

6TH BATTALION, 11TH ARTILLERