, and flares. The sky looked like the Fourth of July on the Washington DC mall. My recollection is that at least one helicopter was destroyed by fire due to the flares. The rear area was somewhat out of control. The brigade commander called all unit representatives into his TOC and chewed some butt.

November 15 - November 19, 1969. The company appears to be split up at this point. The company CP is on FSB Rakkasan. The second platoon continues road security for the engineers. The first and third platoons divide into about eight six man recon teams (and locate about 10 km west of Rakkasan. This is getting closer to the heart of "Indian Country and is just a few km from the future FSB Ripcord." From the journals, I get the impression that the enemy was very deliberate in making attacks on US forces since they were greatly outgunned in firepower. They would probably trail a US unit for several days before making an attack, mostly at night. Perhaps that is why inserting the first and third platoons so far out but keeping them there for a short while was not an unreasonable risk.

A rifle company was like an elephant, thrashing through the jungle. The elephant stretched over several hundred meters and by its nature was noisy, often losing the element of surprise. Many soldiers commented that they were "tired of getting ambushed" and volunteered for six man recon teams or to join the battalion recon platoon that frequently operated in smaller teams. They felt that their chances of survival were better using this tactic, even though they were vulnerable to larger size NVA forces. Since the NVA rarely massed in larger groups, this concern was not a high one.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, an element (4th platoon?) was inserted at YD 493104 (about 10 km south of Rakkasan) and located a bunker at YD 486226.

November 20, 1969. Second platoon remains with the engineers and first platoon, third platoon, and CP come to Evans.

November 21, 1969. First platoon, third platoon, and the CP combat assault to the flatlands just a few kilometers SW of Evans at the end of the day. Second platoon comes in from the field to Evans. Even though the lowlands were marshy in spots with countless mosquitoes, there were attractive features. Jim Lee recalls patrolling near a destroyed church, perhaps attacked during Tet 1968, where flocks of brightly colored parakeets and wild orchids were prevalent.

November 22, 1969. First platoon makes a day trip up to FSB Victory to assist with closing. Second platoon CA's to a location a few km from FSB Rakkasan. Third platoon forms five ambush teams near the Song Bo River and where the terrain rises about 10 km south of Evans.

November 23, 1969. Third platoon remains in the team area near the Song Bo River. 48 women are detained and turned over to the ARVN for being in an off limits area. The teams find one bunker used recently. First platoon is at Evans prepared to secure LZ construction teams and second platoon is standing down at Evans.

November 24 – 25, 1969. First platoon remains at Evans. Second platoon is inserted along the Song Bo River near third platoon's teams. They find a few bunkers about 60 days old. The 25<sup>th</sup> is cold and wet.

November 26, 1969. First platoon remains at Evans and third platoon's teams are extracted and return to Evans. Second platoon does an air move to a location four km to the west.

November 27. Happy Thanksgiving. All elements are at Camp Evans for the Thanksgiving meal.

November 28. First platoon and second platoon move to locations about one km apart to the ridge line south of Camp Evans. First platoon finds a few hooches and sees two enemy running away; they engage with no results.

November 29, 1969. Third platoon joins the other platoons in the same general area and finds a hooch and some minor enemy items.

November 30, 1969. The company moves from its field locations to Camp Evans and then flies to Mai Loc.

December 1 – December 2, 1969. The company moves to FSB Shepherd and provides security for an artillery raid. The idea of an artillery raid is to quickly bring in artillery tubes and put out a lot of fire on suspected enemy locations before the enemy has time to react. Shepherd is about 5 km SW from FSB Victory.



Wildlife plays a role. On Dec 1, 1969, 2/17th Cav spotted 10 elephants and employed ARA on them. Two were killed and four wounded. They were reported to have had large tusks. I suppose they were used by NVA as pack animals to move munitions. There are reports of water buffalo also used as pack animals (Apr 5, 1970 battalion journal). Alpha company killed a 150 pound black bear in a mechanical ambush on June 20, 1970. Jul 1, 1970 - Bravo company had a mechanical ambush triggered by a snake.

December 3-4. Charlie Company arrives at Eagle Beach the end of the day on Dec 3.

December 5 – December 9, 1969. The first and third platoons move to Camp Carrol to construct the alternate tactical operations center (TOC) for 3d brigade headquarters. Carrol is up north in Quang Tri province about 15 km NE of FSB Victory. Second platoon has four ambush teams on rocket ridge (I recall hearing the term rocket ridge and am not certain I'm describing the same area. The general idea was that the enemy could set up rocket launchers on the high ground near our base camp and observe their impact and make adjustments. For this story, I'll define rocket ridge as the high ground south of Camp Evans from the Song Bo on the east to grid coordinates YC 380280). On Dec 7<sup>th</sup>, second platoon hears five enemy and engages but had negative results. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, second platoon made a slight change in their location via Evans and air move back out.

December 10, 1969. First platoon and third platoon return to Evans and then back out to the field in the general vicinity of second platoon. The company is on rocket ridge near the Song Bo south of Evans. One platoon found a map showing Camp Evans, Camp Sally, and Camp Eagle although it may have been blown out of a helicopter.

December 11, 1969. The second platoon apprehended five females near the Song Bo, some with proper ID and some without.



December 12, 1969 to January 1, 1970. This period was a continuation of splitting the company into eight man teams in the vicinity of rocket ridge. On some days, the platoons would consolidate and conduct PAS (patrol and surveillance) operations. The old term RIF (reconnaissance in force) was out as that sounded too aggressive now that “Vietnamization” was a top priority. Apparently there was a decent amount of VC activity such as moving supplies from the population centers to the NVA in the mountains, sniping at US forces, and laying booby traps. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, second platoon received a few sniper rounds and third platoon found a recently used trail. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Colonel Bradley takes over 3d Brigade. The temperature each day is between 62 and 68 degrees with light rain. Not the most comfortable for the infantryman. Several times, the platoons would air move back to Evans and then be reinserted in the same general area. The third platoon spots four enemy on December 23 and engages but has negative results.

Merry Christmas. It appears that most or all of the company pulled back to Camp Evans early on the 25<sup>th</sup> for Christmas dinner (Operation Holly) and then returned to rocket ridge later in the day.

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, third platoon finds a large bunker, booby trapped with US hand grenades. The 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> had first platoon pulling bunker line security at Camp Evans. Second platoon had this mission a few days later.

January 2 to January 11, 1970. The company moves about 15-20 km to the northwest to a low area west of Camp Evans and two km north of FB Sword, between the Song Thac



were in country or had personal effects to pick up; taking the company mascot by jeep to Phu Bai to have him immunized against rabies. The first sergeant was normally a master sergeant with many years of Army experience. Working for the first sergeant was a supply sergeant, communications sergeant, armorer, administrative clerks, and others.

Some of the rear personnel were highly motivated because they were just one chopper ride from the rest of the company in the jungle. John Georgiton remembers several months later “how if the guy in the rear area who was suppose to put the meal (THE HOT MEAL) together for us for resupply screwed it up, he would end up in the field with us because Zippo wouldn't let anyone in the rear screw us over. I think at one time we had three of those individuals in first platoon. I always remember how much Zippo stuck up for the men in the field. I have used the principle often in life for the people that work for me. He taught us all some great lessons in life.”

The base camp at Evans had a number of “sea hut” barracks, supply rooms, and an orderly room. The company may have had a jeep for admin runs. The first sergeant ran all of the “details” necessary for the daily functioning of the base camp: KP in the battalion mess hall, occasional Camp Evans bunker duty, drawing ammunition and supplies from various ASP's and supply points, getting water for the showers, and the disposal of human waste by burning in 55 gallon drums (ignited with diesel fuel).

The infantry soldiers were in the rear area infrequently. The rear was a transit point going on R&R or coming back. A few times a year, the battalion would come to Evans for training. After an extended period in the field, the company might also come to Evans to get supplies and rest before heading out again. During the monsoon season when the company operated closer to Evans, sniper teams and recon teams were employed in the hills for a week at a time. These teams would rotate back though Evans for a night or two before being redeployed. Most men had good memories of the rear where you could get a shower, clean clothes, a hot meal other than C-rations, a cold beer or two, and possibly a trip to the Post Exchange.

The rear was also a temporary respite for men recovering from battle injuries, jungle infections, or other medical issues. Some men had medical “profiles” or restrictions that would keep them at Evans for weeks or longer. The first sergeant would keep these men productively employed and most were more than happy to be working at Evans rather than returning to the field. The first sergeant therefore had a good deal of power and responsibility. He was tasked by the company commander to meet the company's requirements such as six man recon teams. The first sergeant decided who stayed at Evans and who went to the field. To my knowledge, these assignments were made fairly and equitably. In some cases, these decisions intersected with the randomness of combat in determining who was wounded or killed.

The rear may have been a respite for veterans who had seen too much combat or who were getting short (less than a month on their tour). This was a judgment by the company commander and first sergeant and may have varied over time. There was extreme pressure from battalion to keep as many men in the field, fighting the enemy, as possible.

This is understandable. Sometimes the battalion would have a company send every man from the rear who was not absolutely essential to the battalion firebase to pull security duty.

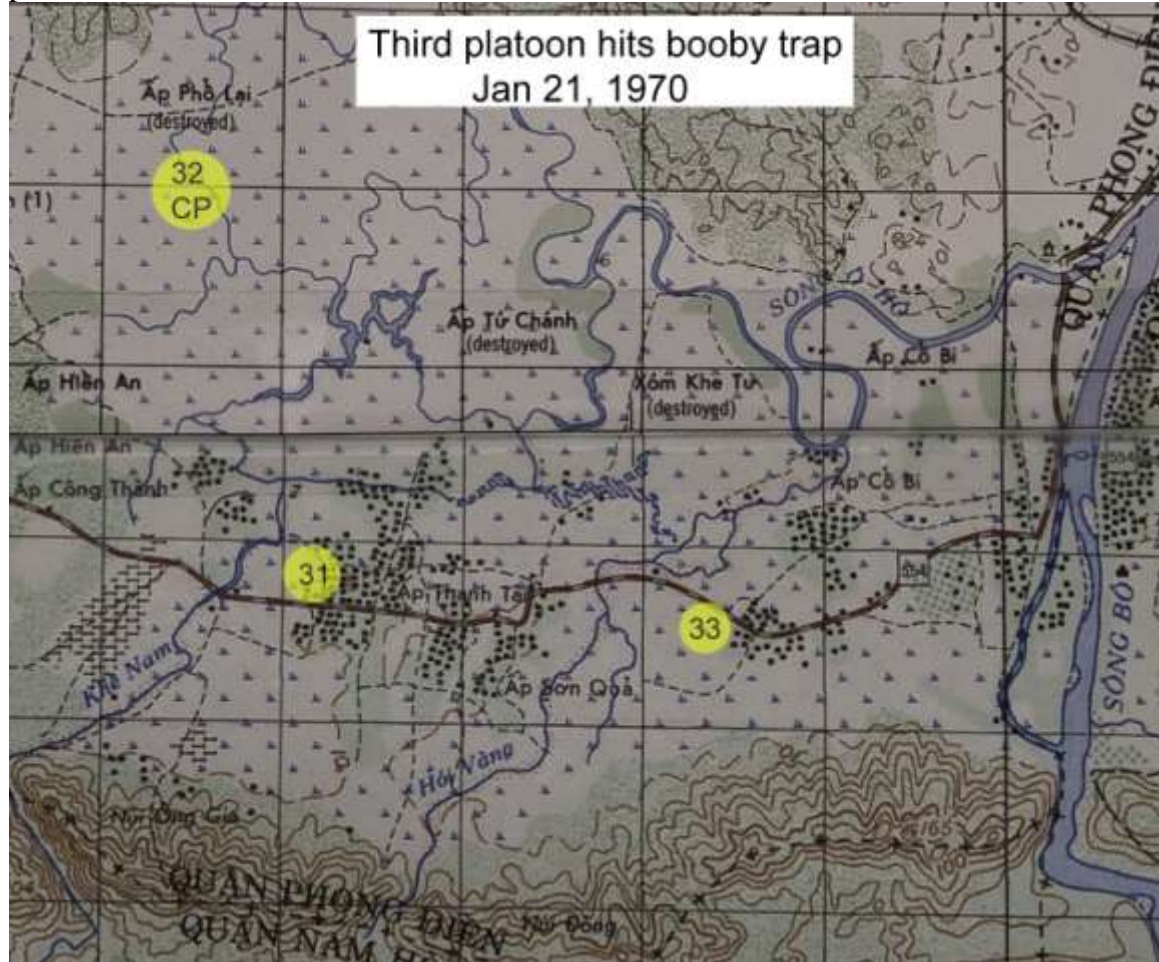
I met some interesting characters serving as company exec in the rear, a place mostly unrelated to the jungle combat. There was a young truck driver who was not the sharpest soldier. I believe he was about 18 years old and an alcoholic. We gave him a coke in the morning to sober him up. He may have delivered supplies to our company. He may also have been involved in some black market activities as he flashed a big wad of MPC (military payment certificates) one day - many hundreds or thousands and he did not seem to care if he lost it in an MPC conversion, when the old money was made worthless and replaced with new.

The rear was also a surreal place somewhat removed from the places a few miles distant where men were fighting and dieing. An example would be the division headquarters at Camp Eagle, a few miles distant. Many division headquarters people were far removed from the war. They were performing important functions that supported the men in the field but were in no danger themselves. Typically the division staff people wore starched fatigues and spit-shined their boots. I ate in the division mess hall one day wearing my crumpled fatigues and "white" boots (where the black leather dye had worn away from many miles in the jungle) and felt like the assorted division staff looked at me with some sort of disdain as though a field soldier was a lower life form. Perhaps they harbored some guilt that they were not participating in the war in a more direct way. The irony of the fact that those doing the actual fighting were looked down upon by the REMF element made an impression on me.

January 21, 1970. The company moves to an area about 10 km SE of Camp Evans bounded by rocket ridge to the south and the Song Bo river to the east. The temperature gets down to 50 degrees at night with wind and rain, feeling cold. There are small villages in the area and a local route 554 passes through some hamlets. The terrain is low and marshy with numerous streams. Each platoon is inserted in the general area; third platoon hits a booby trap not far from their LZ. The hand grenade booby trap wounds four men - two seriously at YD 583246. Line #64 (Rodney Lusk) has shrapnel in his leg; Line # 113 is more serious and has his leg blown off. Both are taken to the hospital ship. The lightly wounded are sent to the medical company at Camp Evans. I remember this event, hearing of the booby traps over the radio. I must have been back to my old job as first platoon leader and about two km from the incident. This is probably a good example of the isolation of units within the same company and why it is necessary to get numerous inputs to this story. Even though just a mile away, you had no way of knowing that someone had a traumatic injury, other than hearing the report on the radio. Since I did not see the injury, it did not affect me as much as it did those who were close by. I really did not like working in a booby trap area and would rather take my chances with enemy soldiers using rifles. Areas such as this generally did not have NVA units but did have the local VC who would emplace the booby traps. Generally, the company found itself in areas prone to booby traps during the late Fall and Winter since the weather forced the



battalion to work areas closer to Camp Evans where road resupply was sometimes possible.



Notes: first platoon (31) goes in at 0848; third platoon (33) at 0850 and CP and second platoon (32) at 0903. A squad from third platoon hits the booby-trap at 0936.

January 22, 1970 to February 15, 1970. The company continued in this general area for about three weeks. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, the second platoon point man triggered a booby trap in high elephant grass. Point and slack had minor cuts to arms and legs and were evacuated in a log bird to C Co, 326 Med. The point man was the lead element in a column and in most cases was the first to make contact with the enemy. In heavy jungle, the point man might be hacking his way through the vegetation with a machete. The slack man was there to protect the point man and to provide a second set of eyes. The slack would also return heavy fire to suppress the enemy if engaged. I remember one instance where my platoon was moving slowly and I moved up to the point to ask him what was taking so long. He pointed out that the vegetation was like a wall and he was having difficulty cutting through it. I must have been frustrated and told him that if he couldn't cut through, to fall forward so we could make progress. He leaned forward but the brush was so thick that he couldn't even fall forward. We smiled about that and used some choice words to describe that part of Viet Nam.

During this period, the journal shows that the company was tasked to provide one sniper team and two recon teams to be placed under battalion control. These teams were three or four men each. Snipers were to engage at a distance and the recon teams were to observe and call artillery. The sniper team was in the rocket ridge area and the recon teams were as far as 10 km south of the company's platoons. The company had very few findings at this time. A hooch or two were found and destroyed. One humorous entry was found in the journal for January 28 from D Company: Sick dog was medevac'd. Field medical diagnosis must have been good – the dog was said to have hepatitis. On the evacuation form there is a block for "nationality." The entry was "dog." It was quiet on February 6, the Tet holiday that involved major fights two years earlier.

## **Chapter 6 Randolph Glen and Texas Star. Granite and Kathryn Areas of Operation (February 17, 1970 to May 3, 1970)**

***Casualties: 19 Killed in Action and 46 Wounded in Action. 31 enemy killed.***

February 16, 1970. The company pulls in to Camp Evans and prepares to move into a new area of operations about 15-20 km SW of Camp Evans. The terrain is wooded and the higher peaks are in the 500 meter range. This is about 20 km east of the Laos border and known enemy concentrations. This area is not far from Firebases Rakkasan and Kathryn. The company is still employing a sniper team and two recon teams separate from the company. On February 23d at YD 474156, third platoon finds old NVA bunkers and equipment such as a rusted M1 carbine, Russian machine gun, and miscellaneous ammo. Having a time horizon of one year and back to the "world," it is easy to forget that this terrain may have been fought over many times, perhaps even back to the days of the French. Many artifacts of previous military use are found throughout our AO's - finding countless NVA bunkers, old rusty NVA weapons and munitions, and old graves.

The 1st Cavalry Division had been working the A Shau Valley in 1968 and had lost a number of helicopters. One day while on patrol, we ran across an old UH-1 still in the jungle. It looked out of place with vegetation growing all around it – sort of like a movie set. I believe all of the radios and weapons had been removed. Another example of prior combat in the area came from a photo of an old USMC personnel carrier destroyed when the US Marines were in the Evans area before moving further north. C Co also found a US body in a shallow grave at YC306950 wearing a GI belt and aviator harness. Perhaps someone lost with the first Cavalry?

On the 23d, Sniper team 5 engages two NVA mid morning at YD 517248 and kills one. They capture a rucksack with medical supplies. This might be the only success our sniper teams had. For the most part, there were not many good locations where a sniper had unobstructed vision for any distance. I seem to recall hearing about this success – I believe the sniper had his scope off and was cleaning his weapon when another team member pointed out the enemy soldiers. The sniper made the shot without the scope,

using like a normal rifle! Another member of the sniper team had disassembled his rifle to clean it and chewed out the sniper for taking the shot when the others were not prepared. Had the enemy been part of a larger unit, the team members would have had a problem.



On the 26<sup>th</sup>, second platoon found a trail used in the last day. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, third platoon finds NVA tracks at YD 462165. They engage and kill one NVA at YD 465165. They estimate there had been a party of three or four NVA. Third platoon puts out an ambush at YD 467164. Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> I commented in letters that we were climbing some pretty good hills and that I had not seen any enemy since the previous October (other platoons had). We didn't realize that things were about to change.

March 2, 1970. We received a new battalion commander today. Generally, they rotated every six months which today is seen by the Army as too rapid a turnover in this key position. The outgoing commander had run the battalion during a relatively quiet period, much of it induced by the monsoons and bad flying weather where the units operated closer to Camp Evans. In hindsight, we see the new commander assuming responsibility during what would be a period of heavy combat. Ideally, the new commander would have had several months to get familiar with the units and the terrain but fate did not provide him this advantage.

The weather must be turning hot as one man is evacuated for heat stroke. I think I remember this fellow; although I could be confusing the dates. If he's the one, he was a

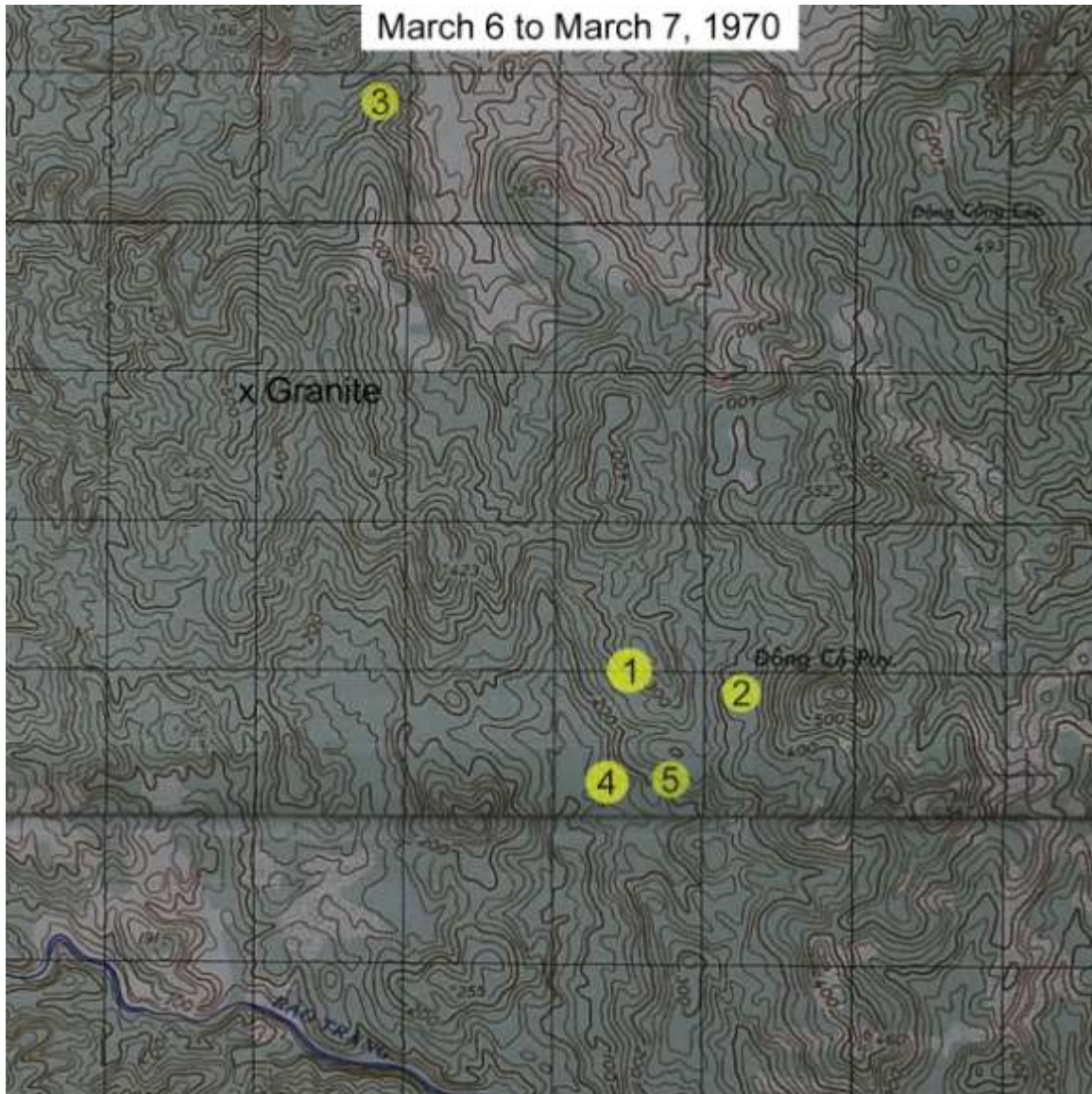
first class con artist. He would purposely not drink water so that he would have heat symptoms and get evacuated. I think I heard a story that he went AWOL from the aid station at Camp Evans and got a ride down to Da Nang where he sneaked into some Navy admiral's quarters and put on his bathrobe. He rivaled Klinger in the MASH TV series. Mark Smith elaborates: "Admiral Rosenberg became a legend in the Company for being sorry but also for being a unique character. He was a malingerer who would 'injure his back' on a daily basis. Finally I left him grimacing in feigned pain on the trail. Once he realized he was alone, he left his rucksack and ran to catch up. Then with a fire-team quietly observing I sent him back alone to retrieve his rucksack. I talked to him every day. He was intelligent and debated the right of the country to snatch him from a life of New York leisure simply because he partied rather than studied in school. Finally it became a joke between us but I vowed to keep him in the field and he began to come around as a soldier. Then I received a call from our S-3, Major Klein, who told me he would take all Jewish soldiers to Da Nang for religious services. He said I had one on the roster named Rosenberg. I said 'No way, I will never get him back.' The Major assured me that he would keep control and return the man to me in the field. I merely said 'I do not believe that.' They came and picked him up and Rosenberg gave me a sly grin as he flew away. 'You will not be back, you sly devil, I said to myself.' The Major called and said he would personally ensure he got back to me in the field. 'He won't get away from me Zippo.' I merely replied 'Baloney.'

Three days later I received a radio call from the S-3 - 'Zippo meet me secure in the green (this was on the encrypted radio net).' I merely replied, 'You lost him, he beat you.' Major Kline replied with a chuckle, 'Just meet me in the green.' After Chief (Ken Hamil) cranked up the secure set and punched in the codes with his KY-38 punch key, I got the S-3, who said, 'I lost him but it is a great story.' It seems that after the services, the troops were told to have fun, rest and be ready to return to Evans. All, including the erring Rosenberg, sang out a hearty 'Currahee sir!' All seemed well until the wee hours of the morning. The Admiral in Da Nang lived in a lighted compound surrounded by troops, dogs and God knows what. He was awakened by noises in his kitchen and arose, armed himself, and crept into the kitchen and to the door of the pantry. There, sitting with the admiral's white mess jacket, medals and all on sat a young man eating peaches from a number ten can and slopping juice down the jacket front. 'Who are you?' inquired the admiral and the lad answered 'Who are you, I am Admiral Rosenberg.' The Admiral told him to sit tight and he would be back and then the doctors and corpsmen came to gently take this poor delusional soldier (who was smarter than all of them) to the hospital. Rosenberg was fast moving from sorry soldier to the stuff of legend. A short time later I got a post card from the States. I do not know who actually sent it but it came from the USA. It said simply 'Zippo, if I did war, I would want to do it with you but I don't do wars so I came on home. It was signed 'Admiral Rosenberg.' I often wonder if he ever had any problem being serviced by the VA. Probably not. He was much too smart for that.

March 5, 1970. Second platoon spotted a camp fire at 0900 and called artillery on it. Shortly thereafter, they received 3 RPG rounds. Negative results all around

March 6, 1970. Other than booby traps in January, Charlie Company has not had significant contact since hitting the caves area in Quang Tri province in October, 1969. The last real fighting was early August, 1969. In General Harrison's book, Hell on a Hilltop, his research shows that the senior North Vietnamese political leadership had made a decision to direct the North Vietnamese Army to conduct decisive military operations in summer of 1970 to destroy US bases and the troops supporting those bases in the 101<sup>st</sup> area of operations. General Harrison was not able to get much specific information from the North Vietnamese during his visits in 2001 and 2004 but we can safely assume that the NVA had already infiltrated a greater number of troops, munitions, supplies, and medical support into the 101<sup>st</sup> area of operations, especially during the monsoon season when the third brigade was forced to position most of its forces much closer to Camp Evans. Most likely, the outlying areas near the A Shau Valley and firebases Ripcord, Granite, Kathryn, and Rakkasan had received significant reinforcements of NVA forces who were given missions to be more aggressive than in the past.





Notes: **circle 1**, second platoon contact at 1245hrs; **circle 2**, third platoon contact at 1150 and 1350; **circle 3**, initial location for first platoon; **circle 4**, reposition of first platoon; **circle 5** is first platoon contact on March 7.

The second platoon saw most of the contact on March 6. At 1010 they report finding a trail at YD 469166, no more than two to four days old. Two hours later, they have covered about 400 meters. At 1245 (YD 465170) they receive AK fire and 28, RPG rounds from about 30 meters out. Oren Crook is in the lead and puts out a heavy volume of fire, buying time for the lead squad to deploy to return the enemy fire. He is killed in this initial exchange. *RPG's can be somewhat terrifying as they whistle through the air and then detonate with a deafening explosion. At this time, the US did not carry a comparable weapon and was outgunned in this area. Within the next few months, the US started carrying the LAW which was a similar weapon but designed to be more of an armor penetrator.* ARA is requested and is on station - three US are WIA. A white team

arrives on station at 1234 (YD 465170). Second platoon estimates the enemy force to be about two platoons. Third platoon is 500 meters distant and first platoon is making an air move to reinforce. By 1255 second platoon is receiving small arms only and total casualties are 1 US KIA and 3 WIA. Medevac is in process. About 1300, there is a lull in the fight. Fifteen minutes later, the enemy initiates AK fire again. One gunship supporting the battle is hit with small arms fire and returns to Camp Evans. Four men have been medevac'd by 1325. One WIA is still on ground. At 1330 they are still receiving light small arms fire. A second medevac is in process. Two pink teams, two sections of ARA, and one white team are on station. A LOH is hit by small arms and returns to Evans. By 1400, all contact has ceased. Rockets and mini-guns from the attack helicopters are key to driving the enemy away. The NVA realize that if they concentrate, even at platoon strength, they are at major disadvantage. Second platoon moves to higher ground to redistribute ammunition. During the fight, Leonard Arsenault, the platoon medic, pulled wounded men back to the relative safety of a bomb crater, despite intense enemy fire. Willie Cohen, a squad leader, skillfully maneuvered his element to blunt the enemy's attack. When his platoon leader was wounded, Donald Neeb, RTO, filled in with radio reports and calling for medevac and ARA. Paul Mason led his platoon despite his wounds and also assisted in evacuating the wounded. Frost Bowling led his squad in an assault of enemy positions to stifle the enemy attack. Paul Richards an RTO made repeated trips to move wounded men to safety.

Concurrently, the third platoon has enemy contact. At 1150 they are engaged by an NVA squad at a distance of 100 meters. They receive AK fire but there are no casualties. At 1340, they receive light small arms fire from the South. One gunship receives AK fire from north of 3d platoon.

The first platoon had split itself into two elements. They are extracted from YD 445208 at 1310 and inserted at YD 463163 to reinforce second platoon.

The enemy action is consistent with a greater aggressiveness than seen recently by the company. The NVA continue to fire at the US attack helicopters despite the danger to themselves by exposing their location to the rockets and miniguns of the choppers. This new aggressiveness will be seen in the upcoming weeks and months.

*Casualty summary:*

*SP4 Oren Lee Crook KIA (tour began 11/29/1969), Line #50. Began tour Nov 29, 1969.*



WIA:

*PFC Roderick N. McLean – to 326 Med*

*PFC Lee B. Patterson – to 326 Med*

*PFC Robert Middleton – to 326 Med*

*PFC Guy D. Statzer – went to 85<sup>th</sup> Evac*

*LT Paul Mason*

March 7, 1970. I'd like to comment on the previous day's contact. The second platoon had encountered a good size enemy force (larger than a few trail watchers) and had taken a good number of casualties. I must have followed some of the action on the company radio net but because of our separation, I did not have a strong recollection of that action. I guess this reinforces the point of "being in one's own little platoon-sized world."

At 0955 hrs, first platoon and an NVA trail watcher exchange fire in the vicinity of YD 468162. Robert Fleeks, the point man was wounded in the hand, causing him to drop his rifle. Lorne Trainor spotted the source of the enemy fire and dropped numerous M-79 rounds on the enemy position. This enabled Robert Fleeks to grab his rifle and start returning fire. First platoon begins to maneuver against the enemy. The terrain is the flat portion of a ridge line and the maneuver is slightly uphill. I remember looking to my left and seeing Derek Montey firing and aggressively moving forward. He may have been carrying an M-60. We were somewhat on line and firing as we moved toward the enemy. I should have recommended Montgomery for an award at this time as his action took a lot of the heat off the rest of the platoon. Glenn Lovett was about 8-10 feet to my right rear and carrying an M-79. I looked back at some point and saw him lying on the ground – he had been hit in the head with AK fire from about 20 meters ahead. I tried to put out some fire with my M-16 and it had jammed (I was much better at cleaning the M-16 after that). Glenn's M-79 would not have been too useful at this time. I grabbed one or two frag grenades and cooked them for a second or two and lofted toward the enemy. The fire stopped and we found blood where the fire had come from. Apparently the NVA ran off at this point. ARA had come on station but I recall they were not able to spot the enemy. I remember that I lost my cool when talking to the choppers and told them to blow those \*\*\*\* er's away. I was upset about losing Glenn Lovett – he was a nice man and had a wife. After consolidating things, one soldier reported seeing the enemy running away at some distance. We asked him whether he fired and he said no. This particular soldier just got low to the ground and did nothing. In general, he had a bad attitude and had fallen in with a bad crowd. He was the only man that I remember behaving this way. There may have been three to four NVA in two positions that we faced that day.

*Casualty Summary:*

*KIA:*

*Glenn A. Lovett (tour began 8/3/1969)*

*WIA:*

*Robert Fleeks*

March 8, 1970. At 1100 a resupply helicopter receives some small arms rounds but no hits. Third platoon 1500 - finds a box with 10, 60mm mortar rounds and 6, 82mm mortar rounds (appears 3-6 months old).

About this time, CPT Reg Moore may have gone on military leave and LT Don Workman may have commanded Charlie Company for a short while. Apparently the battalion commander had plans to give Don Workman a rifle company and used this opportunity to give him some experience.

March 9, 1970. At 1150, second platoon sees one NVA (YD 461160) and engages. They find a north-south trail recently used. At 1300 they find a trail marker at YD 461160. 1315 – at YD 471157 they see an NVA, and engage him with small arms. Purple heart orders indicate that Percy White was wounded this day – perhaps his wound was discovered after the battle reports were submitted. The platoon sees enemy tracks but no other results.

It may have been in this area. I remember once when we were in an area where the enemy presence was high and most of the men were nervous, myself included. We were pulling into a night NDP on the top of a small hill or finger of a ridge. It was getting dark so visibility was not very good. One of my soldiers reported hearing a fairly large enemy force nearby - on a trail below us and perhaps 50-75 meters away. I went with him to see for myself and to the best of my recollection, I (we) saw about 10-12 chimpanzee sized monkeys walking down a trail in single file. We were greatly relieved that it was not an NVA platoon. I hope to get verification on this.

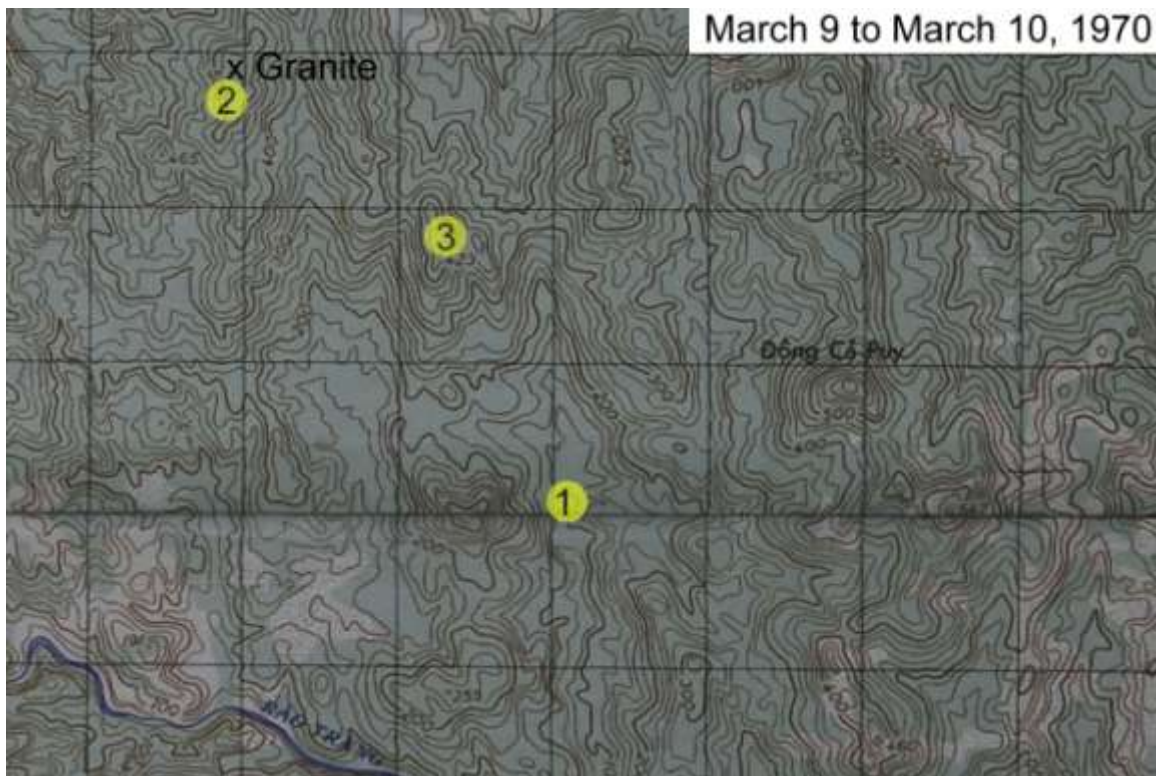
A similar memory from Mark Hendrickson: “One morning (cannot remember when this happened – might have been July or August 1970) we were brining in our claymores after a night on ambush. We had just about gotten all our material together and were ready to head back to the 2nd platoon NDP when we heard some very loud noises coming up the trail. It was so loud that we just looked at one another and thought that there had to be at least a company of NVA in a hurry to get somewhere. We got down behind whatever we could and readied our M16’s to shoot up as many NVA as we could before they overran us. Then, all of a sudden, a pack of wild boars came down the trail – about three or four adults and a bunch of little ones. They never looked our way or paid any attention to us in any way - we had to be about 15 to 20 feet off the trail. Besides myself, Bruce Aaron,



Rick Marshall, Larry Sterzik, maybe Jim Davis and Jerry Brenke as well as a guy from Guam named Lorenzo, were on this ambush.

A LOH working for Alpha Company is hit by AK fire from YD 471154 and lands at YD 462162. 1st platoon secures the helicopter until the LOH is extracted. At the end of the day, first and third platoons are extracted to the future FSB Granite location.

March 10, 1970. Second platoon 1030 - has movement at YD 462162. Paul Richards was a radio operator who noticed the enemy presence. He initiated fire with his M16, at which time the enemy opened up with a high volume of small arms and grenades. Several men were wounded and Joseph Banks, the platoon medic, moved to pull Paul Richards to safety. Banks was wounded in this effort but did not hesitate to administer life-saving measures. Clement Dombrowski recalls that Byron Richard was wounded in the midsection. 1450 - second platoon finds a blood trail vicinity YD 462162. 1715 - they are extracted from YD 434194 to YD 453178 (not far from Granite).





*Casualty Summary:*

*SP4 Byron Matthew Richard (VN Memorial web site shows HOSTILE, HELICOPTER – NONCREW AIR LOSS, CRASH ON LAND. The journal indicates he may have been killed by fire from a white team (Tour began 11/27/1969).*

*SP4 Paul Allen Richards (Tour began 9/12/1969)*

*WIA:*

*Possibly Richard Wellington and Joseph Bauks. These names may have been confused with men from another company.*

*Things are heating up in the general area. At 0614, Alpha Company nearby is hit by small arms and RPG's, suffering 5 KIA and 15 WIA. These casualties may have caused an issue at Camp Evans - the 1/506 had a logistics "log" pad where choppers would take off and land with people and supplies. Normally after a contact when we had KIA's, the KIA would be taken to Evans by a logistics chopper. Frequently a log bird would bring in a resupply of water and ammo and take out the body or bodies. Sometimes body bags would be provided but in some cases they were not. As bad luck would have it, I'm told about ten new soldiers for 1/506 were waiting with all of their gear on the log pad to go out to their units. As they were on the pad, a log bird with dead US bodies was unloaded, some with major wounds. Apparently body bags were not available at the time. You can imagine what sort of first impression this must have made.*

March 11, 1970. 1630 – The CP and 2d platoon CA from YD 445169 to YD 440199 to secure a future firebase (Granite). First and third platoons are in the hills within a kilometer. I had R&R orders for Hawaii from March 17 to March 23. I had to be at the R&R processing center on March 16<sup>th</sup> and I believe this was at Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon. My best guess is that I left the field about March 11 to get to the rear as I do not remember initial work setting up Firebase Granite.

Just a side comment about the skill of the chopper pilots. I'm fairly certain that this recollection was my extraction from the field to go on R&R where a LOH pilot took me to Camp Evans. There really was no LZ, just a small hole about fifty feet up between some very tall trees. Fortunately, there was no enemy contact at the time. The pilot hovered and then went straight down to get me and then straight back up, missing tree limbs by a few feet. I was impressed.



March 12 – March 19, 1970. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, firebase construction begins and Charlie Company puts out 3 LP's out from fire base. There is a medevac for a man injured in a construction accident. *On the 15<sup>th</sup> Alpha company had a significant contact with two KIA and several WIA at YD 464156, three km southeast of FB Granite – there are indications of enemy forces increasing strength in the AO.*

On March 14, the company has a patrol out that discovers a tunnel complex. One man is lowered into the tunnel and loses consciousness due to lack of oxygen. A second man enters the tunnel and also passes out. Arthur Meara volunteers to attempt a rescue and reaches the second man and extricates him. He then proceeds to free the first man while almost passing out from lack of oxygen. He received the soldier's medal for these heroic actions.

The 17<sup>th</sup> has one ambush patrol at YD 441187 (about a kilometer away from Granite). Delta Company had contacts in the AO - further indications that the NVA were present in increasing numbers. Apparently Granite was to be open for 10 days to support an operation but brigade says it may stay open longer.

March 19<sup>th</sup> is National Anti-American Day. Warnings from brigade are to expect attacks in some areas. Just before dark on March 19, CPT Moore passed out sergeant stripes to some guys who just got promoted – including Tinsley Wells.

Here is a general description of Firebase Granite before the attack: the hilltop was something of an oval from northeast to southwest. The NE to SW dimension was about 150 meters and the width about 75 meters. The approaches to the hilltop were somewhat

gradual on the NE and South ends with steeper drop offs on the sides. The 105mm artillery battery was in the center and the 81mm mortars were north of them. On the south side was an LZ and ammo storage. The company CP was close to the center and a large boulder sat on the hilltop. The third platoon defended the west side with the second platoon on the south and the first on the northeast. Most of the fighting bunkers seen on a “mature” firebase had not been completed. One or two bulldozers were on the hill and one was left down by the wire prior to the attack and later provided some cover to the enemy attackers.

Defending a firebase equates to sleep deprivation hell, especially when there are nightly intelligence reports of a major enemy attack. This impacts each soldier but is especially severe on the company commander who must get by on a few hours sleep, night after night. After about a week of this round the clock vigilance, all men are probably operating at seventy percent of their mental alertness. This is an aspect of leadership or even management that is often given low priority. Leaders might assume when people are up and moving and doing things, that they are OK and ready for battle. It takes someone who has been in combat for many months and many different campaigns to have an eye that can discern between apparent readiness and true readiness. Unfortunately, in an environment where there were not adequate forces to cover the area of operations, any request to move a unit off line for rest would have been scoffed at and questions raised about the toughness of the unit’s commanders.

March 20, 1970. There was a new moon on March 18<sup>th</sup> so by the 20<sup>th</sup>, there was practically no natural illumination, even if the weather had been clear. From the battalion journal: about 2 AM, CPT Moore was walking the perimeter and spotted an NVA inside the wire and killed him; this alerted the defensive forces and prevented the NVA from infiltrating further into the firebase undetected. 0204 - Granite receives small arms fire and there are signs of a ground attack. 0210 – From the south, sappers hit the mortar section. 0215 – A mortar and sapper attack continues on Granite. The TOC has a minor hit with one WIA. There is RPG fire with most coming from the South. Ground movement is also detected on North side. By 0230, the main sapper attack has come from the S, SE, and SW. Enemy mortars are fired from the N - NW. 0300 – the enemy attack is losing momentum. There is still intermittent small arms and RPG fire. Illumination aircraft are on station (may have been a CH47 “basketball” aircraft tossing out flares). 0330 - Still receiving some small arms and RPG. 0350 – the mortar section receives an RPG or mortar attack. By 0410 - incoming fires have stopped and the weather appears to be clearing. 0445 - the first estimate of US casualties is 20 WIA. 0645 - casualty estimate is 5 KIA and 13 WIA. 0815 – the first medevac is on station. 0820 – casualty report: 10 KIA (two engineers, eight, 1/506); 31 WIA (one pathfinder, two Artillery, seven Engineers, 21 Inf). 0835 - first medevac is complete at 0815 with five evacuees. The C&C chopper then takes three wounded. A CH-47 arrives and takes the 21 remaining WIA. 0850 - Gen Hennessey (Assistant Division Commander for Operations) arrives. The battalion Commander and S3 had been on the ground with Delta Company and return to the firebase at 0920. 0946 - Gen Wright (Division Commander) arrives. It was not uncommon to get the CG and ADC on a fire base when things were active. Enemy casualties: One NVA killed on NW side; 12 found dead on

the south side of the perimeter. Bravo Company's 3d Platoon (-) arrived at Granite 1350 and finds four NVA killed by small arms (with five RPG launchers, five AK's, 50-75 satchel charges). At 1115 a pink team found three mortar positions at YD 435175 and a trail at YD 425177; they also found nine mortar positions in the vicinity of YD 412180. If a reader only had the TOC journal for information about the Granite attack, he would know the casualty totals but not much else.

Many, many men distinguished themselves during the attack and defense of Firebase Granite. Award citations are a source of selfless and heroic actions but are not the full story. In some areas of the fight where casualties were high, no one was able to describe the heroic actions of some men because those who observed the fight in that area were either killed or badly wounded and evacuated as soon as possible.

There were five combat medics on Firebase Granite. One of the five, Ronald Leonard was killed in the fighting. Joseph Banks, who was involved in heavy combat ten days earlier, provided aid to the wounded and assisted with the medevacs. Leonard Arsenault moved around the perimeter under fire and pulled the wounded to safety where they could be treated. Lawrence Fieser and Thomas Fries also exposed themselves to enemy fire and aided many of the wounded.

Led by Dwain James, platoon leader, and David Morton, platoon sergeant, the 81mm mortar platoon maintained fire missions as long as possible and fought as infantry when necessary. James Kurth and Willie Walker were killed while aiding the wounded. Alredo Belez kept his tube firing to suppress the enemy mortar positions. When his mortar was destroyed, Donald McVay fought as an infantryman. Charles Mobley kept firing illumination rounds despite being wounded.

Alvie Martin, an artillery FO, called in defensive fires around the firebase and engaged the enemy who had penetrated the wire near his position. Joseph Sprovkin was a resupply specialist who distributed ammunition to the fighting positions under enemy fire. Thomas Taylor, a TOC RTO, moved about the firebase during the attack to assess the battle and to give accurate reports to higher headquarters.

The infantry platoons defended the firebase and defeated the enemy attack, despite taking heavy casualties. William Anonie, a machine gunner, kept firing despite being wounded early on. James Block, platoon leader, organized his defense and directed fires at the main enemy thrust. Frost Bowling directed his squad's fires and counterattacked an enemy penetration. Tony Carnett led his squad in the fighting and later helped bring back the man that had been on an LP outside the wire. Frank Foronda, the field first sergeant, moved about the perimeter, directing fires and aiding the wounded. Calvin Hardage kept up steady fire on the enemy and made runs to the ammo point during the fighting. Paul Mason, platoon leader, defended his sector and moved to the areas experiencing the heaviest contact. Clyde Meade aided the wounded and helped resupply the positions with ammunition. Paul Oplane, a grenadier, placed effective fire on the enemy, suppressing their fires at critical times. Bobby Powers went to the assistance of the men outside the wire. Darrell Pugh tossed hand grenades at the enemy after his rifle was shot out of his

hands and destroyed. On an LP, Danny Richard engaged the enemy and assisted with the evacuation of his team members. Steven Smith, platoon sergeant, led the defense of his sector and organized an effort to retrieve men that had been outside the wire. Terry Thompson maintained the company radio and engaged any enemy that came near the company command post. Carroll Turpin, machine gunner, put out heavy fire and later when he had been isolated, engaged the enemy with grenades.

First platoon's four man LP / OP had been placed outside their wire the night of March 19<sup>th</sup>. Carroll Shiltz, Gary Tarpein, Lloyd Bryant, and Gus Mack went out a short distance from Granite and carried a radio. Gary Tarpein remembered: "I was asleep when the first shots on the perimeter awakened me. As soon as the firing from the perimeter increased, we moved down slope about 25 meters from our LP position to avoid all of the small arms fire coming at us because we started out on top of the ridge that was basically at the same elevation as the perimeter maybe 75-100 meters out and rounds were buzzing all around us coming from the direction of the perimeter (friendly fire). No one called in the artillery from our LP because we had no idea what was happening back at the perimeter and we didn't see a single NVA troop out where we. We hauled ass back towards the perimeter just a few minutes later as soon as artillery started "walking" towards us. I took the radio, which we initially left behind. As soon as we got back just outside the perimeter we found a huge tree to put between us and the perimeter for cover from the small arms. It was about 25 meters outside of the wire and below a bulldozer. I don't remember seeing the bulldozer until it got light and we were carried back in. I took the radio and requested permission to re-enter the perimeter but we were refused permission and told to hold position and dig in. We didn't have entrenching tools but this huge tree we were behind had a very tall and thick root system in which everybody found a niche to fit into, except me. I was laying about 10 feet out from the tree trying to see more around us when the artillery rounds landed. Several rounds landed very close to us over about a one minute period. One of the rounds landed about eight feet to my right side. I recall a searing pain in my right thigh and then I was flying through the air in slow motion. I guess I flew about six feet and landed close to Carroll Shiltz. Things get very fuzzy for me for the next few minutes probably due to the concussion. I recall checking to see if anyone else was hit and I realized that Shiltz and Mack were hit pretty bad but Bryant was unharmed. I grabbed the radio which was laying with Shiltz and began screaming at the CP to call off the arty because it was blowing us to pieces and three out of the four of us were wounded. It must have worked because no more arty landed close to us. I helped Shiltz, who was in a great deal of pain tie a bandage around his foot and I tied a big handkerchief around my right thigh (shrapnel wound) because it was the only bandage I had left. From that point on we just lay there where we were and listened to the battle going on which seemed to start slacking off around 4-5 AM. I recall doing some world class praying at one point. I remember talking on the radio the next morning to the CP and they sent a patrol out to fetch us because I told them that we needed help with the wounded. I remember when the patrol arrived to get us, the first recognizable face I recall seeing was that of Bobby Powers. Man, was he a sight for sore eyes. The men on that patrol looked like ghosts. The look in their eyes was horrible. I can't begin to describe it. I believe that Bobby Powers carried Carroll Shiltz in on his back and someone gave me a shoulder to lean on. Some others carried Mack. We encountered a



dead NVA troop not more than 10 meters from where we had been laying although I did not see even one during the battle. I never even fired my weapon. I remember reentering the wire and couldn't believe the scene before me. We noticed four to five dead NVA near the dozer at the perimeter wire. The area was devastated. Unexploded satchel charges were laying everywhere. I remember the squad navigating through the satchel charges like following a maze... there were so many and we were trying not to step on any. When we got up to where the fox holes began there was evidence of explosions everywhere. We were taken up to the helipad for extraction and that's where the real devastation was. Dozens of bodies were there... our dead and wounded. It was horrible! I just went numb. I remember lifting up a few ponchos to identify the dead and came across Gary Stacey who was a buddy of mine. I couldn't look anymore so I just sat up against some sandbags and waited for the medevac choppers to come in. It seemed that we waited quite a while. Gary Tarpein also remembered seeing Jim Lee lying on the ground near the men who had been killed. He saw that Jim was bandaged but not covered. He shook Jim and after Jim mumbled some words, Gary knew that Jim was still alive. Later, he saw him in the hospital in Japan so he knew that Jim would make it back home. Carroll Shiltz had a wound on his right ankle and later took shrapnel in his knee. Gary Tarpein was wounded in the backside. Lloyd Bryant was OK and Gus Mack had shrapnel in his hip and thigh.

Carroll went to Phu Bai (22d Surgical Hosp) for ten days before being stabilized enough to go to Tokyo. He said the Tokyo hospital was hellish and crowded. People were awake and screaming – some had to be restrained. There may have been someone already there from Charlie Company who had lost a leg. He then went to Great Lakes Naval Hospital near home to wrap up his convalescence thru October 1970.

Lloyd Bryant remembers that they did not hear any NVA moving toward the firebase. He guessed that the enemy may have spotted the OP and just bypassed or ignored it. He called to the firebase telling them that the artillery was hitting the OP. They were told to keep down as the fires could not be cut off. The four men in the OP tried to scrunch down under the roots of a large tree. Gus Mack was wounded in the butt and Lloyd remembers bandaging Turp and Shiltz as well as Gus. He remembers the sky being lit up from 2 AM till 7 AM. Apparently the firebase thought the OP had been lost as they exclaimed “they are alive” when a patrol found the OP members, the next morning.

Carroll “Turp” Turpin recalls that Granite had been socked in on and off for four days and they were running out of food. Turp was a big, hard-working guy who could eat with the best of men. He remembers tossing eight grenades and killing five NVA. Turp's position was in the first platoon sector where most were either killed or wounded. At one point, he stopped firing his M-60 machine gun as the NVA were inside the wire and would have taken him out with satchel charges. He said the NVA were very close to his position. He had to “play dead” for a few hours while the NVA were inside the perimeter. He recalls that everyone was killed near his fighting position. Turp's assistant gunner was David Dickoff from Oregon.

*Turp recalls going back to Camp Evans and getting a job at the Ammo Supply Point. He implied that some Granite survivors were given the opportunity to not have to return to the field.*

David Causey recalls that he was outside the perimeter as a forward observer with one other man when the initial attack began on the opposite side of the firebase. “All hell broke loose. We had to dodge razor wire, claymore mines and fire from the US defenders to get back inside the perimeter. The guy with me lost an eye and luckily, I was not hurt. The thing I remember most about Granite is the bodies - both our men and the sappers. Bodies were everywhere.”

Buzz Buzzell recalls parts of that night – he was sick and had been sent to a medic tent to sleep. He put his rifle on a cot in the tent to “save” the cot. He remembers Reg Moore shooting the first NVA inside the wire – he ran to the tent to get his rifle and returned to a foxhole near Jim Lee. Buzz remembers an artillery gunner getting in the foxhole next to him. During the explosions, a piece of an NVA scalp landed on Buzz’s steel pot. It was not noticed until first light when he removed it in disgust. He recalls a large boulder on the top of the hill. During the attack, he saw two to three NVA on the boulder firing at the US. He remembers a flare ship “basketball” keeping the base lit up most of the night. In the AM, Buzz saw that Jim Lee was bandaged up and heard a Chinook coming up the side of the mountain from below. He could not see it due to the fog. CPT Moore directed men to load the wounded first. Buzz walked Jim Lee to the chopper. After bringing the wounded to the chopper, those killed were brought up. Buzz said the pilots were heroes.

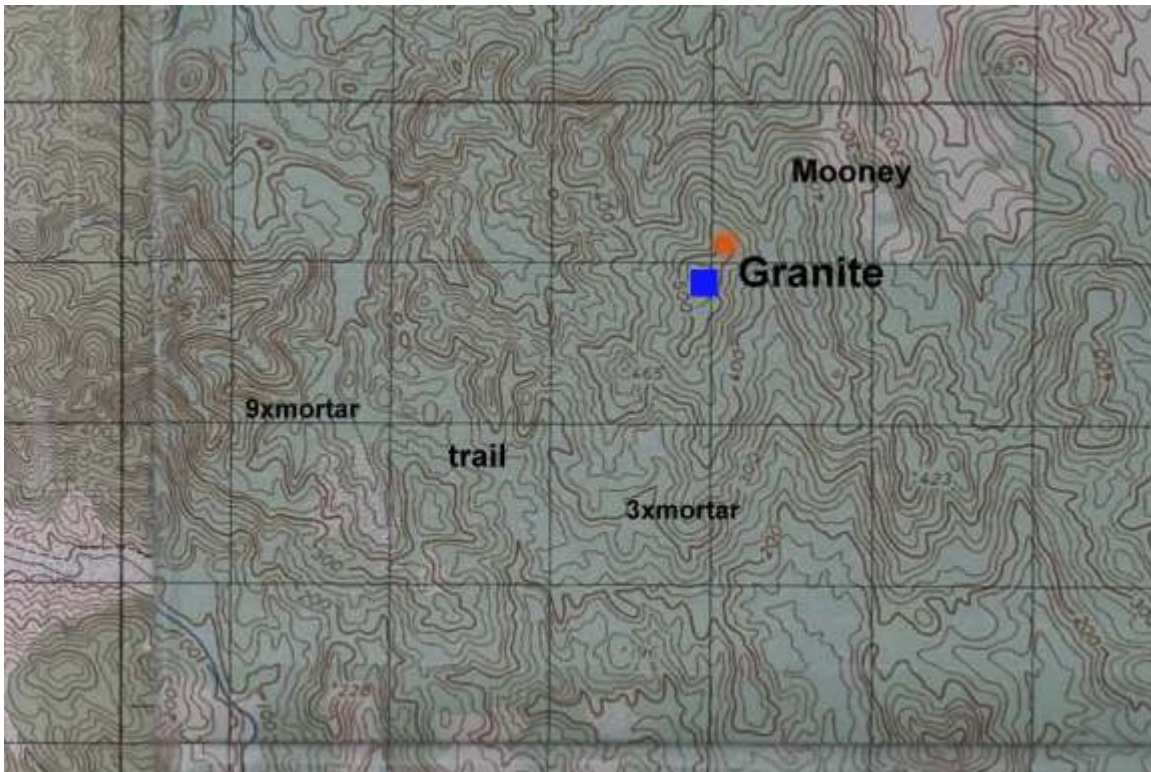
Jim Lee provided his recollection of the fight in his sector: “About 2 AM a trip flare went off and I saw an NVA sapper running inside the wire from left to right. I engaged him and then the NVA infantry outside the wire started heavy rifle and RPG fire into our position. Our first Platoon was on the S/SE side of the firebase. Gary Stacey, Jack Wells, and perhaps James Davis, and I were on the left side of our platoon on a gentle sloping hill that was the more difficult area to defend. Most of the other sectors of the firebase were much steeper and therefore more difficult to attack. Fog was also rolling in and out; the only light was from flares so visibility was not the best. We were engaged in heavy fighting. Jack Wells, James Davis and I ended up in one larger foxhole. Gary Stacey went to a smaller foxhole to the left and down the hill a short distance. After a while, I saw a sapper to the right front hiding behind a bulldozer that the engineers had left down on the wire at dark. This was a mistake as it provided good cover for the sappers. The others were firing at the NVA outside the wire. I was throwing grenades at the ones behind the cat. My right hand and rifle were badly damaged by rifle or RPG fire and I had to throw left handed and pull the safety pins with my teeth. At this point, I saw a satchel charge come into our foxhole, blowing me out of the foxhole and killing Jack Wells and Jim Davis as they did not have time to react. I heard Gary Stacey still fighting to the left and also Carroll Turpin. We continued to defend our positions but at a heavy cost. After the fire dropped off, I went to see Gary Stacey but he had been killed and I am not sure how he died. At one point, I was looking for weapons to fight with and ran into two sappers carrying satchel charges and wearing US helmets. I thought they would

jump me but they ran to the north. I lost the sight in my left eye, was shot in the thigh, had my right hand damaged, suffered ear damage, powder burns, and shrapnel from head to foot. I spent two months in hospitals in Japan and four months at Fitzsimmons in Denver.”

Stephen Smith had some observations: “I do vividly remember the fight on Granite. I was 3rd platoon sergeant during the assault. Third platoon lost one dead and three wounded. The KIA was with our listening post along with the three wounded men. Danny Richards was one of the wounded. He along with [later] SGM Foronda most probably could tell a pretty good story. The next night we were getting socked in again. I was getting a brief from Farmer when "The last bird" to Evans was leaving. Guys were scrambling trying to get loaded. All the rear guys that came out (Chaplain, Cooks with chow, others, etc.) were "big eyed" and moving fast. When I returned to my platoon's fighting positions I found that my platoon leader had also loaded on the "last bird". I was third platoon leader when we walked off a few days later and my platoon took point. We humped all night until about 3 or 4 a.m. We hooked up with another Company (their company commander carried a 12 gauge shotgun). Next day we choppered back into Granite. Pretty strange series of events. When we arrived back at Evans, I, along with the team that was with me (during the recovery of the Sniper Team members), were summoned to battalion. Upon arrival we were greeted by a warrant officer from CID. All of us provided written statements regarding what we found (type of terrain, condition of the KIAs/WIA, etc.).

Some men recall that Mike McGuire was on a sniper team outside Granite on the morning of March 20. They believe that he was killed by US artillery when the artillery lowered their tubes and fired in order to prevent the firebase from being overrun. That a sniper team was likely employed on March 20 as well as March 22 caused confusion about when Mike McGuire was killed.

Dale Blake, James Davis, Harold Harris, Michael McGuire, Gary Stacey, and Tinsley Wells of Charlie Company died while defending their positions. *Davis was socked in on Granite when he was due to go on R&R. His wife was waiting for him in Hawaii with their newborn.*



Map 4

The enemy tactic for hitting firebases seems to include mortars fired from one to several kilometers distance (when available), RPG fire from no more than a few hundred meters, and a sapper attack with satchel charges and small arms fire. The enemy attacked in the early hours hoping to catch the defenders off guard and allowing them to cut off the attack and disperse before the US can employ observation and attack helicopters.

*Casualty Summary:*

*KIA*

- SP4 Harold Ray Harris (Tour began 7/4/1969)*
- SGT James Leonard Davis (waiting to go on R&R) (Tour began 7/1/1969)*
- SP4 James Peter Kurth, E Company Mortars (Tour began 11/4/1969)*
- SP4 Ronald Fred Leonard (medic) (Tour began 11/22/1969)*
- PFC Michael Joseph McGuire (Tour began 11/15/1969)*
- PFC Dale Adams Blake (Tour began 1/10/1970)*
- SP4 Gary Ross Stacey (Tour began 7/21/1969)*
- SP4 Tinsley Jack Wells (Tour began 9/18/1969)*
- SP4 Willie Walker, E Company Mortars*

*Dennis Morrill and Robert Thompson of 326 Engineer battalion were killed.*

WIA - 31 total.

*Sent to 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital were:*

*Daniel Burkhart and Taylor Thomas of the 326<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion  
Ralph Matkin and Phillip Michaud of Alpha Battery, 2/319<sup>th</sup> Artillery  
David Dickoff, Gerald Dressel, Donald McKee, Donald McVay, Paul Opland, Robert  
Orona, Jose Rodriguez, Carrol Shiltz, and Gary Tarpein of Charlie Company*

*Also wounded and treated elsewhere were William Anonie, Paul Atterbery, Frost  
Bowling, Frank Foronda, Donald Neeb, Darrell Pugh, Reginald Moore, Percy White,  
James Lee, Gus Mack, Guy Rogers, and Danny Richard of Charlie Company*

March 21 – March 22, 1970. There are no reports of enemy activity on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Derek Montey and Doug Moniaci are at Camp Evans when a CH-47 helicopter carrying ammunition crashes on take-off. They saw the crash and rushed to the burning helicopter, pulling two men to safety. Each was awarded the soldier's medal for risking their lives to save the men injured in the crash. MAJ Wesley Ford (battalion XO) and CPT Mark Smith also assisted in evacuating men from the burning chopper.

On the 22d, at 1930 – the company sees two NVA to the East and three to the NW. A sniper team is selected to go outside the wire. Richard Hahn remembered the team being an interesting grouping of three white country and western aficionados and a skinny black kid, Anderson, from New York. There was a toss up between Lloyd Bryant and PFC Anderson, who had just arrived on Granite after the attack. Bryant did not want to go after his experience on the 20<sup>th</sup> and won the coin toss. Later that evening, the NVA set off a trip flare on the firebase perimeter. At 1945, the OP's coming in receive satchel charges. Sniper team 5 is still out in position. At 2000, all artillery that can reach Granite is employed. After the attack on March 20, there is no holding back on supporting fires. Sadly, a short round lands on Sniper Team 5, killing two and wounding one (orange circle, Map 4 above).

From the battalion journal: On the afternoon of 21 Mar 70, a four man sniper team was sent on a mission 300 meters to the north (YD 441191). They carried 1 PRC-25, 2 M-16's, 1 M-79, and 1 modified M-14 sniper rifle with scope. Most likely their mission was to kill any NVA attempting to make a daylight recon of the firebase. At 1938 hours, 22 March, C Company detected movement outside the perimeter wire. All LP's were called back to the perimeter. The sniper team was contacted and instructed to hide because of enemy activity. The sniper team responded with a "Roger." From this point on, there was no radio contact with the team. Upon inspection of the position the next morning by artillery personnel and according to the interview with PFC Anderson (the survivor not seriously wounded), approximately 30 minutes after the team was last contacted by C Co on FSB Granite, a 105mm HE round struck a tree causing an air burst, killing two of the team and wounding one other. It is thought that this HE round was an erratic round. PFC Anderson was struck in the shoulder by a falling tree. Shrapnel from the HE round damaged the PRC-25 radio rendering it inoperable. Approximately one hour after the HE



round exploded, PFC Anderson heard two to five enemy pass his position moving toward FSB Granite. He remained in his position. Approximately one hour before daylight, the enemy withdrew by the same route. (One has to wonder, what the NVA were trying to accomplish. It is not clear how large a force they were. Perhaps they were probing for weakness that they could exploit with perhaps a battalion size force). At first light, PFC Anderson started towards the perimeter of FSB Granite. At this time he was in shock. At 0945 hours he walked into the perimeter. All equipment was recovered by C Company. Two white star clusters were carried by the sniper team for use in case of emergency but were not used because PFC Anderson was debilitated. Communications checks were made every half hour prior to 1938 hours and reply was made by breaking squelch (just holding down the push to talk button on the radio handset. This makes a slight noise letting the receiver know that transmission was made without having to speak and possibly alert the enemy).

*Casualty list:*

*KIA -PFC John Wilbur Sams (Tour began 10/24/1969)*

*KIA - PFC Donald Wayne McKee (Tour began 1/9/1970)*

*WIA - Was with sniper team #5 – PFC Phillip W. Gorter, 382-48-6392 (man lost leg).  
PFC Anderson makes his way back to Granite (in shock).*

*Note: Donald McKee was at 85<sup>th</sup> Evac Hospital on March 20 – Stephen Smith recalls that McKee was badly wounded on March 20<sup>th</sup> and died of his wounds in the hospital on or about March 24, 1970 .*

March 23, 1970. B Company 3d platoon (they have been moved to FSB Granite to reinforce Charlie Company) reports killing one NVA about 50 meters out at 0620. 0756 - C Company sweeps area but does not find a body.

March 24, 1970 to March 30, 1970. On the 24<sup>th</sup> ,a search party is sent to FB Mooney, two km northeast of Granite, to locate missing secret radio codes for the KY-38 (a radio that encrypted the voice transmissions to prevent enemy interception). Lorne Trainor is in this group and finds some of the pages in a bomb crater. On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Intelligence reports that the enemy is likely to attack Granite. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, 3d platoon of A Company replaces B Co platoon on Granite. C Company is given a mission to cut a trail to FSB Mooney for resupply (FSB's above 1,000 feet elevation need an alternate LZ below 1,000 feet).

I believe that after returning from R&R I went to FB Granite for a day or two. At the time, I felt bad that the company had been hit hard but thought that I was lucky not to be there at the time. Looking back on it forty years later, I think that I should have been there and might have been able to make some difference in the outcome - sort of like an opportunity to have done something was taken away while in truth, it really did not exist,

as fate had placed me elsewhere. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, I may have left the field to be company executive officer.

I gave some serious consideration to extending my tour to command a company but decided against it (most likely a bad career decision). When we were successful in the field, it gave me an immense sense of accomplishment. Nevertheless, I did not see our efforts in fighting the enemy leading to a successful conclusion. We fought well but our battles did not fit in to an overall strategy for success. We would have had to attack the NVA sanctuaries in Laos as well as in North Viet Nam. Also, the South Vietnamese Army and government would have to have been committed to the fight and clearly they were not. The constantly rotating battalion commanders probably increased the casualty rate higher than they should have been as new commanders learned their jobs. Key positions such as S3's and S3 Air's also should have been more stable. Good news is that today, the Army does not follow this procedure of musical chairs.

March 28, 1970. C Company works to disassemble Granite. Brigade headquarters directs Charlie Company to link up with Delta Co, 2/506th Infantry at YD 445190. There may have been intelligence reports of major enemy forces in the area and the idea was to reinforce each other in the event of attack. Charlie moves off Granite at 2145 and links up 0100 next day. *Alpha Company is opening FSB Rakkasan.*

Mark Smith provided some insight into the company's activities after the Granite attack. Reg Moore had commanded the company with great skill since July 1969 and had exceeded the norm for time in command of a rifle company by several months. Mark was in command of Echo Company which consisted of the mortar platoon and recon platoon. Mark and Reg swapped companies about this time. Some of the men in Charlie company were still shaken by the attack and when asked by a soldier, "What do we do if we meet the NVA again, Zippo?" Mark replied, "Kill them!" Mark decided to keep the company in the field for a day or so rather than fly straight to Camp Evans for rest and assimilation of many replacements. He felt he needed some time with the company to give the men confidence under his leadership. When the company marched off Granite to link up with D Co, 2/506<sup>th</sup> Inf, Mark and his RTO's moved to the front of the column. Mark said he observed that the 101<sup>st</sup> at this time had some issues with clarity of the combat mission. The senior commanders seemed to have a priority of keeping casualties low while many individual soldiers were focused on their own survival. Mark began to work to reconcile these viewpoints where fighting the enemy with skill and courage would keep casualties low and allow most men to make it out in one piece.

Questions such as "why was Granite opened, just to be shut down two weeks later?" need further investigation.

March 29, 1970 – March 30, 1970. On the 29<sup>th</sup> a squad size element returns to Granite to secure a landing zone and the rest of the company moves to Granite from Mooney. It is not clear whether the company walked or choppered back to Granite. FB Granite was officially closed at 1535. Later in the afternoon, Charlie Company returned to Camp

Evans for one day's training and recuperation. The other companies under battalion control seem to notice a lot of minor enemy activity but no contacts.

Mark Smith initiated some policies that may not have been uniformly practiced throughout the company. When patrolling to find the NVA, he had platoons work the draws and ravines as well as the customary ridge lines. He prohibited the use of poncho hooches (field expedient tents) while in the field as they could be seen from some distance and made noise when someone ran into them. Zippo had people dig in when they were in their night defensive positions. John Georgiton remembers "we stole a couple of regular shovels from the rear and were using them to dig our fox holes. Of course you could dig them ten times faster with them. Once we were on the same trail as Zippo but he was about a click ahead of us and we had stopped for the evening. With those shovels it only took us about fifteen minutes to dig in. Zippo was always on me about having great fox holes that you could actually get in and he asked me if we were digging them. I accidentally told him that they were done. He didn't believe me because he knew the time from when we stopped to our conversation was only about fifteen minutes. So he came back with a patrol to inspect our position. Of course by the time he got there we had hidden the shovels. Even though the fox holes met his satisfaction, he still knew sometime smelled, but he couldn't figure it out. He was just too smart to be fooled."

Smith had a magnetic personality and got to know his soldiers well. Matt Budziszweski was digging a foxhole one day when Smith came by to chat. Smith sat there and covered the normal items such as where are you from and went on to explain that he "wanted to get to know his men so that he knew who was defending him against the NVA."

Smith used stay behind ambushes to catch NVA scavenging for food left behind by US forces. He allowed squads to design their uniforms as long as each squad member wore the same type of field uniform. When returning to Camp Evans from the field, he had all platoons wait and come in to the company area in a company formation rather than individuals straggling in. They did the "Charlie Company shuffle."

March 31, 1970. A combat assault from Camp Evans is complete at 1055 to YD 485158, about five km SE of Fire Base Granite. At YD 484161, third platoon heard two mortars from YD 482168. The 1/506<sup>th</sup> Infantry is closing Rakkasan (YD 490198) and gains responsibility for Gladiator (YD 416211), three km northwest of Granite.

On April 1, 1970, the company has limited enemy contact. At 1135, the third platoon spots a few NVA and employs artillery. At 1306, the second platoon at YD 478151 engages one NVA and employs artillery. Again at 1400 (YD 478150), second platoon spots three NVA. A supporting pink team takes small arms fire. These engagements indicate that many enemy forces are in the area although dispersed in small units.

Zippo believed in the liberal use of artillery and ARA when there was good intelligence on the enemy locations. He recalled, "The Artillery Forward Observer (FO) "Chicken-man" (based on the character on AFVN by that name and not on his courage which he possessed in spades), his artillery recon sergeant, and RTO "Short-round" were always

within arms reach. They became an integral part of the company headquarters along with the primary RTO's and "Rookie" a young FO from the 4.2 Inch Mortar Platoon in E Company who came one day and "I just never gave him back." Johnny "Spud" Smith was a company RTO replaced by "Big" Ed Miller. Ken "Chief" Hamil came from the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division (Big Red One) and Rich "Monty" Montalbano were with the company CP for an extended period. All joined in the battle to get real tube artillery support in the face of the Ammunition Supply Rate (ASR) limitations imposed since the destruction of the huge ammo dump in Long Binh in 1967 by sappers. What angered us were the ever present harassing and interdiction (H&I) fires which rarely hit anything but did not seem to be limited. A constant battle was fought about getting useful marching fires or recon by fire on suspected enemy locations. Finally a short meeting on an LZ with MG Wright and the brigade commander settled this issue once and for all.

April 2, 1970. Second platoon left an ambush behind at the previous night's NDP (YD 478150). At 1118, they kill one NVA. Another NVA engages and wounds 3 US (some confusion over the three names – R. Hughes, Hardage, and Bruce Earp (who goes to 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital and who may have been line #56 or #146). A second NVA is then killed. An RPG launcher and AK assault rifles are found. The medevac taking out the wounded men receives small arms fire. At 1410, the company spots movement at YD 478150 and engages with small arms but with negative results.

April 3, 1970 – April 5, 1970. The 3d of April finds the platoons in the same vicinity, having moved a few hundred meters. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, third platoon hears movement at 2107 and engages with artillery. Second platoon finds a winding tunnel (goes for 20 feet) at YD 486160 and destroys the tunnel.

April 6, 1970. 1045 - chopper (Ghost Rider 26) takes AK fire from YD 455178 and lands at 3d platoon's location. 1155 - Ghost Rider is extracted with his crew and helicopter. At 1500, third platoon finds a trail with signs of recent activity. The company CP is travelling with the first platoon. 1530 - after resupply, first platoon confronts two NVA. Doug Moniaci, one of the company commander's RTO's is wounded. CPT Smith had the rifle shot out of his hands. Medevac complete at 1637. One NVA is killed.

In this fight, Robert Andrejcisk, a forward observer, was cited for engaging the enemy under fire and making a run for more ammunition where the fighting was heaviest. Johnny Smith, a company RTO, engaged the enemy with his M16 until he expended his ammunition; he then used his .45 pistol. Mark Smith employed a machine gun and tossed grenades against the enemy to allow his men to move to better fighting positions. Curt Taylor, artillery FO, engaged the enemy and then moved to a position where he could adjust artillery on the enemy position.

Here is a more detailed description of this firefight furnished by Douglas Moniaci:

I don't know what prompted Zippo to move out ahead of the company the morning of April 6th, 1970. He may have done this sort of thing before, but it was the first time I

had seen a CO take the main CP out ahead of the company, walking point to boot! I was a little nervous that morning. Lately, we had frequently been running into small groups of NVA and VC. I always felt “comfort in numbers” traveling with a fully equipped rifle company. The trail we followed was quite wide. We were deep in the mountains, walking along a ridgeline just a few clicks south of Firebase Granite.

Zippo was going by the book this particular morning. He was taking short, cautious steps, and pausing to look and listen before proceeding. We followed with a minimum five-yard separation. Suddenly a voice inside my head started telling me, “we're going to get hit, put your M-16 on auto.” It was an incredibly strong premonition, one which I'd truly never had before. I often thought there were dinks around, but this was an entirely different feeling. WE WERE GOING TO GET HIT AND I KNEW IT. The voice kept saying “put the 16 on auto, put the 16 on auto.” I went over the logic of it in my head but kept coming back to the book, which advised, “do not switch your weapon off safety unless engaging or preparing to engage the enemy.” I'm not sure how long I fought the urge to break this rule, but it couldn't have been more than a minute or so.

I was still fighting the urge to put my M16 on auto when Zippo, who had done too good a job walking point, silently walked past a couple of NVA trail watchers just off the trail to our right. I was the fourth man back and directly in front of them when they realized we were upon them. They must have been sleeping or playing cards when we happened by because we had surprised them completely. I heard a clicking sound and all Hell broke loose. I felt a warm feeling in my right leg and knew I had been hit, but felt no pain – the bullet had gone right through.

They had aimed low at me and swept forward, spraying the guys in front as their rounds rose higher. Fortunately their aim was not calculated as their rounds hit only radios and back packs on the guys in front of me. Fortunately, no one other than me was wounded. Zippo's AR-15 took three rounds through the middle as it shattered apart and was ripped from his hands. He told me recently that he also found three bullet holes through his shirt.

Some other related memories from Doug Moniaci: “In late March, 1970 I was preparing to go back out to the field after a short stand down. I was to join Zippo's CP as one of his RTO's. My friend, Mark Rebovich, whose tour was ending shortly, came to me and said “I have this knife here that I want you to carry in the field with you, but you have to promise to bring it back to me when you get home.” Since we lived within ten miles of each other back in the world, that would not be a problem. The problem was that this thing was no ordinary knife. It made Rambo's knife look like something from cub scouts. It had in a large leather sheath, a serrated edge, and was at least eighteen inches long weighing probably a couple of pounds. It had leather tie-downs at the top and bottom to secure it to your calf.

I told him I wasn't interested in humping the thing up and down mountains with me and that I had enough to carry being an RTO and all, but he would not relent. He said I would need it. He said “I can't say how, or when, but YOU WILL NEED IT.” He had killed a gook his first day in the field and I always respected what he had to say. He



convinced me to take it. It seemed his offer had a certain significance to it, like the proverbial passing of the sword. At that point I was thinking that if I didn't take it, some kind of bad Karma might ensue. Being somewhat superstitious, I strapped it on and it actually felt ok. I didn't give it another thought until the day arrived where I needed it.

As mentioned above, on April 6th, 1970, the Charlie Company CP, (with Zippo at point) walked into a couple of NVA crossing the trail we were on. As they opened fire, we all dove away from the fire. As I hit the ground, I tried to roll out of my pack but I became entangled in a bunch of small trees that edged the trail. I was bound tight by my partially disengaged pack and ammo bandoleers which were twisted into and around the small saplings. It was a mess.

Already wounded, unable to move, and expecting more bullets to strike me as I lay in the open only ten feet or so from the NVA blasting away at us, I momentarily lost consciousness. After coming to, the enemy had stopped firing. I tried to reach my rifle to return fire but it had been tangled in some small trees. I was also tangled in brush and could not move. Immediately, I thought of the knife. I reached down and pulled it out, cut away my bandoleers, got my ammo clips and crawled forward to get to my rifle. One, two, three - it was instantaneous. After things settled down, I realized he was right. I did need that ridiculous knife. Suffice to say a feeling of chagrin overtook me as I heard his words again. Up to that point I hadn't touched the knife.

As I made my way through the hospital system, I always kept the knife under my pillow or locked up if the ward had such facilities. Upon arriving home in late May, I called Mark. I told him I had been wounded and was home for awhile on medical leave. He asked how bad I had been hit and then inquired, "Do you still have my knife?" I said, "of course I do." As I walked into his parent's home the next day and handed him the knife, he asked me, "did you get a chance to use it?" I said, "Let me tell you all about it....."



Map 5

April 7, 1970. Activity is heating up in the 1/506<sup>th</sup> Infantry area of operations. 0050 - Delta Company is in heavy contact - takes 5 seriously wounded. Bravo Company moves to FSB Granite. 0830, first platoon has movement at YD 478151 and employs artillery and a pink team. 1330, first platoon has movement at YD 453159 - artillery is employed again. 1105 - YD 468150 third platoon finds a trail with recent activity of three to four NVA. 2000, third platoon has movement and artillery is employed.

April 8, 1970. At 1015, third platoon finds a trail recently used at YD 474158.

April 9, 1970 – April 14, 1970. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, intelligence sources report enemy forces in the vicinity of Granite and Gladiator - they plan to destroy all FSB's. Delta Company is in contact again - takes several WIA's. First platoon is constructing an LZ at YD 480153.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, CP, second platoon, and third platoon find three bunkers about a week old. The 12<sup>th</sup> sees B-52's being employed in the area. The CP, second platoon, and third platoon are together. They find 9 bunkers at YD 464162 containing miscellaneous items. They heard movement within 25 meters at 2040. There is an exchange of grenades. *FSB Nancy (about five kilometers southeast of Quang Tri) is hit hard by sappers after dark.* On the 14<sup>th</sup>, B-52's are being employed in the area. 1110 and 1630, Alpha Company finds bunker complexes recently used vicinity YD 455164. It seems like the NVA are all over the area but not massing larger than platoon or company size.

Here's a memory from Dan Pierce that must have occurred about this time: "One of the first things we learned to do was to dig in. Zippo insisted on it. Well, this was our lucky night. We found an NDP site just off the trail. I guess SSG Lockett thought it was a good place to spend the night. We liked it because there was no digging involved. It was on a long trail where there were two LZs. One about a third of the way up and another about two-thirds of the way up. It was getting late, so we were settling in. Considering everything, it was a pretty nice evening.

It was a funny time in Charlie Co. the first and second platoons were humping together. Even with that we had [only] 20 men, including two lieutenants. Not long after dark someone got my attention. We had movement on the trail. I pushed the safety forward on my M79 and got into a good position. We were being told to hold our fire! Be cool was the word. Here they were. Flash lights shining and a lot of conversation. And they just kept coming. Now I knew why we were told to hold our fire. It was at least an entire company of NVA moving at night. I put my finger on the trigger guard just to make sure. I had never seen anything like this. I was afraid that one of us would get too nervous and start shooting. I guess we shouldn't have been, or maybe it was just me, but we sure were nervous. Right about then, something, a rat or whatever decided to test me. It ran right across me digging its' nails in. That took me to another level.

Not long after that, they were gone and we were asking each other what they were thinking. No one blew it and we were all glad of that. It was one of those strange things that happens once in a while and that I still remember. Not long ago I asked Zippo if he remembered that incident. He did. I asked him why we didn't call in artillery on them after they passed us. He said, "You know that we didn't believe in letting anyone get away." I said, "Yes sir." Apparently there were some ARVN units in the area (apparently the decision was made not to engage in the event the large group with flashlights had been friendly ARVN soldiers). Zippo found out later that the ARVN were about five miles distant.

April 15, 1970. Delta Company is on Rakkasan.

0815 – Charlie Company spotted 35 NVA at YD 477145 at a distance of 250 meters and employed artillery. 0919 - the company saw an NVA platoon at YD 472148 carrying heavy rucksacks and banana leaves over their heads for camouflage. 1047 – a pink team is on station and kills one NVA. 1128 – the company receives RPG fire at YD 468151 but takes no casualties. 1210 - ARA receives two magazines of AK fire by an estimated

NVA company. 1750 - CP, second platoon, and third platoon are moving to assist Alpha Co, 2/506th Infantry who is in heavy contact.

April 16, 1970 – April 18, 1970. Air strikes are made in support of A, 2/506th Infantry. Part of second platoon is at YD 466154 with a mission to secure a backhaul site. 1125, they receive AK fire at YD 466154 but sustain no casualties. At 1330, third platoon finds evidence of several wounded NVA and miscellaneous ammunition at YD 470150. 1645 - YD 476145, third platoon kills two NVA and finds three other dead NVA (two killed by artillery and one by LOH). There is evidence of many other wounded at the site. This day is probably a good example of the significant undercount of NVA casualties killed by US firepower (B-52's, air strikes, artillery, attack helicopters, and mini-gun helicopters). The 101<sup>st</sup> seems to be very conservative in its count of enemy killed. At 1430 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, third platoon finds miscellaneous gear and rucksacks with NVA body parts. 1607 - YD 474146, the company finds a trail with markings, possibly indicating to the NVA where to take their wounded. 2115 - Charlie finds documents near an NVA body which includes a company roster and recent NVA company history. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, first platoon spots one NVA in the vicinity of YD 478168 but does not engage because the enemy is too close to recon team 7.

Here is a fuller recollection of events that occurred on April 16th or 17th from Mark Smith: "We were sitting just off a deserted firebase and observing the opposite ridgeline from concealed positions. "FIDO" Martin's platoon was sent toward the river and we watched for enemy movement getting out of his way. Then, in broad daylight, the lead elements of an estimated enemy sapper battalion made a fatal error. An NVA soldier made a dash across a small LZ, soon followed by a stream of others, as we sat observing. While SSG Stephen "Raider" Smith maneuvered, we brought in artillery, gunships, and eventually TACAIR and hammered one sapper battalion so ferociously that they dropped weapons, rucksacks full of satchel charges, an 82mm mortar base plate and one RPD machine gun and tried to flee, dragging their wounded with them. Their ability to respond was just two RPG rounds and a couple of bursts of automatic weapons fire before they were hammered into oblivion.

A battery six, three by three was fired (basically six rounds from each gun in the battery of six guns fired along all four sides of a three hundred meter square for a total of one hundred and forty four rounds of HE and VT fuses mixed). The size of the enemy unit was calculated by nearly forty rucksacks recovered with satchel charges. The one RPD MG and the 82mm mortar base plate indicated that the heavy weapons company of the battalion was present along with female laborers. Make-up compacts with rouge in two rucksacks and one gaffer hook (for females to drag away bodies) was also found. Thus two sapper companies and one support company/heavy weapons company were present – one NVA sapper battalion.

April 19, 1970. Lines #102 and #107 are injured with explosives – one broken arm; one broken hand. They were in the process of destroying enemy bunkers.

April 20, 1970. 1432 - first platoon YD 478152 engages two NVA building a bunker. One NVA is carrying an M-16. First platoon pursues. The company reports a LOH receiving AK fire at YD 475120 (not clear if the LOH was working for C Company or just in the area). 1650 – First platoon finds a grave at YD 478152 containing one dead NVA. 1709, first platoon then walks into a horseshoe ambush and is hit by claymore and AK fire, resulting in two US KIA and five WIA.

Lloyd “Calvin” Bryant was the RTO for SSG Lockett when Lockett was killed in this ambush. Lloyd remembers his radio and M16 getting hung up on a branch as he went for cover when the firing started. He saw a large boulder he thought about getting behind but as he moved toward it, enemy rounds started to bounce off where he had planned to go. Then quickly, the firing stopped.

Kent Longmire was cited for leading his squad to flank the enemy position before he was killed. Kent had designated Chuck Kerr as his “personal rookie” and had taken point from Kerr when he was killed.

Ron Marks led his squad against an NVA position and James Lockett secured the wounded and then attacked aggressively until he was killed. Mark Smith recalls that SSG Lockett was in the front of his platoon when the normal spot for a platoon sergeant was more toward the rear, in a position to assume leadership if the platoon leader was incapacitated.

Two wounded were extracted by LOH white team (perhaps the more serious wounds) and three by Dustoff 95.

Chuck Kerr provides further details of this day’s fight:

My ruck had been lightened with the attrition of some canned goods and I was walking point on a real nice, well traveled trail up a hill and was doing so well that my slack man, a young Hispanic soldier, whose name I do not recall, also new to the platoon, was ten yards behind me. The remainder of the platoon was well behind him. Being the world’s dumbest “Cherry,” I thought I was doing good. Upon topping the hill I saw some little guys who did not look like us. I emptied about three fourths of a magazine in their direction and went back down the trail I had just climbed and changed magazines. SSG Lockett got the platoon on line and we swept the hilltop. Pierce caught a glimpse, at a good distance, of four little people running down a trail that led away from the open cap of the hill, down the ridgeline. They were gone too quickly for him to engage them with his thump gun. The top of the hill was the apex of three trails. The one I came up, one along the top of the ridge on which enemy had fled and one that lead down and to the next ridge line, facing, and overlooking the spot where we had been for three days.

There were two bunkers cut in to the top of the hill, one bunker facing the direction of the ascent trail, and one facing down the trail in the direction of our previous NDP. The one facing the ascent trail had an American Claymore in front of its berm. I fragged the first bunker and someone else fragged the second.



Our medic Doc Arsenault found a small amount of fresh blood. We milled about on that site for twenty minutes or so. I would learn later that the appropriate thing to do at that time would have been to request a few 105 rounds be walked down the escape trail, and then make a non direct RIF around the escape trail in the direction of the enemy withdrawal. That didn't happen.

SSG Lockett was told to form up a patrol to follow the escaping enemy. The team was picked and SGT Marks put me on point, he wouldn't be going himself. Kenny objected saying that we needed an experienced point man and said he would take it. The order of march was Kenny (on point) and six others including SSG Lockett, his RTO, the Hispanic guy, who had walked my slack earlier, and me. I would be "Drag," the last in line. The remainder of the platoon would remain to blow the claymore in place. The patrol moved cautiously down the trail, perhaps three hundred yards. The first five men disappeared around a "dog leg" in the trail, then, all hell broke loose. I estimate three AKs firing one magazine each (about ninety rounds) with the simultaneous detonation of an American claymore. As abruptly as it had started, the firing stopped. The man in front of me and I hadn't even gone to prone when SSG Lockett ran back to my location. He made a brief comment and fell dead from rifle wounds in the front of his body. The young Mexican-American and I were moving forward when an E-5 came hobbling back the trail; he had been hit twice in one leg. He told us that the radio had been destroyed and the machine gun had been dropped, and that Longmire was down. He said that he would be all right and that we were to run back to the CP location and bring help. He cautioned us that we should start yelling that we were "coming in" about halfway back. He said that Longmire would need plasma, told us again, that he would be all right and to go and to hurry. We followed his instructions.

We found the remainder of the platoon where we had left them, gave our report, and were instructed to lead the way back to the ambush site. About halfway back SGT Marks, walking third, gave the command to recon by fire, left and right. We did so. Upon arriving at the spot where SSG Lockett had fallen, we found three wounded men - the young SGT who had sent us for help, another man with leg wounds, and a young man I now believe to have been SSG Lockett's RTO, "Calvin" Bryant. He had taken two AK round in the front center of his "steel pot." I later learned that the rounds had followed the curvature of his helmet and exited the rear, plowing two furrows in his scalp, from the top to the back of his head. Doc Arsenault attended the wounded. We moved forward around the "dog leg." We came upon Kenny to the right of the trail about twenty-five to thirty yards from where I had been at the onset of the ambush. He was alive but only barely. He had apparently been in the primary kill zone of the claymore. Men moved forward around me to secure the front. All that I could do for my best friend was to offer any comfort I could. We talked and he asked me to hold him up "so he could die like a man." I lifted his torso, but he couldn't take it. He told me he couldn't breathe and asked that I put him back down. Kenny Longmire died there in the arms of someone who loved him.

The area was secured. Medevacs took our wounded, to include the young man with the magic steel pot. We carried Kenny and James Lockett to a log bird for extraction.

*KIA:*

*SGT Kent Longmire (Tour began 9/2/1969)*  
*SSG James Lockett (Tour began 11/5/1969)*

WIA:

*Lines: 45, 94, 108, 110, 112 (John Harper was one wounded and Lorne Trainor went to 85<sup>th</sup> Evac Hospital - was wounded in both legs)*

April 21, 1970. At 0830, first platoon finds a fresh bunker at YD 482145. Third platoon 1000 is at YD 475153; 1241 they sighted an NVA 50 meters behind the platoon. They also found a trail with recent NVA activity. 1445 - third platoon (ambush) moving toward the rest of the platoon at YD 476134 saw movement and received AK fire. They returned fire with LAW, small arms, and grenades. There were no friendly casualties. They found one dead NVA the next day, killed by M-16 fire. Contact had been at YD 477134 and the NVA was found at YD 475135. 1525 - third platoon is located at YD 473137. ARA engaging enemy bunkers at YD 477133 accidentally wounds line #83. Second platoon 1628 - found a command detonated explosive at LZ YD 480147. Wire ran to a bunker.

April 22, 1970. 1235 - Third platoon had movement at YD 475135 - fired 3 LAW and found a blood trail. 1900 - Found a fresh grave of an NVA probably killed by the LAW earlier. The next day, they found another grave of an NVA probably killed by small arms during the same engagement. More discoveries: another grave at YD 477134 on Apr 25 - probably another from the above engagement - the NVA was killed by small arms and fragments (perhaps LAW); later on the 25th, they found one more grave. This man may have been a Chinese advisor since he was six feet tall and weighed about 190 pounds. A few months later, there are reports of a blond Caucasian in the 2/506<sup>th</sup> Inf journal carrying an M-60 machine gun - perhaps a Russian advisor?

April 23, 1970. Third platoon 0920 - finds a blood trail and an RPD machine gun. At 1033 they find an NVA rucksack on a trail to the river at YD 476133. The Rao Trang is due south of Charlie Company and it runs eastward, flowing into the Song Bo.

April 24, 1970. The location of supporting artillery if needed is: 105mm artillery at FSB Ripcord; 155 and 105 at Granite (these are within supporting range of Charlie Company); Alpha and Bravo companies make an air move to FSB Maureen. SGT English of first platoon is killed by a grenade at 0040. It appears that he heard movement and tossed a grenade but it bounced back off some vegetation and detonated, killing him. Third platoon 1845 - hears 60mm mortar vicinity YD 473124 - calls artillery and hears secondary explosions.

April 25, 1970 - May 4, 1970. Activity continues in Charlie Company's area although there are no major contacts. *On the 25<sup>th</sup>, Bravo Company had a significant engagement YD 438124. Four US KIA and several wounded. Several NVA killed.*

I spent a few days as TOC officer on the current firebase (probably Rakkasan). I was company XO and the battalion commander needed someone on the firebase. Duties included receiving communications from the field companies and responding to their needs.

26<sup>th</sup> - D Company is on Rakkasan. Mark Smith thinks the NVA are crossing the river at YD 463138 and YD 457143 and moving toward YD 467155. There are several hilltop and ridgeline features nearby that would make good defensive positions for the NVA. First platoon 0109 - has movement and blows a claymore. Negative results the next morning. It would be easy to see how the platoons' nerves would be on edge because of enemy sightings and signs seen for several consecutive days. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, first platoon has a wounded soldier taken to Charlie, 326 Med but there is no description of the circumstances or severity. Chuck Kerr recalled that about that time there was a man whose hand was badly cut as a result of an accident with a machete. He was cutting thick bamboo to harvest water from inside the chambers of the plants stalk. He would have been evacuated as a tactical emergency due to the severity of his injury. Early on the 28<sup>th</sup>, first platoon 0437 - line #153 wakes up and thinks he hears movement. He shoots line # 49 in the side and arm accidentally. The wounded man may be David Causey who was taken to 85<sup>th</sup> Evac on April 28<sup>th</sup>. 0845 - line #15 falls down and cannot breathe and is medevac'd. (Since April 20<sup>th</sup>, first platoon has had a rough go and probably needs some stand-down time. They have had frequent enemy contact and lost three non-commissioned officers, one WIA, one accidental shooting, and one injury requiring medevac). On the 29<sup>th</sup>, third platoon 1552 - found fresh bunkers at YD 468151 – a prior site of Charlie Company NDP. The next day at 1840, they - heard mortar firing from YD 475165. *Other companies are also finding enemy forces. May 1<sup>st</sup>, Alpha Company had contact – resulting in several KIA and WIA.* The next day at 1105, the company employed artillery on a bunker complex at YD 465161. Charlie Company flies to Camp Evans and stands down on May 4.

March and April 1970 were months of heavy fighting and frequent contacts with the enemy and resulted in high losses of US soldiers. The steady loss of men may have had a cumulative effect on some soldiers as they reasonably expected the future months to be a continuation of the last months. This may not have been the case but it did cause several men to consider their options of doing whatever it took to survive. Ironically, reenlistment was an option where men could sign up for a longer term of service but in a safer job farther from combat. Buzz Buzzell and three others decided to reenlist to get out of the field. Zippo apparently did not care for those who chose to do this and had reenlistees sent out of the field ASAP. [Most likely he did not want their thinking to influence others] Buzz went home and got a 30 day leave. He extended his visit an extra 15 days (AWOL) but did return. It turned out that he was assigned to helicopter sheet metal repair at Camp Eagle.

## **Chapter 7 Texas Star (continued). Rakkasan, Kathryn, Ripcord, and Bastogne. (May 5, 1970 to July 30, 1970)**

***Casualties: 1 Killed in Action and 17 Wounded in Action. Seven enemy killed.***

May 5, 1970 – May 9, 1970. Charlie company moves to FSB Rakkasan and has the mission of providing fire base security.

*Delta Company moves to FSB Maureen (YD 429122).* On the 7<sup>th</sup>, third platoon 0938 moves to reinforce Delta Company on Maureen. Delta has 6 KIA and 9 WIA. 1730 – they find miscellaneous ammunition including 60mm mortar rounds at YD 434124. Third platoon is attached to Delta Company temporarily. On the 8<sup>th</sup> they receive some small arms fire with negative results.

Some more detailed information provided by Jerry McGee about the time his platoon was attached to Delta Company – May 8 or May 9: “3rd platoon of Charlie Company had been attached to Delta Company after Delta was hit yet again. We had been walking point for Delta Company when we were suddenly ordered to secure a hill for an LZ. Engineers were on the way to blow the LZ on a hilltop that sat just under a taller hill that might have been a better choice. The engineers were coming in on a Chinook and the supplies were on a Huey just behind them. We had to rush to beat the choppers to the location. We arrived at the LZ and were checking the area and positioning ourselves around the hilltop when the choppers came in. The lead chopper immediately took fire from the saddle of the hill to our front. The fire came from the right side of a saddle on the ridge line. I could see muzzle flashes from two weapons coming from the foliage. We returned fire and I extended a LAW and fired at the spot where I saw the muzzle flashes. I was right on target with the direction but a little high in the trajectory with the rocket going right through the trees. The firing stopped immediately. I don’t know if it was the rocket or the Chinook shuddering and falling to the right of our location that ended the fire. The Huey was still in sight and offered another target, which leads me to believe it was the rocket that ended the contact. Had the Chinook come straight down several of our men would have been injured or worse.

We quickly organized the platoon to check out the top of the other hill, something that should have been done before the helicopters came to our location. We went up the higher hill and found a trail that went along the top of the ridge. We checked down the trail to the right and found nothing. We then went back up the trail to the left of where we came in and saw that the trail went into a bamboo thicket. Terrible Tom and I volunteered to check it out. With Tom in the lead we decided to go through the bamboo rather than follow the trail that went first right and then left. We could see that the bamboo was not deep. We got side by side and on his signal burst through the bamboo. Fortunately there was no one on the other side. Fortunate because my canteen caught on a bamboo pole and I was delayed and distracted upon my entry into the most perfect bunker complex ever encountered. The ground under the trees was scraped clean. The tree canopy made a perfect cover from the air. Around the perimeter was a bamboo wall. The trench that went from bunker to bunker was covered with openings for entry and exit. In the middle was a large hut that was empty. The latrine was a hole covered with poles that offered only a hole in the middle for use by the soldiers. There was no running water but the complex offered all the other comforts of home in the jungle.”

May 9, 1970. Back at Rakkasan, at 0813 - During firebase defense rehearsal, SGT Noli had wounds from a claymore and is taken to 85<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital. Third platoon 1053 - reports CH-47 at YD 442120 receives RPD fire from 300m [this must be the same incident mentioned by Jerry McGee above]. CH-47 goes down at YD 480148. Second platoon moves from Rakkasan to help secure the CH-47 and returns a few hours later. At 1330, third platoon finds two bunkers at YD 445120 with signs of recent use. 1507 – they receive some AK fire with no injuries.

Charlie Company moves to Eagle Beach the morning of May 10<sup>th</sup> and remains there through the 11<sup>th</sup>. *D Company loses a platoon leader on the 10th.*

Back to work on May 12. Charlie moves from Eagle Beach to Rakkasan to Maureen (YD 429122). Perhaps Maureen was inactive other than the LZ?

Mark Hendrickson: “After a couple of days of stand-down, we came back to Jack [may have meant to say FB Rakkasan] before we were taken out and combat assaulted into an old FSB – Maureen. I remember going into Maureen and being told by the door gunner that the LZ was “hot.” A couple of Cobras preceded us in and were shooting their “flechettes” and rockets. If there was someone shooting at us as we came in, I was unable to tell. Also, sometimes the noise of the Huey’s rotors could sound similar to the familiar “clack, clack, clack of an AK 47.”

Chuck Kerr remembered the descent from FB Maureen: “We were warned that this was a hot LZ and to get off the top and down the side of the abandon fire base ASAP. After exiting the helicopters we walked down what seemed to be a very large rock pile, perhaps a hundred yards long, maybe longer. It looked as though the rocky top of the fire base had been blown and the resulting debris had been pushed over the side we were descending. As we reached the bottom of the rock slide/pile three 60mm mortars impacted at the top of the rocks where we had started our descent. We were spread out to the extent that two back azimuths could be shot to the sound of the rounds leaving the tube. ARA was called in on the coordinates, they reported secondary explosions.

2034 – The company reported a mortar tube 600 meters from YD 427118 but it turned out to be artillery from FSB Kathryn (YD 468111). Zippo has a conversation with NVA on his push (radio frequency). Obscenities are traded! *Alpha Company is on Rakkasan.* For the next two weeks, Charlie Company will be working the area in the vicinity of FSB Maureen. This area is very hilly with some peaks near 1,000 meters and is south of the Rao Trang River and about nine km south of FSB Granite.

May 13, 1970. At 1115, third platoon finds a trail recently used with markings. 1218 – they are in contact with two NVA at YD 424119. They find a blood trail and an AK rifle. At 1256, they spotted four to five NVA. They engaged with small arms, artillery, ARA, and LAW and found a blood trail. 1345 - YD 424119 – third platoon found one dead NVA. Adam Garcia was wounded by an M79 fragment in his hand. He was extracted by



a pink team and taken to FB Rakkasan and then on to 85<sup>th</sup> Evac Hospital. At 1534 the company reports a mortar tube 600m West of YD 427118. Artillery is employed.

May 14, 1970. General company mission: Turn west along ridge line between FSB Maureen (YD 429122) and FSB Kelly (YD 404119). At 0950, the company put in an air strike with 6 cans "A" bombs, twelve 500 pound bombs and 2,400 rounds of 20mm. Third platoon 1523 - found trail recently used by 25-30 enemy at YD 423120.

May 15, 1970. At 0500 the second platoon LP hears movement, fires its weapons and pulls back. The other LP thinks they are enemy and engages. Two men below are injured by friendly fire (claymores). Both are sent to C Med and then 85th Evacuation Hospital. Time of incident – 0545 at YD 427118.

Here are the details, as Mark Hendrickson recalls them, before, during and after this unfortunate and tragic event. Bruce Aaron, Rick Marshall, and Ronald Marks might also remember this event.

“I had only been with Charlie Company for about three weeks when this incident took place. I had originally been given a squad about a week to ten days after arriving in the field with Charlie Co. At some point, SSG Reid arrived in Charlie Co. and took over my squad, since [he was senior and] I was the most junior squad leader. As far as I remember he had been involved in a “Vietnamization” program most of his time in country and for some reason was assigned to a line company. I remember his being a very nice and likable person and he seemed like he knew what he was doing.

At this particular time, first and second platoons were working together. The weather was very rainy, cold and we were pretty much soaked in before, during and after this event. I remember that we were having trouble with our radios because of the wet weather. Our hand sets were put into plastic bags to protect them as much as possible from the humidity but this was not totally efficient.

We were in our combined NDP when we received word that our squad was to go out on ambush. Besides myself, there was SSG Reid, Bruce Aaron, Rick Marshall, a guy named Biggs and I think “Little Joe” Cartwright. I do not remember any of the others. I remember there was a trail that went through the NDP. We left on ambush through one of the NDP positions down a small muddy incline. The people at the position did not make any effort to tell us that first platoon had already sent a squad out on ambush in this direction. Why nothing was said we will never know. We went down the trail for about 400 to 500 meters, as best I can remember, and set up our ambush just off the trail. It was already pretty dark by the time we had set out our claymores got into position for the night.

The radios were only working intermittently that night due to the humidity. We would send in our situation reports – two squelches – and have to repeat them a couple of times before the CP would acknowledge them, so if anything had been said about the other squad blowing their ambush and heading back to the NDP, I am not sure that whoever

was on watch at the time got that message. Even if a message had been received we did not know that the first platoon ambush had gone out on the same trail as we had used.

At some point I remember being awakened by the person next to me, who was on watch, and hearing him say that there was movement to our right front. The others were awakened and were all on alert as we heard the movement approaching our position. A first claymore was detonated, and then a number of others followed rapidly. I was in the process of getting ready to throw my grenades. Fortunately no one had fired their M16's. Then, someone yelled out, "GI, GI..."

I think that the other ambush patrol thought they had reached the platoon NDP. We still had no idea where these guys had come from or exactly what was going on. It soon became apparent that we had blown our ambush on our own people. We finally got a medic out and as day broke. I remember seeing SGT Mauney against a tree with his legs blown off and a few others with lesser wounds from the shrapnel and steel balls of the claymores lying around the general area. The weather finally broke enough to allow a medevac to come in. I do not remember how many were taken out. A couple of days later we received word that SGT Mauney had died of his wounds.

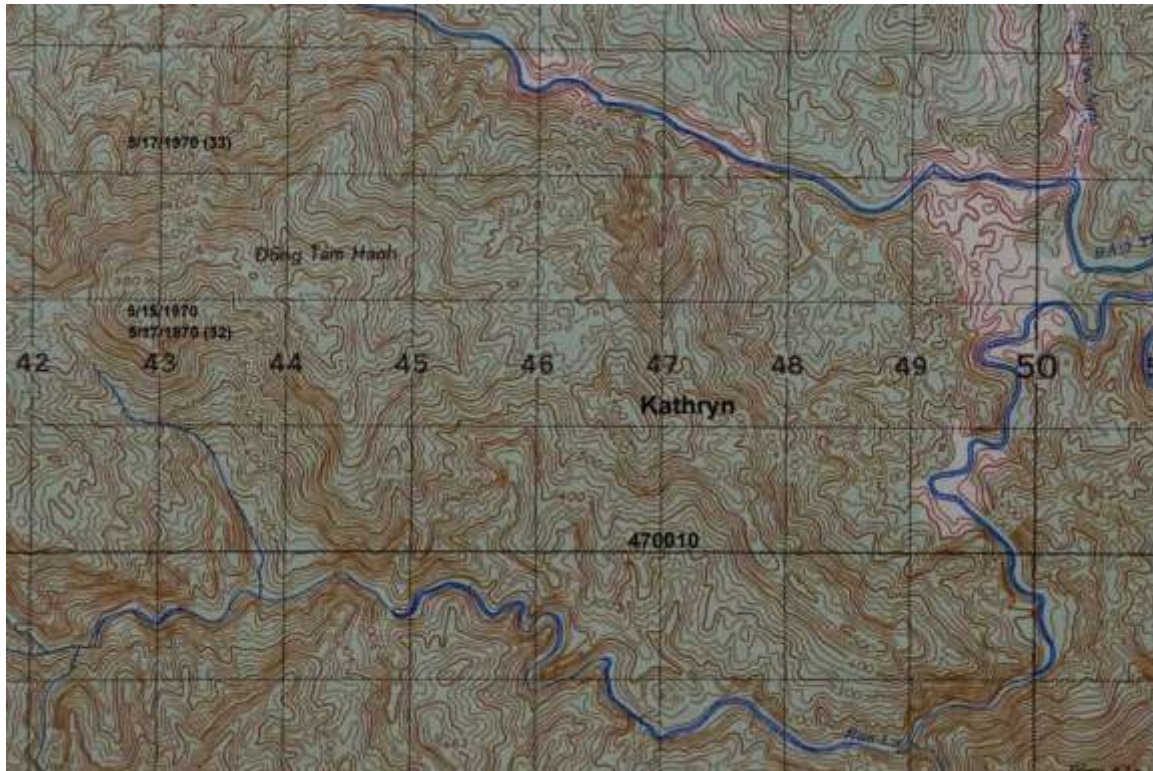
I think that SSG Reid was immediately transferred out of the Company. Looking back I do not think it was in any way his fault or that anyone else was to blame. There were just a number of things happened in a sequence that lead to a very tragic event. I also remember SGT Marks when we got back to the NDP that morning asking why it was always the sergeants that got hit. I did not understand what he was talking about until I read your book and saw that a number of sergeants had been lost in a short period just prior to my arriving in Charlie Company."

Chuck Kerr amplifies the treatment and evacuation of the wounded, "There had been a shortage of medics in the 1st of the 506th for some time. I had previous medical experience in civilian life, and had mentioned this to Doc Arsenault, one of the company's veteran medics. At his insistence I was issued an aid bag and was on IJT (in the jungle training) status; he and other veteran medics provided guidance and advice regarding the medics job in the field. The May 15th incident was my first casualty experience. I was the medic referred to in Mark Hendrickson's account. I was awakened by LT Fido Martin, first platoon leader. He and I and a support squad went to the site of the incident. There isn't much that can be added to Mark's account except to describe the weather further and the extraction of the casualties.

We were so socked in that it took several attempts by various Dust Off crews to get to our position. The first two or three attempts to extract our wounded were unsuccessful. Visibility was zero. The successful attempt was made by one very fine pilot and crew. These guys followed valleys, flying nap of the earth, to our general location. When they got close enough for us to hear them, LT Martin gave them back azimuths from his compass and talked them in closer using the radio. We cut long bamboo poles and tied two together, tied a trip flare to the end, ignited the flare and held it above our position. The medevac found our marker and extracted two wounded with a basket. They returned the way they had come in, nap of the earth flying down valleys to the low lands. Any

amount of praise for the dust off pilots and crew would be insufficient to recognize what they accomplished under extreme conditions.

Combat is very difficult and it is not possible in hindsight to sense the situation before the two ambush patrols departed. It is likely that the difficulty of coordinating the efforts of two platoons working in close proximity, contributed to this very unfortunate incident.



Map 6

*SP4 Alfred Haun, 410-86-6553 – frag wounds, right arm and left leg  
SGT Gerald L. Mauney, 587-30-7903 (lost both legs) and died on May 16, 1969.*

*Four other men with minor wounds. Harry Baker may be among this group.*

*Alpha company is on Rakkasan. FSB Veghel (YD 487065) hit with 4 US KIA and 30 WIA. Several NVA are killed, perhaps more.*

A mortar FO, last name Thorne reports he is seventeen years old. He must have had second thoughts about his line of work. Investigation reveals that he is seventeen and is pulled from the field (soldiers had to be 18 years or older to be in combat).

May 16, 1970. Third platoon 1400 - YD 423121 sees one NVA and engages with small arms and artillery and captures one AK-47. This was the AK that Zippo carried for the

remainder of his tour. When asked by LTC Porter why he wanted to carry the enemy weapon he explained that having either initial, or return fire, from the distinctive sounding AK would have a demoralizing effect on any NVA and could cause them to hesitate and question who was shooting at them. Previously Zippo had carried a CAR 15 which he passed down to Johnny "Spud" Smith, his RTO.

Chuck Kerr: "Several weeks later Spud gave me the opportunity to shoot that cute little CAR. I liked it, a lot, even though when the tracers got out to about a hundred fifty yards they would "cork screw," forming a cone of bullets as they went further down range."

C company reports urgent need of resupply.

May 17, 1970. Third platoon 1023 - has contact at YD 423121. The observation post (OP) west of third platoon saw five to six NVA and engaged them with small arms. Third platoon reinforces their OP with machinegun and small arms. The enemy returns fire with AK's. Third platoon employs LAW. Stephen Smith received a gunshot wound to the shoulder and another man is injured in a fall, rushing to reinforce. Jerry McGee recalls 'that there had been several days of rain and that Cico Rodriguez was in the OP and spotted several NVA advancing toward his position. Rodriguez fired and moved back to the platoon NDP. Stephen Smith, Jerry McGee, Cico Rodriguez, and Booker Merritt returned to engage the NVA where the NVA had been seen earlier when Stephen Smith was shot in the shoulder. Jerry McGee covered the withdrawal of the other three men until he was almost out of ammunition. Fortunately, SFC Foronda and others arrived to secure the area. A couple of hours later, the first platoon point man was wounded while moving in the area of contact.

Stephen Smith and the other man are placed in a basket for medevac. During the extraction, the chopper takes fire and snags the cable in a tree, causing Smith and the other man to fall about 35 feet, aggravating their injuries.

Second platoon had some men at the platoon NDP and some were moving down a trail nearby. At 1319 - YD 423121, the point man comes upon an enemy point man. Small arms fire is exchanged and US has leg and arm wounds. Willem Clous receives five wounds - two in the right leg, two in the left leg, and one in the shoulder. His platoon uses a poncho as a litter and drags him away from the contact through a thicket of vegetation. The weather is soaked in. The company reports Dustoff 999 (a medevac helicopter) completes the rescue under very difficult conditions. The chopper took some small arms rounds from the NVA and took a while to reel in Willem who was placed in a basket and who was the only wounded at this time. Bill Clous had been in country a little over two months.

Just a short story that relates to the above from Mark Hendrickson:

"When I arrived out in the field with first platoon I was put in a position in the NDP and met PFC Clous for the first time. He kind of showed me how things were done during my first few days in the field. That "training" consisted of everything from how to dig in, stand watch, be silent, make coffee and/or hot chocolate, heat up the c-rations (both with

chunks of C-4 explosives) and a quick course on the use of a P-38. He was also the one who showed me how to get leeches off your body.

As I remember, he had only been out in the field for a couple of weeks or so, but he seemed like an old veteran to me. After all these years I could remember this guy and the first impression he gave me of life in the jungle. I could remember sitting with him, keeping him down as low as possible during the artillery strike and trying to console him with his wounds as he waited for the dust-off, but I could not remember his name until I read your story. I so am glad that I am finally able to put a name to the person in my memories and hope that he recovered from his wounds and is leading a healthy, prosperous life.”

Mark Smith also recalls that day:

“As we moved with Raider's Platoon on point there was a meeting engagement with NVA caught unaware by the quiet approach of the platoon. In the ensuing gunfight, a bullet nearly ripped Raider's [Stephen Smith] arm from his shoulder but he was back up and led his men until the enemy faded away into the jungle mist. Then I heard the shout as I moved forward, “Raider is hit.” We got to him and he had taken on that pallor I knew too well as the onset of shock. “Snap out of it Ranger, it ain't that bad.” I knew if I did not get him out of there, my good man was in deep trouble. I called for a medevac.

I knew that once the dust-off was on station they could hoist my two wounded up into the bird and get them out to the hospital ship REPOSE. The greatest men in Vietnam, with the exception of infantrymen of course, were dust-off pilots and their brave crews but that day dust off 'TRIPLE NINER' was having a bad day and my favorite airborne ranger was wounded. I should have known something was amiss when the pilot asked “Is that LZ secure”? My main OH-6 pilot “Squirrel” came on the net and read the dust-off the riot act; “Look pal there is no LZ and I and these gunships you brought with you will do our best to cover you while you hoist the wounded up.” Then he asked me if my mountainside PZ was secure. I exploded. “In case you did not get the word, pal, there are no totally secure places in this country but I and mine, along with your cobras and Squirrel will do our best to make you feel comfy. Now drop that jungle penetrator.” He did drop the penetrator and right after my two soldiers had entered the uppermost branches of those tall Mahogany trees, an NVA on another ridge fired on the dust-off. The pilot dropped the nose and dragged Raider and the other man through the branches until the cable snapped and they rode that yellow penetrator a hundred feet back to the ground. They hit the ground as if they had been sitting in a falling chair. That ride down would eventually cost Stephen Smith a leg, bad back, and probably a bad dream or two over the years. One thing was certain - the twenty year old hard-charging airborne ranger who went up on that penetrate - “Never mind Zip, I can walk back to Evans. I am OK and I am not taking that ride again.” I just looked at him; “Shut up Raider.”

I contacted LTC Porter “Razorback” [the battalion commander] and we arranged for the same pilot to get another bird and come back out. As he settled into a hover again he asked, if somewhat sheepishly, if the PZ was secure and I just directed him to look out



his left window. "That young man with the M-60 Machine Gun is Harlan Wright from Harlan County Kentucky and if you break this basket off or refuse to drop it to us, he will shoot you down." I heard Squirrel say, "Best listen, he will do it" and with a wide eyed Raider looking through the lattice of the basket as it made a swinging circle as it ascended, dust-off accomplished his mission. The only medevac who ever showed less than absolute courage redeemed himself within an hour and saved two lives. "Zippo, sorry about that first pass." He flew for us and around us after that, risking his life to save others, never ever again hesitating or dragging troops through the trees. He redeemed himself in spades and we never saw Raider again until we started having reunions a few years ago. I missed him every day personally and professionally. His father a serving naval officer sent me a thank you letter and let me know how Raider was. His was the only such letter I ever received. Stephen Smith came from good stock and did not let his country, his men or his father and I down. What more can you say about a soldier?

Wounded:

*SSG Stephen R. Smith, line #12, right shoulder wound*

*line #96, back injury due to fall (while being extracted by jungle penetrator, the penetrator caught in a tree and snapped; he fell 35 feet aggravating his injury)*

*PFC William T. Clous, line #83.*

May 18, 1970. Third platoon 1440 - receives two mortar rounds at YD 427123. The company employs FAC, ARA, and a pink team and gets a secondary explosion. 16 replacements are in the rear ready to come to field. These included Mark Taylor who would become the senior aid man for the company and Gary Keedwell who would be third platoon's medic until he fulfilled his field commitment. Field strength is 67. The company requests a medic to replace Banks. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, third platoon 1535 - receives four 82mm rounds as a log bird arrives at YD 428118. Stanley Richtarik received a purple heart for action about this time. *On the same day, there is a sapper attack on Bravo Co on Rakkasan.* At 1730, Charlie Company reports a white team receives small arms from six to seven enemy as well as .51 cal fire. At 1815, the company reports an enemy mortar at YD 417117 and .51 cal at YD 415118. The .51 caliber are indications of larger size enemy forces and may be part of the buildup that hit the Ripcord area in July. Field strength is about 61. This is a low number as losses have not been made up by new replacements yet. *There was a temporary "cease fire" 18-19 May in honor of Buddha's birthday.*

The late 1960's and early 1970's were turbulent times. Social issues that had been suppressed boiled to the surface and included minority rights, women's rights, sexual freedom, and the use of drugs. Minority rights and drugs were two items that impacted the US Army in Viet Nam and may have increased in intensity from 1969 to 1970. As an observer of these societal changes, I was either oblivious or not far from it. I spent four years in the military cocoon at West Point where the common drug was alcohol and

where there may have been a handful of blacks among the 3,000 corps of cadets. With regard to black soldiers, I think the Army generally treated all soldiers fairly equally although the white leaders did not have much empathy with black soldiers because they came from different backgrounds and different cultures.

Ron Williams' background probably had elements that were similar to some other black soldiers. He grew up in Washington, DC, the son of a single mother. He described the hopelessness and resulting raw aggression that was common among young black males at the time. He said the only way he saw to get the things he wanted was to take them. This involved guns and robberies. He was caught in one offense and later escaped a more serious armed attempt. Ron said he realized that staying in his neighborhood and continuing this lifestyle would lead to his demise. Ron and the Army met each other's needs. Ron needed a paycheck and to get out of DC; the Army needed more soldiers for Viet Nam. A judge agreed to rescind Ron's arrest records if he would enlist – and he did.

Ron had friends in Charlie Company but tended to hang around other black soldiers when he could. Battalion training at Camp Evans and trips to Eagle Beach were such opportunities. Ron said that most of the other black soldiers in Charlie Company had similar backgrounds and stories. Their dilemma was that the Army was one of the few job opportunities available but the Army was also a dangerous occupation at the time, especially being in the infantry in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne.

Some black soldiers wore signs of solidarity such as a black cross around the neck. Some read that they were being used in a white man's war against their yellow brothers. Most probably did not feel that their society would take care of them after the war as the country had done for the largely white World War II veterans. Despite some allegiance to black solidarity, Ron felt that the black soldiers in Charlie Company did their jobs well and supported their fellow soldiers. I agree with him.

Mark Smith instituted some measures to treat all soldiers equally and to build cohesion. Since some black soldiers had medical permission not to shave with a razor, Smith allowed all men to go without shaving while in the field. In the rear area, all soldiers had to have haircuts, shave, and look sharp. Ironically, race and drug problems seemed to come from the club systems in the rear designed to improve soldier morale. Mark Smith created a Charlie Company club and had barbecues in the company area to isolate his men from trouble makers.

Mark Smith recalls an incident related to race: "Few recall that the infamous "Camp Evans Eight," black soldiers who rebelled and barricaded themselves in a barracks armed to the teeth, were initially, the "Camp Evans Nine." As we prepared to head to the chopper pad to deploy on an operation, SGT Marks and Top Rollins reported we had a soldier missing - Austin. I asked if we had any idea of his status and was told they thought he was in the barracks with the black militant wannabes. I was angry but also a tad amused because physically Austin made an unlikely black crusader with his reddish blond hair and blue-grey eyes. I headed down to the barracks which was surrounded by MP's as LTC Holt [battalion commander], MAJ Wild Wes Ford [battalion executive

officer] and the other soldiers' commander tried to negotiate them out. I stomped past them as they watched behind the sand bags and snatched open the door on the barracks which wild Wes said might be booby-trapped. I thanked my special forces pal for telling me but I already had the door open. "Austin, are you in here?" I heard someone yell "Oh shit" and the back door slammed as my man fled back to the company area. I eyed the others and one said "Zippo, we ain't from your company." I just said "Men you truly need to think about this because Leavenworth prison and not LBJ (Long Binh Jail) await you." Then I turned and walked out past a stunned LTC Holt and the MP's.

When I returned to the company area, I heard the troops telling Austin that Harlan Wright had been setting up his M-60 to take out the barracks. Austin smiled at Harlan and asked, "Would you have shot me Harlan?" Harlan smiled back, "Yep." End of conversation. At the pad I put my arm around Austin. "My man, you make a truly lousy looking black revolutionary." He just said "sorry Zip" and got on the chopper with his squad. Later I got a message from the headquarters asking if I planned any action against Austin. I just replied that he was in the field and doing his best to slay the enemy and there would be no action. I was stunned that anyone would wish punishment against someone after he had followed his commander's orders. The other eight went to jail and entered the lore spewed by the radical Left about the Vietnam war.

May 20, 1970 – May 22, 1970. The 20<sup>th</sup> is quiet and on the 21<sup>st</sup>, the company 0920 - reports significant override on company frequency. On the 22d, 1000 - first platoon and second platoon are conducting patrol and surveillance operations.

1045 – A pink team is on station

1306 - PZ from Kathryn via CH-47? This may refer to C Company, 1/501<sup>st</sup> Inf.

*1/327 Inf at Bastogne*

*1/501 Inf at Kathryn*

*2/502 Inf at Veghel*

*2/506 Inf at Ripcord*

May 23, 1970. 0905, third platoon is at (YD 421133). 1240 – they receive mortar fire from YD 415117. During the evening of May 23/24 Firebase Kathryn is attacked. Five men are killed and 22 are wounded. Alpha company is defending the firebase.

*CPL Alan Harry Gross, killed by incoming rockets and mortars on FSB Kathryn. Tour began 5/2/1970) Wall – 10W, 085. Listed as C Co in Coffelt. 10 men from C, 1/506 on FSB Kathryn in mid May (probably some sort of tasking or security detail). Perhaps one of the 30 man provisional platoons from the rear that did work on FSB's.*

*Glen Krebs, is wounded on FSB Kathryn. Robert Hickman received purple heart.*

May 24, 1970 – May 27, 1970. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, third platoon 1145 - receives 82mm mortar rounds at YD 421132 from YD 405140. Artillery is called. *Note: Alpha company is on*

*FSB Kathryn.* The 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> appear to be quiet days although a medevac was hit by an RPG on the 26<sup>th</sup> and went down with the loss of four men from C/326 Medical Battalion. Locations are a few hundred meters from the previous day. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, second platoon 1025 found bunkers at YD 406132. At 1039 – they are in contact with the enemy. 1105 - FAC (Bilk 31) is on station with fighters – an airstrike goes in at grid YD 417117. At 1200, the company is sweeping the area and employing artillery on bunkers at YD 409131. At 1330, they found a bunker with six fighting positions and miscellaneous ammunition and explosives. There were no signs of recent activity. MG Wright departs as commanding general and is replaced by General Hennessey.

May 28, 1970. About mid day, Charlie air assaults to a location a few hundred meters from FSB Kathryn – it appears that they had to move between 500 meters and 1,500 meters to reach the PZ. The air move covered about six kilometers: Sapper attack on Kathryn or "FSB rehearsal?" Several sapper KIA. 1145 - first platoon and second platoon arrive on an LZ at YD 405132. They had to check out bunkers around the LZ. 1814 - partial journal entry says C Co found ... at YD 471109.

May 29, 1970. At 2019, the third platoon ambush at YD 482092 sights enemy soldiers and calls mortar fire on YD 488092 and artillery on YD 487096. At 2110, they report movement and employ artillery. *2/506<sup>th</sup> Inf is on Ripcord [site of a major battle in July].*

May 30, 1970 – June 1, 1970. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, the company is constructing an LZ in the vicinity of YD 465094. There is an air strike at 0930 in the vicinity of YD 450115. At 2005, Charlie Company reports they believe the majority of enemy are south of the Rao Lau River and can move to FSB Kathryn in one evening. *Alpha Company is on Kathryn.* At 1715 the next day, first and second platoons find a large bunker with two 82mm rounds used in last 7 days. On June 1, the company field strength is 63.

Facing life and death each day caused some soldiers to get creative. Mark Smith recalls one man who decided to become a pacifist: "The pacifist decided he could not kill so I took his weapon and grenades away and gave him a D-handled shovel to carry to be used for digging night positions in the rock-hard I Corps earth. After three days of fear and ridicule from the other troops he was no longer a pacifist and begged for the return of his weapon. I gave them back and he no longer complained about killing the enemy. If you sent an erring soldier to the rear he fell into a world geared to defend refusing to fight "in a senseless" war. You had to keep him beside you until one day he would morph into a hunter/soldier like the rest.

June 2-4, 1970. Company strength is now 80; they must have picked up new soldiers at Camp Evans. Charlie leaves the field on the second and does range training at Evans on the third. The fourth is spent at Eagle Beach. At 0500 on the fourth, Camp Evans receives five, 122mm rockets. At 1053, the brigade commander states that 1/506 is to relieve 2/506 on Ripcord 8 June and to relieve 1/501 on Kathryn on June 14.

June 5-7, 1970 is spent training at Camp Evans. I believe Evans and other base camps were serviced to some extent by Pacific Architects and Engineers (PA&E). They did

contract work for the US to a much smaller degree than do the Army's contractors in Iraq today. PA&E probably constructed the sea huts and serviced the generators that provided some power at the base camps.

Camp Evans was full of dogs, many having been adopted by various units. I believe our support platoon leader had a pig as a pet (I understand someone killed his pig later over a disagreement of some sort). Some other group had a small monkey. Every dog that I saw around Camp Evans had a curly tail. Either the humidity affected the dogs or there was a major stud dog a few years back that passed on his genes to all the succeeding dogs. The rear was another world. In order to reduce the chance of a soldier getting rabies, the medical staff required all dogs on Evans to be vaccinated. I had the task of taking the company jeep to Hue / Phu Bai to get the dog its shots. It was a nice drive and an opportunity to see a bit of the country but seemed incongruous that we would do such a thing when soldiers were fighting and dying just a few miles away.

As executive officer, I recollect going to 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai to check on wounded soldiers. It was difficult for the company rear to get feedback about where the soldiers may have been sent and if they would be returning to the company. Sometimes they would get moved out of country and we would not be informed. The company did this for two reasons – to be able to send the soldier's personnel effects to his current location and to allow the company to request a replacement for the injured soldier. While driving through the Hue area, I recall seeing young Vietnamese men hanging around the street, smoking cigarettes and riding small scooters. My impression was that they were not dedicated to protecting their country against the North Vietnamese and that it was just a matter of time before the South Vietnamese lost.

June 8, 1970. 1045 - Charlie Company assumes control of Ripcord. The company has 12 starlights (night vision devices). Battalion asks for 20 soldiers from the rear to be on Ripcord permanently. *A Company, D Company, and Recon platoon LZ on Ripcord (probably RIF off). B Company lands on FSB Granite. C Company strength on Ripcord is 84. Ripcord total is 231. Includes 105mm, 155mm artillery, and other detachments.*





June 9, 1970. 0453 – A firebase rehearsal is conducted. *Alpha company has contact with two enemy (vicinity Ripcord).* 1725 – there is an intelligence report of a possible attack on Ripcord with supporting fires from YD 352152.

Mark Hendrickson: “While we were on Ripcord we were constantly getting movement. We went out to set up some trip flares one afternoon. There were no signs of recent activity, but that night our flares went off. It seems that we were told that an attack was possible at any time, but nothing major happened while we were there. I will never understand why we were not used a few weeks later in support of Ripcord. Why was Delta Company, that had already had its butt kicked several times, used instead of us? “

June 10, 1970. 0130 - Ripcord goes to 100% alert. At 0300, two men are injured from H&I fires. 1415 - Alpha Company in the vicinity finds 38 bunkers but not recently used. 1445 - Intel reports likely enemy attack on Hill 902 vicinity YD 336172.

WIA:

*Injured in upper arms during H&I fire on FSB Ripcord 0300. SP4 Major Blacksner and SP4 William Bright – both are sent to Camp Evans.*

June 11, 1970. 0702 – A CH-47 loses power and drops its load on Ripcord, returning safely to Camp Evans. 2130 - Position #23 on NW side has movement about 50 meters

out and engages with grenades and M-79. One US is injured by a shell fragment. Ripcord total strength is 284. C Company total is 101 (probably includes provisional platoon).

*SP4 Roy L. Halpain, wounded in chest by frag from grenade – suspected enemy activity around FB Ripcord perimeter. Sent to Camp Evans later that day.*

June 12, 1970. 1545 - MAJ Klein [battalion operations officer] reports a delay in getting artillery clearance on known enemy locations in the vicinity of Ripcord. 1655 – There is a message from brigade regarding an enemy attack: photo and visual reconnaissance revealed enemy firing positions and bunkers recently constructed in the vicinity of Hill 805 (YD 361188), Hill 902 (YD 337171), Hill 975 (YD 335146), and YD 361164. An agent report says a multi-battalion attack is to be made prior to June 15. 1730 - Alpha Company at YD 353166 is alerted they may be the object of enemy attack. They are digging in. 1745 - C company employs mechanical ambushes around Ripcord. 1755 - Alpha Company receives six to eight mortar rounds. 1846 - Bunker #11 has movement and engages with M-79 and mortars. 1930 - 105mm battery hears enemy outside the wire and engages with firecracker. [Perhaps the NVA are starting to recon the attack on Ripcord about a month in advance.] Third platoon of D Company moved to Ripcord for one day stand-down.

June 13, 1970. 0825 - Alpha Company engages two enemy at YD 357167. 1710 – Alpha Company second platoon finds a Chicom claymore on a trail and a bunker nearby with two enemy bodies, six months old. 1800 - C Company sends out a patrol from Ripcord. Alpha Company finds a US sensor on the ground (perhaps air dropped).

June 14, 1970. 1000 - C Company and D Company 2/506 Inf are OPCON to 1/506 Inf. 1015 - D 2/506th sights one NVA 400m from Ripcord and employs mortar fire. 1018 - C Co, 2/506th Inf had contact at YD 359164 (they switched with A Co, 1/506 Inf). 1334 - C Co, 2/506th Inf sees five enemy in the vicinity of YD 355166 and employs artillery. 1345 - first platoon of D Co, 2/506th Inf will RIF off Ripcord to West. Recon 1/506 Inf will RIF off Ripcord to East in direction of Hill 805. C Co, 1/506 Inf stays on Ripcord and second platoon of D Co, 2/506 Inf reinforces on Ripcord. 1721 – an intelligence agent reports an imminent attack on Ripcord and Hill 902 - noting that A Co, 1/506th Inf had been followed for 5 days by enemy.

*PFC Johnny A. Rubio, 905-60-0518 had frag wound in upper arm – not serious. Perhaps on Ripcord from H&I.*

June 15, 1970. Charlie Company was probably very happy to be leaving Ripcord although FSB Kathryn was not in a totally quiet zone itself. The company air moves from Ripcord to Kathryn start 0630. 1147 - C Company moves off Kathryn to SSE.

Mark Hendrickson: “FSB Kathryn was our AO most of the time I was there. We pulled FSB duty a couple of times on this FSB. One of the toughest things was when we walked off FSB Kathryn – June 15th – 1st time. It seemed like it was straight down. Trying to

maneuver down the side of this mountain with a full rucksack plus all of our other gear was very difficult. On top of being extremely steep we would have to spend the night on this slope. Needless to say, there was no digging in, we would spread out and try and find a tree, stump, rock or anything else to curl up round to keep from sliding down during the night. To make things worse, it seems that when you did slip, which was often, anything you grabbed onto had thorns or stickers. I can remember that when we finally got off that mountain everybody would rush the Doc to have their sores taken care of before they could get infected.”

D Co, 1/506th Infantry defends Kathryn. D Co, 2/506th Infantry defends Ripcord. Kathryn has 261 personnel.



*PFC Michael E. Clark, 280-46-3572, line #75 fell on a stick and punctured a lung. Went to 85th Evacuation Hospital.*

June 16, 1970 – June 19, 1970. The new AO is about 15 km SE of Ripcord. The 16<sup>th</sup> is a quiet day. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, first platoon 1020 - found a bunker with a Chicom machine gun and misc supplies, 3-6 months old. 1315 - YD 475096 they found a hooch for 60 people with bunker, 3-6 months old and some miscellaneous equipment. 1125 – an air strike goes in at YD468099 (24, 500# bombs). The FAC saw two secondary explosions. At 1900, third platoon found seven bunkers at YD 469097 about 30 days old. There are 284 men on Kathryn and 66 in the field with C Company. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, first platoon found a trail at YD 467090 1230. S3 tells C Company to move south and cross the Rao La River.

June 20, 1970. At 1830, first platoon reports movement at YD 463086. They engage six to eight NVA. Enemy returns fire with five RPG rounds and small arms. ARA is on station. Enemy engages ARA. Charlie company has one minor frag wound. This may be Johnny Rippy. 1950 – Intelligence report of NVA 803d regiment massing to attack – perhaps Kathryn. C Company will not sweep contact area as they think larger enemy force may engage from the flank. 2104 - C Company gets emergency resupply.

June 21, 1970. At 1025, YD 463087, the company finds a trail heavily used the day before. Third platoon 0830 - finds trail YD 462086 recently used. At 0852, the company found small hooches used in last 24 hours and one stretcher with blood. 1008 - YD 461087 - finds three hooches with polished rice, medical supplies, and bills of sale from Hue [coastal city 40 kilometers to the northeast]. First platoon 1025 - YD 463087 finds a trail heavily used, yesterday. 1412 - YD 457085 finds trail used in last 24 hours. 1500 – the third platoon is in contact at YD 457085. ARA is on station 1530. Artillery is employed and third platoon believes one enemy is hit in the engagement. Six men were cited in this engagement. John McCurdy was the squad leader, Harlan Wright the machine gunner, and Nathan Ruff the RTO. Terry Thompson, William McCarver, and Donald Feeney were riflemen. Ruff called ARA on the enemy and all successfully used fire and maneuver to rout the enemy.

June 22, 1970. A medevac is called at 1453 for the Kit Carson Scout who had a bad case of cellulitis (even the native born population pick up these skin infections). Field strength is 67. First platoon 0920 YD 462086 found one dead NVA killed by small arms - probably from contact on June 20. 1134 – there is a medevac for SP4 Bures (105 degree temp). 1605 - YD 452088 receives M-16 fire from 50 meters and engages. 1 NVA KIA - captures AK, rucksack with 50 # rice and ammunition.

June 23, 1970. 1610 - YD 461078 the CP and first platoon find stairs cut into a steep slope up a hill. One of the platoons is conducting a recon patrol when Douglas Ketterling notices an enemy ambush about to engage the patrol. Ketterling immediately places out a large volume of fire and is assisted by Brian Holdner and James Foy, the squad leader. The NVA are routed and no injuries are sustained by Charlie Company. This episode is recorded in award citations for Foy, Holdner, and Ketterling and is not mentioned in the battalion journal. Most likely, the battalion TOC was occupied with Alpha company's significant contact and the mortar attack on Kathryn itself. 2253 - FSB Kathryn is under attack - one US KIA and some wounded. *Alpha Company has contact with 2 US KIA and several wounded vicinity YD 437124.*

June 24, 1970. *Alpha Company has significant contact with 1 KIA and 10 WIA.* 1245 – A Charlie Company person is medevac'd with 105 degree temp. The company found a north-south trail at YD 448094 which crosses the river at YD 449100. Another trail is located at YD 445104. The company commander thinks this is a major artery from the Maureen ridge line (FSB Maureen YD 429122). There is intelligence of a major sapper attack tonight. Company is carrying 44 LAW. Third platoon 1540 - finds trail with recent tracks of 20 enemy. [The intelligence appears to be generally correct however it is not very precise in its timing.]

June 25, 1970. 0945 – The company commander wants to get rid of his Kit Carson Scout. Third platoon 1247 - YD 444117 - found a trail used by 2-3 people recently.

*Neighborhood report: 0645 - Alpha Company continues to be hit hard. 2 KIA and 3 WIA from mortar fire (may have been friendly fire). 1030 - photo recon of Hill 959 (YD 441120 – three km NW of Charlie and on the other side of the river) has bunker complex with four NVA companies. 1229 - Alpha Company is in further contact YD 438121. They estimate an NVA company in bunkers. 2 US KIA.*

It would be interesting to know whether the Ripcord area or the Kathryn area was crawling with more NVA at this time - or perhaps they were about the same?

June 26, 1970. Charlie's platoons are relatively quiet. *In the battalion, 0236 - B Company second platoon in contact - 4 US KIA and 9 WIA; 6 NVA KIA. 1045 - Air strike goes in at YD 437121 for Alpha Company. 1654 - Part of Alpha Company reinforces B Company. 1/506th Inf casualties in last 5 days reported to Brigade:*

*A Company: 8 KIA and 19 WIA*

*B Company: 4 KIA and 8 WIA*

June 27, 1970. PFC Feeney is medevac'd due to cellulitis of the foot to the extent that he could not walk. Air strikes go in at 0845. YD 430136 - 1,800 20mm, 12, 500# bombs, and eight napalm. YD 434129 - 16 500# bombs, 800 20mm. Alpha and B companies are still in significant contact. It appears the NVA are pursuing and attacking but not in force.

June 28, 1970. LTC Holt visits C Company 1545. First platoon has movement at 2136 and engages. 2033 - they have movement YD 439088. Third platoon 2110 has movement again and engages with claymores and artillery. 2136 - Has 10 enemy at YD 440090 and engages at close range. 2145 - engages enemy with M-79 as artillery not available. 2240 - ARA reports lights outside of the perimeter. ARA cleared to engage. Artillery called. Roy Halpain is awarded the purple heart this date.

June 29, 1970. Third platoon 0815 - engages one enemy with small arms and artillery at YD 440090. 2140 - Has movement vicinity of YD 436086.

June 30, 1970. First platoon 0955 - finds four bunkers with hooches not recently used. 1240 at YD 442087 they find hooches and bunkers: 25, 82mm rounds; 7 RPG rounds; 50 RPG charges. No large force present there in last 30 days. 1307 – an ambush engages 10-15 enemy at YD 436085. Employs ARA and artillery. Lines #79 and #24 receive fragments from ARA. James Foy and John McCurdy receive purple hearts. Third platoon 1110 at YD 435086 finds recent tracks of 3 NVA.

July 1, 1970. Intelligence reports likely 803d NVA regiment attack on Kathryn, Rakkasan, Hill 959 (YD 441120), Hill 980 (YD 429123) or Hill 900 (YD 415111). 1310

- LTC Holt visits C Company in the field. 1130 BDA of airstrikes at YD 418111: they appear to have destroyed 6 NVA ammo bunkers. [My suspicion is that the Air Force forward air controllers and even the Army attack helicopter forces overestimated the results of their attacks. Almost always, they claim secondary explosions and precise numbers of enemy killed and bunkers destroyed. Nevertheless, they were very useful to the ground forces and gave the edge to the US forces.] Air strikes dropped 36, 500# bombs. C Company PDS is low at 62. At 1355, first platoon and third platoon find two hooches a day or two old. They fired a LAW into one hooch and an NVA ran to second hooch. They pulled back and employed artillery. NVA may have escaped as there is no further mention of the enemy. PFC Michael E. Clark, 280-46-3572, line #74 had possible broken back and is sent to 85th Evacuation Hospital. He may have been hurt blowing up NVA bunkers. 1728 - first platoon and third platoon construct an LZ at YD 434079.

July 2, 1970. 1240 - third platoon or first platoon kills an NVA in last night's NDP and captures an AK 47. Chuck Kerr made good use of the AK-47: "This was my AK. My original M-16 failed me after only three magazines during the April 20 incident. This combined with its history and its condition when first issued to me, turned me against it. No matter how clean I kept it, I just didn't trust it. Sometime in May, about the time I had gotten my aid bag and 45, I had the opportunity to DX the 16 and acquire an M 79. I carried a dozen HE rounds and eighteen or so canister rounds, one in the pipe. This would be a light load for an M79. A regular grenadier would carry many more rounds, but as a medic I figured it to be sufficient, in combination with my side arm. I also carried two claymores, twelve frags, and a couple WP grenades (medics weren't expected to carry smoke). When first platoon took this weapon from their kill and brought it to Zippo he didn't report it or send it to the rear which was the normal procedure. He decided that it would be a superior weapon for me to employ. I sent my "thump gun" back to the rear the next day during our resupply.

First platoon reports 1440 - trail with recent use at YD 430078. Second platoon 1910 - finds trail YD 435093 but not recently used. At 1430, the company runs into a bunker area - requests CS. 1/506 Infantry is aware that Ripcord area is heating up.

July 3, 1970. Third platoon 1000 - find 5 hooches 10x10x20 with bunkers and miscellaneous clothes and small amount of rice. Second platoon 1115 - has movement and engages. They receive some AK fire. Company strength is 63.

July 4, 1970. Col Harrison desires to meet with all Battalion commanders at 0930 July 5 on Ripcord. [That's one way to keep a meeting short as Ripcord began to receive regular mortar fire from the NVA!] FSB Kathryn - 281 men. C Company - 63 PDS. Third platoon 1235 - YD 429081 finds 3 hooches 10x20 with bunkers used 30-60 days ago. I depart Charlie Company to head back to the US.

July 5, 1970. Third platoon 0925 - YD 424083 has contact with an NVA squad. Two US are WIA and two NVA are KIA. They employ ARA, artillery, pink team and use a forward air controller (FAC). After the contact, Mark Smith selects an LZ for evacuation of the two wounded men. When the medevac helicopter is engaged by the enemy, Smith organizes another attack on the enemy to suppress their fires and to allow the medevac to be completed. Harlan Wright and Gary Pryor were the machine gunners, who suppressed



enemy fires. Charles Kerr was the medic and with Gary Keedwell, moved the wounded to safety and administered first aid. John Desselle was the platoon leader who directed the fight and Steven Riggs was the forward observer who fought as an infantryman. Bruce Kotschwar and Matthew Budziszewski also risked their lives to suppress the enemy and to pull wounded to safety.

Chuck Kerr provides more details about this fight: "Second and third platoon were understrength and operating as one platoon. The company CP was also with us. We began the day normally. We filled in the previous night's fox holes and ate, brought in our claymores, and rucked up. We traveled perhaps eight hundred meters and then established a patrol base, a loose perimeter from which to launch a patrol to scout to our front, to find the enemy and failing that, an NDP for that night. A squad from third platoon including their medic, Gary Keedwell, comprised the patrol unit. This was pretty much our SOP. If we found the enemy we would fight him - if not we would proceed to our NDP and set up. Just before dusk we would send an ambush squad back to the previous night's NDP in hopes that at day break we would catch a couple of NVA scavenging for what might have been left behind. *It is truly amazing how well that tactic worked. It is my belief that the NVA had small groups of men scattered throughout our AO. The equivalent of one of our fire teams in each grid square. They would only come together when ordered to do so and lived incommunicado for most of the time. This is a good practice if your enemy has B-52's at his disposal.*

*We would travel at least a kilometer and a half daily. These small groups would watch us and assure that we had traveled out of their immediate area and would then wait till the next day to search for food or anything else we might have left behind. Because they didn't have good small unit communications, relying mostly on runners, they never learned that the only thing we left behind, at this stage of the game, was an ambush.*

Eight or nine men of the third platoon moved out of our patrol base to "see what they could see." They were traveling down the gently sloping finger on which we were traveling. About a half hour out we heard gunfire. The report came back from "Rookie" Riggs, on the squad radio that they were in heavy contact. Zippo advised them to pull back and regroup for an assault. Riggs advised that they had a man down and would hold their ground and asked to be reinforced. I was sitting about ten feet from Zippo when the firing had started. I was in the process of strapping on my "go bag," a medic's equivalent of an overnight bag, containing field dressing, ace bandages, and frags. Zippo put the hand set down on the radio, looked over at me and asked, "well, doc, you comin?" We then executed the first rule of "Charlie Co." He and I "ran to the sound of the guns." Others would follow but we were the ready reaction force. We burst into the contact area getting on line with those already involved, and began supplementing the fire being laid down with our AKs.

Keedwell was busy working on the wounded point man. He had been hit several times. I knew Gary had control of the situation there, so I continued to suppress. Gary didn't possess much of a "fox hole manner;" he wasn't big on attending everyday cuts, bumps and bruises, but he was the best we had in a fire fight. I was on Zippo's left. The man standing to Zippo's right was hit in the neck. There is currently some debate as to whether it was a fragment from an exploding grenade or a bullet. But, I saw Zippo put rounds into the chest of the guy who appeared to me to have shot our man. I moved to treat our new casualty. A neck wound is a tricky thing. I stopped the bleeding with a

pressure dressing and instructed the wounded man to keep as much pressure on the wound as he could and rejoined the fight which seem to be waning.

The incoming fire had ceased. Dust Off was on station, and ARA was pounding the fingers to our front and rear. Gary moved his casualty towards a clearing to our left rear and I assisted the man with the neck wound to his location. Gary went back to check on the remainder of "his" people. I stayed and put the two casualties on the jungle penetrator. They were taken on board the hovering Medevac, and were gone. We policed the area, and moved back to the patrol base.

The de-brief was short and congratulatory in nature. Zippo was heard to say to Matt "Budweiser" Budziszewski, "when I heard the 60 talkin, I knew Budweiser was doin his job." Bud got a Bronze star that day.

At 1355, first platoon finds 10 bunkers and hooches, two .51 cal positions, and 20, 75mm recoilless rifle canisters. Most had been destroyed by 8 inch artillery. Charlie Company is instructed to be 100% alert from 0100 till first light.

*PFC Clyde Meade, 306-56-4360, line #90, neck wound*

*PFC Brian Holder, 569-69-7636, four gunshots in arms and legs*

July 6, 1970. First platoon 0735 - ambush engages enemy squad at YD 425082 with small arms, claymore. Negative findings. There is a minor wound in contact with the enemy (Larry Turner) but no medevac is required. B company has contact and has 19 wounded. Their field strength is 46. Alpha Company moves to link up with B company.

July 7, 1970. Third platoon 0905 - YD 419080 found hooches and one 107mm rocket. 1257 - YD 416080 - found a trail with no recent activity. At 1340, a first platoon ambush at YD 423080 engages two NVA and employs artillery, with no results. At 0830, the company reports the smell of CS. 0905 - Question from Brigade: On morning of 9 July, one company from 1/506th Inf will be OPCON to 2/506th Inf. Which company will this be? Answer - C company (fortunately for Charlie Company this did not come to pass as D Company which was made OPCON was hit hard by larger NVA forces). Intelligence continues to predict NVA attacks on Ripcord or Kathryn. The plan for July 9 from battalion: A and B company move to Firebase Bastogne. D Company stays on Kathryn. C Company becomes OPCON to 2/501 Inf. (this conflicts with C Company opcon to 2/506). PZ's for July 9: second platoon - YD 431087; first platoon, third platoon, CP YD 423080. LZ Ripcord? (Perhaps that was an intermediate LZ).

July 8, 1970. Apparently there are several upcoming mission changes in the brigade. It appears that 1/506th Inf will change AO responsibility with 2/501 Inf (the 2/501 takes part in the battles around Ripcord and meets heavy resistance – see Keith Nolan's book). 2355 - 9 July air moves on hold but it must have taken place as Charlie is in the vicinity of FSB Bastogne the next day. Bastogne is about 20 km due east of the present location and normally a much quieter AO.



July 10, 1970 – July 21, 1970. After having been in a highly active area for several weeks, you would expect the soldiers' nerves to be on edge and to report suspected enemy movement if there were any doubt. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, second platoon 1940 - had movement YD 628070 and engaged with negative results. Bastogne is a large Fire Support Base with a population of 399. July 11<sup>th</sup>: Life in the new AO seems safer and perhaps pleasantly boring. The journal has numerous comments about woodcutters and convoys on Route #547 between firebases Bastogne and Veghel. Apparently Vietnamese woodcutters are allowed to work around FSB Bastogne and are controlled to some degree. Prior to July 10, anything moving was enemy; now, it is necessary to show greater care. Co strength is 59. July 12<sup>th</sup>: There is notice of future plans where 1/506 will swap with 1/502 on 17 July involving firebases Bastogne, Arsenal, and the Rocket Belt. July 13<sup>th</sup>: second platoon reports duster (40mm) rounds from Bastogne going over their heads at 2330. 0947 - LTC Holt visits the company in the field - perhaps his farewell. At 1545, the company commander raises hell that PFC Meade who was shot in the neck on July 5 and sent to the hospital ship is returned to the field without the bullet removed. Meade gets sick and is evacuated to Camp Evans. July 14<sup>th</sup>: At 1900, third platoon sees two enemy but does not engage. Charlie Company moves by air to Bastogne and then back to the vicinity of NDP locations (a few kilometers distance). July 15<sup>th</sup>: 1027 air move to YD 650044 (perhaps the new battalion commander is taking an opportunity to practice some combat operations while in a relatively quiet area?) July 16<sup>th</sup>: Mention of possible 1/506th Inf move to Kathryn, Maureen, or Kelly. July 17<sup>th</sup>: 2000 – the company finds a trail used in last 24 hours and sets up an ambush. 1/506 Inf is informed that Ripcord is getting hit hard by indirect fire. PDS up to 75. July 18<sup>th</sup>:

LTC Porter visits Charlie Company at 1147. July 19<sup>th</sup>: Company makes an air move between 0830 and 0930. First platoon receives AK fire on LZ. ARA is employed with negative results. LTC Porter visits between 1400 and 1530. July 20<sup>th</sup>: At 0912, third platoon saw an enemy and engaged at YD 612031. Negative results. Steven Riggs and Harlan Wright receive purple hearts. 21<sup>st</sup>: 0815 - battalion plans to move to Kathryn on Jul 22 and Gladiator (a few km NW of Granite) on Jul 23. *0845 – Battalion journal notes D, 1/506 heavy casualties vicinity Ripcord (YD 376192). 3 KIA, 27 WIA, 2 MIA. The night before, Mark Smith had a dream and told Ed Miller about it the next morning - that Don Workman was killed in fighting around Ripcord. The dream proved to be accurate.* Air move made 1911 to NDP locations.

July 22, 1970. Convoy from field location begins 1035 and ends 1212 at Camp Evans [Movement by ground vehicle is uncommon and only done closer to the base camps in areas without significant enemy presence]. 0920 - 1/506 assumes control of Kathryn. 2054 - D Company is back with 1/506 and will have training Jul 26 [Training is normally done after a unit receives significant casualties].

July 23, 1970. The company moved from Evans by CH-47 and arrives at Kathryn by 1112. The journal notes that Ripcord is evacuated and LTC Lucas (battalion commander) was killed.

Watch where you pee. A sergeant gets up to pee at 0500. While doing so, the position to his left threw a fragmentation grenade as part of H&I fires. The grenade landed 20 meters to the front of the soldier who was urinating. He was injured and the medic discovered a 1/8 inch cut in his penis where the fragment embedded. He was evacuated to 326 Med.

Something is out of balance in the 101st. The 2/506 had been in the middle of a major engagement and the 1/506 moves to Bastogne where the issues are woodcutters and VIP visits. "July 12, 1970 journal: CPT Rankin, Division Protocol Officer calls on the land line at 2330 that a VIP "Knee Britches" will fly over the AO tomorrow between 1600 and 1800 and may visit Bastogne."

July 24, 1970 to July 31, 1970. Charlie is back in the "Kathryn AO," about 4 km NE from their recent positions and north of the Rao La river. At 2310, second platoon reports movement and engages. The terrain in places is very steep - two men are injured in falls. Lines #117 (ankle) and #115 (back – cannot move legs). July 25<sup>th</sup>: third platoon received small arms fire 1120 at YD 445112. Robert Steel is sent to 85<sup>th</sup> Evac Hospital (it is possible that the records have the incorrect unit and that he is not in Charlie Company). There is some confusion about the location of an adjacent company so fire is not returned. 1315 – third platoon sees three to four enemy on an LZ at YD 445110 and employs artillery. 1930 - YD 445110 finds three bunkers 12x12x6 that can cover the LZ and adjacent terrain with fires. They also find a trail to a spring (water source). July 26<sup>th</sup>: 1530 - air move all elements to YD 464112. It was noted that PFC Rodgers was AWOL; he landed on Kathryn but did not move off with the rest of the company. July 27<sup>th</sup>: third platoon 1747 - finds bunker 4x6 with 38 rifle grenades and 3 RPG rounds but it was not

recently occupied. SP4 Juan N. Acueveda medevac'd – fell on his head the previous day and blacks out. July 28<sup>th</sup>: first platoon 1101 - YD 481118 - found 300 rounds of .51 cal and 800 rounds of 7.62mm about 45 days old. Second platoon makes an air move on the 29<sup>th</sup>. July 30<sup>th</sup>: 0945 - LTC Porter and MAJ Lamb visit. At 1350, second platoon sees movement at YD 470110 and engages. Afterwards, they find a blood trail. 1445 - Finds old bunker complex (20-25 bunkers) at YD 482109 with recent tunnels dug inside.

July 31, 1970 – Charlie Company is back at Camp Evans. On August 3d, three 122mm rockets land inside Evans but not near Charlie Company. The company remains at Evans for training through the fifth with one day at Eagle Beach on August 4<sup>th</sup>.

Charlie Company spends the next six days in the FB Birmingham and FB Arsenal area of operations (generally about 12 kilometers south of the city of Hue). On the sixth, Alpha and Bravo companies move to Birmingham and Charlie and Delta go to Arsenal. 1/506 assumes the 1/502<sup>nd</sup> Inf area of operations. Charlie air moves from Arsenal, lands at 1532 and reports two incoming mortar rounds landing a few hundred meters away. The next day, Charlie does three flare drops between 1330 and 1430. Radars have been activated on Birmingham. At 1945, the company finds a week old bunker complex with an AK-50 and miscellaneous ammunition, and bloody bandages. It seems that the closer the company moves to Camp Eagle where the terrain is flatter, more technical equipment is employed such as radars that detect personnel movement. At 0909 August 8<sup>th</sup>, the third platoon ambush engages two NVA and receives fire from about ten more. ARA and pink teams work the area. The pink team spots a bunker at 865020. An air strike goes in at 1127. Third platoon finds a blood trail and believes two NVA were killed. At 1330, they find a tunnel with fresh blood. Company field strength is 79. The following day, at 1030, third platoon finds a hooch and bunker complex at 875005 used the previous night. At 1300 they find a bunker at 878007, also used recently. At 1650, third platoon finds used medical equipment (IV, morphine) with blood on it. The 10<sup>th</sup> is a quiet day and on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the last day in this area. Third platoon sees some enemy at 1240 and kills one VC. At 1315 they find documents in a hooch nearby; at 868997, third platoon finds 28 RPG rounds, 25 pounds of rice, two bunkers and numerous spider holes. It appears that the VC are active in this area.

Apparently, higher headquarters did not believe that Charlie Company had killed a VC on August 11. Mark Smith apparently asked higher headquarters where he should deposit the body and they were of no help. He had a soldier wrap the body in a poncho and tie it to one of the trucks that took the company through Hue to FB Jack where the VC was buried. Apparently there was discussion of giving Mark Smith a written reprimand for this action but I believe it was not issued.

Charlie next spends about a week in the FB Jack area about eight km SW of Camp Evans. The company makes an air move to FB Arsenal at 0740 on the 12<sup>th</sup> and then convoys to FB Jack (about 30-40 km by road), arriving at 1330. At 1750, Charlie airlifts from Jack to NDP locations to the east. At 2340, Charlie has movement 50 meters to their east and employs artillery. *A new brigade commander has arrived and the company field strength is in the upper 70's.* At 1140 on the 14<sup>th</sup> at 548267, the company found a bunker, trails,

and fresh clams having been eaten (this area is only about 15 km from the coast). The company requested a white team for reconnaissance but none was available. At 2140, the third platoon ambush engages 6-8 enemy and moves back to its platoon NDP. They are certain that two enemy were killed. A rucksack found from the previous night's ambush contained rice, a working transistor radio, and cigars. It appears that the 101<sup>st</sup> school for new arrivals (SERTS) is training men in the general vicinity. There is nothing like a little realism in training with live enemy nearby to get the new soldiers to focus. At 1442, second platoon finds a hand grenade booby trap and four bunkers about a week old. As has been seen before, the closer the company is to populated areas, the more VC are present in contrast to NVA and hence, more booby traps. At 1530 on the 16<sup>th</sup>, second platoon finds an enemy camp at 598261 where six NVA had just departed. A few minutes later, they saw 3-5 NVA in the water at 604264 and employed artillery.

At 1940 on the 17<sup>th</sup>, first platoon makes contact with a reinforced NVA squad. The platoon, led by Donald Muller was moving into an ambush position when Vincent Gazzara, point man, was engaged by the enemy force. Michael Dooley, a squad leader, maneuvered his men and killed an enemy soldier. On the radio, Larry Turner employed ARA and artillery. Ronald Ulmer's machine gun helped to suppress the enemy fire. Charles Kerr brought additional ammunition to the engaged elements and repaired a machine gun that had jammed. Steve Francis, James Hall, Ted Neal, Frederick Koch, and Leo Legarie were cited for aggressively engaging the enemy force and allowing the platoon to successfully disengage from the ambush site. About 100 rounds of artillery are employed around first platoon. Two NVA are killed. The following day, all move in to Camp Evans between 0900 and 0930.

The next six days are spent in a different AO near FB Veghel. Veghel sits along Route 547 which runs into the A Shau Valley. Veghel is about 26km due south of Camp Evans. On the 19<sup>th</sup> at 1102, third platoon found two tunnels near old firebase Brick at 564023 but no recent activity. Second platoon constructed an LZ at 566028. Veghel has 381 personnel on the FB. The following day, air moves are made by the company. Mid day, third platoon constructs an LZ at 564027 and second platoon does likewise at 529014, toward the end of the day. On the 21<sup>st</sup>, LTC Porter visits Charlie Company about 1030. Shortly thereafter the company LZ's at 508031 (less first platoon). At 1315, first platoon arrives at 478025 (near FB Canon) where Air Cavalry reported firing up a truck and killing two enemy the day before. First platoon checks out the area and reports that the truck was a junker without an engine and there was no sign of bodies. *Makes you wonder about the air cav - many of their reports found in journal entries are very precise such as "a trail used by three NVA within the last 24 hours."* The platoon found a bunker nearby with bags of crystal CS. 1525, second platoon reports seeing a large smoke plume at 453057. At 1820, first platoon medevacs a man for a broken arm and he is sent to A Company, 326 Medical. Next day at noon, second platoon finds a trail with recent activity at 496034. On the 23<sup>d</sup>, second platoon finds two old bunkers at 486034. Third platoon hears chopping noise at 500032 and checks it out but finds nothing. Second platoon finds two cases of Bangalore torpedoes just off the road that probably fell off a truck a month earlier - they destroy the munitions.



The next six days will be spent in an entirely different area of operations - about 50 km due east near the coast along Highway QL1 and southeast of Camp Eagle. At first light on the 24th, the company was picked up and air moved to FB Veghel and from there to FB Tomahawk. Charlie assumed control of Tomahawk at 0940. Just a short distance to the northwest of Tomahawk is a large inland bay connecting to the ocean. At 2200 the next day, the company spots a sampan in the water at 111024 - a patrol boat is notified to check it out. Second and third platoons are defending the firebase and first platoon is in the field. August 26, first platoon reports hearing small arms one km to their west and is told it is probably friendly South Vietnamese Popular Forces troops. This area is close to the populated area as LTC Porter is travelling by jeep today. Next day, there is a report that local VC detonated a mine on the railway and destroyed a boxcar and some track. The track was repaired within a few hours. *I remember hearing a rumor many months earlier that the reason we did not have soft drinks in the rear was because the VC blew up the "coke" train. That story may well have been true.* At 0945 on the 28<sup>th</sup>, first platoon reported movement about 150m to the north but nothing was located. *FB Tomahawk strength is 148 with a 155 battery. 1/506 will be replaced soon by 2/327 Inf.* On August 29, a journal entry regarding Bravo Company reports that a man had a swollen penis and requested that the medical doctor tell them what to do. No doubt there were gratuitous comments on this from the men in the TOC. Another train hit a mine and derailed. At 2215, Charlie reports movement just outside Tomahawk but nothing is found. The next day the company says good-bye to Phu Loc.

The company will spend a little over a month in the upcoming area of operations. Firebases Ripcord, Granite, and Rakkasan make the base of a triangle running west to east about 15 km long. Making the top of the triangle at a point six km above Granite would give a rough center for the new area assigned to Charlie Company. The top of the triangle is also just short of the ridge line that overlooks the lowlands toward Firebase Jack and on to Camp Evans.

At 0800 on August 30, 1970, Charlie Company passes responsibility for FB Tomahawk to 2/327 Infantry. The company completes an air move and is in new locations by 1045. The primary company mission is to restrict movement of the NVA by setting up ambushes to reduce their ability to move about freely. 1130 September 2, third platoon found a US NDP site where someone had left several grenades and seven M16 magazines within the last few weeks. 2040, at 398238, the third platoon ambush hears three people talking and blows its claymores. Two days later, at 1930 while moving to an ambush location, second platoon heard someone kicking cans on a nearby LZ. They called in artillery. The next day, first platoon finds a trail used by ten enemy in the past week at 395239. September 7, second platoon finds old bunkers at 390239. 2147, the first platoon ambush hears activity about 125 meters distant on their previous NDP site. Speculation would be that the NVA had moved through this area for months if not years and were very familiar with the terrain. The 101<sup>st</sup> did not have adequate forces to hold terrain so it was a learning experience for Charlie Company as it moved into a new area. The next day, third platoon finds an old foot bridge at 394246. On the 10<sup>th</sup>, third platoon moves from 390186 to 398182 and then clears an LZ at 400247. LTC Porter stays in the field with Charlie.

0100 the next day, the third platoon ambush hears movement and employs artillery. Later that morning at 1000, Ron Williams Ron walked into the main rotor blade of the log bird. Ron was a tall guy. The LZ was uneven as it was on a thin finger with a downward slope. The position of the LZ required that approaching birds would make a side approach and touch down on the left skid while the bird was held at a hover for loading and unloading. Ron walked down the slope and into the main blade. He was knocked unconscious. Upon hearing the loud crack of the blade striking Ron's helmet, the pilot of the bird took off thinking that he was taking hostile fire. Mark Taylor and Chuck Kerr were about seventy-five yards up the finger. When they got to Ron, he was in the process of a seizure similar to that caused by epilepsy. They restrained him and stuffed his mouth with a rag so that he would not bite his own tongue. Once he was stable, they loaded him on the log bird that had returned and sent him for evaluation to C 326<sup>th</sup> Med at Evans.

I met Ron in Fall of 2008. He was evacuated to the US and recovered well from his head injury but went AWOL when it was time to return to Viet Nam. He had a run in with the Army judicial system at Ft Meade, MD but had some luck that LT George Wooldridge was also at Ft Meade and served as a character reference. Ron retired from the Washington Metro Area Transportation Authority and teaches billiards. He may be the best pool shooter to come out of Charlie Company. *Charlie company has 72 men in the field.*

September 12, third platoon finds an old, rusty SKS rifle at 399251. At 1135, first platoon spots two enemy and engages. Danny Minor and Vincent Gazzara immediately assaulted the enemy, allowing the rest of the platoon to get in good positions to defend themselves. The contact is brief and the platoon finds one NVA KIA with a Czech 51 rifle and rucksack with B40 rocket charges. Chuck Kerr remembered Minor and Gazzara: “[after Granite] we got Corporal Danny Minor. Danny had attended Army OCS dropping out in the last weeks because he did not consider the training he had received adequate in equipping him to lead men in combat. Danny claimed to be the brother of Mike Minor who played the crop duster pilot on the T.V. show “Petticoat Junction.” I don't know if he was pulling our legs, but he never produced any pictures. Danny earned his nick name, “One Shot” one afternoon while leading a “water RIF.” A water RIF involves four to six men collecting the empty canteens from everyone at the patrol base and filling them at a nearby water feature. The water RIF had been gone a short time when we, at the patrol base, heard a single rifle shot. We all assumed it was a new guy who had accidentally discharged his weapon previously. Then the radio crackled, the RTO with the RIF called in that he thought they were in contact.

The standing order from “the Boss” was, “if you make contact, shoot your guns, Rookies.” (Zippo's way of saying, achieve fire superiority). What had happened was the point man, Danny, had sighted a lone NVA soldier, on our back trail, took a knee and put a single round between the enemy soldier's eyes. Thereafter he was no longer Corporal Danny Minor, he was Danny “ONE SHOT” Minor, solid soldier, good man. Danny was to soon team with another solid new guy Vince Gazzarra from New Jersey to become, in

my opinion, the best point team second platoon had during my time in the woods. It didn't matter which man walked point when they were point and slack. If one took a breath, the other did not have to breathe, they were just that tight. Individually they were excellent grunts and as a team they were lightning quick and laser accurate, totally reliable."

At 1920, the company found a trail junction at 407224 but not recently used. At 2040, the third platoon heard movement and blew their claymore mines. The next day, first platoon finds an old trail and bunkers. At 1130 on the 14<sup>th</sup>, first platoon heard 6-8 enemy soldiers and employed artillery. At 1500, a pink team found signs of enemy activity within a few hundred meters. It seems that the local NVA are playing a cat and mouse game with Charlie Company. At 1145 on the 15<sup>th</sup>, first platoon received a resupply of LAW kicked out of a chopper. Two detonated on impact, slightly wounding Dennis Possley and George Wooldridge. Unfortunately, all of the LAW were damaged and had to be destroyed. First platoon seems to be getting most of the action for a few days. At 1155 on the 16<sup>th</sup>, first platoon approached a bunker complex and Ted Neal recon'd by fire with an M-79. The round detonated in a tree about 35 meters away and wounded Kenneth Arthur in the thigh. At 1500 on the last day before heading back to Camp Evans, Charles Eesley is medevac'd with a 104.6 degree temp. I believe most of these high fevers were caused by malaria.

Chuck Kerr also describes several men in the second platoon at the time: "Dan Pierce, was known to be naturally mean; he may not have gotten to Vietnam as hard as he was when I first met him, but he took being in the field very seriously having survived FSB Granite. Early in my tour I saw Dan flatten a guy for falling asleep on guard. The errant soldier pulled a bowie knife, and Dan cooled the situation down instantly by flipping his M79 shut and pointing it at the man's midsection. Before decking the guy Dan had loaded a canister round. The knife was sheathed and the argument was over. The knife fighter soon disappeared from our ranks. Pierce didn't have a lot of friends and people called him "Crazy Pierce." That is until the shit hit the fan. When that happened "Crazy" was welcome in all social circles. Dan Pierce could lay down accurate thumper fire faster than most two men. He left the platoon for parts unknown sometime in early summer. I liked "Crazy Pierce" just fine, almost as much as my soon to be good friend "Gabby Garnos." Gabby held Pierce in Awe.

Bill "Gabby Garnos" of Beverly, Mass was another of the new guys who showed up and acclimated quickly. At the departure of Pierce, "Gabby" secured Pierce's M79, exchanging his M16. Gabby wore a floppy old hat that resembled that worn by the 50s cowboy side kick, "Gabby" Hayes. Bill started as a rifleman, moved to grenadier, and finally became the platoon RTO. He was adept at "running fire fights." He had a good knowledge of what was available for support and was expert at employing all assets available. He could call in all varieties of fire support effectively.

We were blessed with some fine young school trained NCO's, one that comes to mind is Theodore Neal. In the narrative about August 17<sup>th</sup> he is called Ted Neal. Nobody ever called him Ted. When I asked him what he was called, his answer was "Flip," and it was

easy to understand the rationale, he looked like the comedian, Flip Wilson. Flip was built like an upside down spark plug and was a solid soldier and competent squad leader from day one. From Danville VA, Flip was quietly entertaining and expert at keeping morale at its peak. Men would do anything he asked, because he would not ask anything that he would not do himself.

Any reference to solid soldiers in second platoon C /1/506 during the summer and fall of 1970 would be incomplete unless Tom Koland is included. Tom was a California boy. That could be known immediately upon meeting him. Blonde, suntanned, and completely laid back, his entire being was stereotypically Californian.

When a new guy, of reasonable size and strength would enter the group he was invariably picked to carry the 23 pound M-60. Tom was that guy and unlike most new guys, he liked it. He became the undisputed machine gun virtuoso of second platoon.

When a 60 gun failed, the cause of the failure was usually one of two things. Either the ammo was dirty or the buffer group in the butt of the gun was dirty. Tom's gun never failed. There was a time we were relaxing on a fire base prior to walking off for the next mission. Some rear area type officer saw Tom lounging on his ruck and made a comment about Tom's gun. He felt that Tom's starter belt was dirty and that the 60 would not fire. Tom held his tongue and simply stood up and unleashed a fifty round burst (his entire starter belt) into a trash pile 25 yards to his front, then set quietly back down. The red faced officer turned and left without a word."

The battalion has six days of training at Camp Evans and Charlie completes its air move by 1020 on September 18<sup>th</sup>. The records show companies going to Eagle Beach for a day although there is no mention of Charlie Company going to the beach.



Notes: circle one is BBT encounter September 28 and circle two is September 29, 1970.

The next 11 days will be a return to the previous area of operations with the battalion command post at FB Rakkasan. Things appear to be quiet until September 28<sup>th</sup>. About 1340, Roy Breternitz of second platoon hit a booby trap at 403247 and lost a foot. He commented to his buddies, "Guess what? I'll be home for Christmas!" He was sent to 85th Evacuation Hospital in Phu Bai and then on to Valley Forge Hospital in Pennsylvania and Allen Park in Southfield, Michigan. Later, first platoon engaged two enemy at a distance of 150 meters at 401248. They also found a week old grave at 403247. The next day seems like a repeat of the prior day. At 0940, Dale Schatzberg in third platoon stepped on a booby trap, resulting in the loss of his right leg. He was evacuated to 18th Surgical Hospital in Quang Tri. Matt Budziszweski visited Dale in the hospital where a major storm had dumped so much water that there was eight inches of standing water in the infirmary. Matt observed that Dale had burn marks on most of his body. Dale Schatzberg elaborated on that day: *Dale was the slack man for the platoon as they moved down a trail. A fallen tree crossed the path, requiring men to go under the trunk. He heard the sound of an explosion but it did not sound that loud to him. He immediately called for a medic and felt that he was the calmest man in the platoon. He did not feel pain right away and noticed his dog tag on the ground that had been tied to his right boot. The explosion blew his boot off and his pants to above the knee. Dale saw a cut in the side of his foot and the pain felt like it was coming from a lower area. The pain increased as time passed. He asked the medic to put his dog tag on his uniform. He pointed out to the platoon that there was an opening for a jungle penetrator about 50 meters back up the trail. The medic placed a tourniquet on Dale's leg and loaded him in a medevac basket. He still felt unusually calm as he rode the huey to Quang Tri. At the 18<sup>th</sup> Surgical Hospital, the medics asked him for all of his personal information. They put a mask on his face and instructed him to breathe deeply. He did so as he had never done before and felt the back of his head falling away. The next time he awoke, he was in the recovery room. He looked around and told the nurse, "You took off my foot." He then lost his breakfast of LRRP scalloped potatoes due to the anesthesia. He remained at 18<sup>th</sup> Surg for four days and then moved to the 95<sup>th</sup> Evac Hospital in Danang where he remained for a week to ten days. About this time, Dale has an urge for a pizza. His doctor asked him what he wanted and he said a shrimp and pepperoni pizza with mushrooms. Dale described the doctor as a Peter Lawford look-alike with wire rim glasses, wearing a ban-lon shirt and a string of beads, flanked by a good-looking nurse. Dale ate the pizza, slept well, and finished the pizza the next morning. His next hospital was Camp Drake, Japan and then on to Fitzsimmons in Denver, CO where he remained until May, 1972. Dale had three revisions to his original surgery. The doctors tried to put him in a cast, but that was unsuccessful. While in Denver, Dale learned to ski and enjoyed the city. He had the option to stay in the Army but declined.*

At 1030, third platoon reports hearing activity about 250 meters away. The company had returned to the same area it had been working prior to going to Camp Evans. The enemy would have had no way of knowing that Charlie would return to the same place and think to booby trap the trails. Maybe the enemy thought some US forces would use that area or perhaps the booby traps had been in place long before.

The next few days appear to be uneventful with platoons setting up ambushes each night. The weather is starting to get cooler with more rain and is taking a toll on the men in the field. On the first of October, Gerollimo Lorenzo is medevac'd for cellulitis of the foot, to the extent that he is unable to walk.

Commencing October 5<sup>th</sup>, Charlie Company is placed under the operational control of 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry, one of the three infantry battalions organic to the third brigade. 3/187<sup>th</sup> Infantry has its command post on Firebase Jack, about seven km NE of Charlie's previous position and in the lower hills of the coastal plain. At 1300, October 6<sup>th</sup>, third platoon finds and disarms a grenade booby trap device. Later at 1825, first platoon found some VC correspondence at 545295. At 1915, Charlie reports seeing five people carrying supplies but does not engage due to the proximity of friendly forces. At 2030, first platoon has movement and tosses a few fragmentation grenades. At 0900 the next day, first platoon finds 15 pounds of rice at 573285 - about six km east of FB Jack and five km SE of Camp Evans. On the 8<sup>th</sup>, first platoon squads make some short CA's to check out radar sightings. At 1340, third platoon finds and destroys a small bunker complex. Again at 1550 the following day, third platoon finds and destroys four bunkers at 571249, used six months ago.

October 10<sup>th</sup>, the company checked-out radar sightings with no results. Apparently the radar instruments are more effective in flatter terrain where the company is currently operating. At 1530, third platoon finds an enemy NDP site at 559250 used in last four days. The next day, third platoon finds a 24 inch diameter fuze at 565249 that is Air Force and blows it in place. Second platoon found fresh tracks at 600242 down a trail leading to the river where the enemy most likely boarded a sampan. At 1710, first platoon found a trail marker leading to a small amount of ammunition. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, the company finds the shell of an old, downed LOH helicopter with its instruments still intact. Later, the instrumentation is destroyed to prevent use by the enemy. Next day at 1900, first platoon engaged an enemy squad and killed one at 547264. They found some woodcutter and local Vietnamese clothing. The US allowed some Vietnamese woodcutters to continue their work under US escort - perhaps some VC were trying to infiltrate the woodcutters to gain intelligence about the US forces. The company checked out some radar sighting and enemy sightings after artillery was employed on the 15<sup>th</sup> October but results were negative. Similar results the next day when first platoon engaged six enemy at short range with no results. On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the company made some short moves by air but nothing noteworthy was reported.

After its OPCON to 3/187<sup>th</sup> Inf, Charlie returns to the general Rakkasan area but farther west, about six km NE of FB Ripcord. Third platoon is on Rakkasan for two days and nothing significant is reported between Oct 20 and 23. The remainder of the month is spent about ten km farther south and about four km north of FB Maureen, on the north side of the Rao Trang River. As of the 24<sup>th</sup>, hurricane produced rains are on the way. At 1320, second platoon found a trail and spider hole at 430154. The next day at 1015, Alpha company was securing engineers on Rakkasan road. An engineer 2 1/2 ton truck hit a mine. An engineer soldier from the 101<sup>st</sup> 326 Engineer Battalion was killed and one wounded. Five from alpha were wounded. Rakkasan road ran about 14 km from near FB



Jack and South through “rocket ridge” to FB Rakkasan. An old 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry firebase ‘Stella’ was located about half way between Jack and Rakkasan and slightly to west. During monsoon season, helicopters frequently were unable to fly and resupply of FB Rakkasan depended more heavily on truck transport.

October 26<sup>th</sup>, first platoon spotted two enemy on a ridgeline at some distance but did not employ artillery due to the proximity of friendly forces. At 1650 on the 29<sup>th</sup>, first platoon checked out a sensor activation with negative results. It appears that at this stage of the war, the US is relying more on sensors and high tech gadgetry but the journals do not indicate that the technology is locating and killing many NVA. There are 326 men on Rakkasan. By the 30<sup>th</sup>, poor flying weather has put the companies in emergency need of supplies. Part of Rakkasan road has washed out. The cold, wet weather is taking its toll on the battalion with non combat medevacs way up. Hey Joe, toss me a trip flare (a heavy cylinder about six inches long and an inch and a half in diameter). At 1420, Frederick Koch is medevac'd for a possible concussion - he was hit in the head with a trip flare. This wraps up the month of October. November is spent in the lowlands a few km SE of Camp Evans and December on Rocket Ridge, about nine km South of Camp Evans.



Map overview of Charlie Company’s areas of operation, July 1969 – July 1970  
 The table below is a summary of the major fights that Charlie Company had between May, 1969 and September 1970.

Location	From	To	KIA	WIA
Hill 937	5/11/69	5/23/69	6	23
South and East of FB Currahee	6/14/69	6/29/69	3	2
Hill 996	8/5/69	8/12/69	6	13
Mai Loc	10/4/69	10/4/69	0	7
Lowlands South of Camp Evans (BBT)	1/21/70	1/26/70	0	4
Granite AO	3/6/70	3/24/70	15	31
Several KM SE of Granite	4/2/70	4/27/70	3	8
Near FB Kathryn	5/13/70	5/23/70	1	7
Near FB Kathryn	6/10/70	7/6/70	0	10
Hills 7 KM NW FB Rakkasan (BBT)	9/28/70	9/29/70	0	2
Total			34	107
<p>During the period between May 11, 1969 and September 29, 1970, approximately 25% of the time was spent in moderate to heavy contact while the remainder of the time was relatively quiet. This illustrates the recollection many soldiers had - that their tour had relatively quiet periods, interspersed with days of high intensity. (BBT = booby trap)</p>				

I have lived in Northern Virginia since 1984 and have always noticed that the area had a fairly large Vietnamese population, most I suspect having come from the old South Viet Nam. The last office I worked in had a very talented woman whose family was originally from Viet Nam (she came to the US as a young child). Her husband works for the Defense Department as a ballistic missile program analyst. I have a neighbor who is originally from Viet Nam and he is an MD in a local hospital. When I have been doing research at the national archives, I have noticed Asian researchers, some of whom may be Vietnamese. I cannot help but think that many Vietnamese must wonder where their family members fought and died. Our journals have several reports recording the unit designations on NVA soldiers' shirts. I don't believe they had names on their shirts. I recall after a firefight, searching an enemy body for intelligence information. I think at least once, I saw a picture of the man's wife or girlfriend and what may have been a letter from home. For a small country, Viet Nam took a horrendous number of casualties. As a

poor country, they have not had the resources to document the losses they had sustained and for political reasons, did not want to admit that their losses were as high as they were. We are fortunate to have had as much information about our casualties as we have.

Probably some comments should be made about the military awards system. There can be many views of the awards system but at its heart is the manner in which the military unit recognizes its soldiers for exceptional performance. There were two general categories – service awards and valor awards. Each infantryman who spent his year in the field would normally receive a bronze star medal and an army commendation medal for service. These awards were well earned as enduring the jungle and the enemy for twelve months challenged each soldier and not all were able to complete their infantry tour and receive these commendations. In addition, infantrymen involved in combat with the enemy were awarded a combat infantryman's badge and air medals for the frequent combat assaults by helicopter. Valor awards were almost always linked to a specific battle and rewarded actions above and beyond the call of duty. Most valor awards reflected bravery in fights with the enemy or selfless exposure to danger while helping fellow soldiers who may have been wounded or in danger of enemy attack. The majority of valor awards were clumped around significant battles in the company history although the isolated fights were also recognized.

The brigade and division headquarters had the responsibility of ensuring that awards were equitably distributed among the various units. What would earn an award in one unit for a certain action should also receive an award had the action taken place in another unit. The military was somewhat liberal with awards during the Viet Nam war however there was no shortage of close infantry combat that provided the ingredients for award citations. Another angle was that command support for awards may have fluctuated over time. If a prominent journalist wrote that the award rate was high, the commands might react and be more conservative for a while. Also, officers and non-commissioned officers may have been over-represented as award recipients. On one hand, these were the leaders whose job it was to lead and to expose themselves to enemy fire. On the other, their positions were more visible and more likely to get recognized. An award for valor received by a young PFC or SP4 was almost certainly to be the real McCoy.

Without doubt, there are many men in Charlie Company who distinguished themselves in battle but who did not receive formal recognition. Perhaps no one was close by to observe their heroism. Maybe in the heat of combat, writing up award citations was not the highest priority. Maybe their leader or sergeant was not as attentive to awards as a recognition factor as others were.

Back to the world. I'm hazy on this part. We may have flown to Viet Nam wearing casual civilian clothes. We may have stored them at Bein Hoa or Camp Evans after receiving our jungle fatigues and retrieved them on the way out. I believe we flew back to the US wearing jungle fatigues. After arrival at Travis Air Base while waiting to catch a plane home, we used the men's room to change into our civilian attire. Everyone removed their fatigues and jungle boots and threw them in a pile. I recall a pile to the

ceiling made of dozens or hundreds of sets of combat clothing, never to be worn again by those veterans. Soldiers were then issued dress green uniforms for the flight home.

At similar points on leaving Viet Nam, most of us went our separate ways. In a way, this felt odd as we had been members of a very close knit family of men who relied heavily on each other for survival. Now we were individuals going to different places where no one was familiar with our recent experiences. We must have felt relieved to be away from combat and reunited with family yet may have felt some guilt that we were leaving others behind who were still in the danger zone.

For many of us, it is important to touch base with each other and talk about our experiences as we did not have a chance to do so at the time. Due to the individual replacement system, we left individually, either at the end of a 12 month tour or when wounded or injured. After leaving Viet Nam, we scattered, some going home and some spending six months at an Army installation. Speaking with other veterans from different units would not give us release as the other veterans would not have understood the unique challenges of Charlie Company as we may not have understood their own challenges. It is necessary for us to describe our experience and to put it in some sort of context so that we can agree that we did OK. We were deeply affected by our Viet Nam experience, perhaps scarred by it, and ultimately strengthened by it. Linking up with the old guys and talking about things goes a long way toward finishing the story.

The United States has been engaged in many wars since its Viet Nam experience. Each conflict has its unique aspects but probably has more in common with other wars than differences. The military seems to have learned well from its mistakes in combat over the past forty years – it is not clear that the civilian leadership of the nation has been as good a student of history.

#### Miscellaneous Notes:

April 28, 1969 – George Lamberton PH and Jan 20, 1969.

FB Sword (425312) was opened Feb 14, 1969. Echo company's mortars and recon platoon with the fourth platoon from Charlie Company defended the firebase when it was attacked by sappers about 0400 on Feb 23. The attack consisted of RPG rounds, satchel charges, and probably mortar rounds. Eight men are wounded: SSG Peterson (E Co), SGT Bobby Jackson, SP4 Horace Graham, SP4 Ronald Smith, PFC Palmer (E Co), PFC Robert Todd, PFC Leppaner (E Co), and PFC Rane Ramos. The more seriously injured are sent to 18<sup>th</sup> Surgical hospital. The most seriously wounded has chest and eye wounds. US claymores killed several of the NVA and body parts were found in front of the US bunkers. Charlie company's CP is at FB Jack with first and third platoons while second platoon is at 508290.

Jan 29, 1969. Robert Stamps and Joseph Grenevicki were wounded while OPCON to 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cav. Joseph Grenevicki lost both legs and hands at 600284.

Jan 25, 1969: Charlie Company is OPCON to the 3/5<sup>th</sup> Cav. At 1715 on Jan 25, 1969, Bobby Jackson and Robert Stinger trip a booby trap at 552249 consisting of an 81mm or 105mm round and are medevac'd. Both have stomach wounds.

Dec 20, 1970: PH Billy Plaster

Appendix - Military Terms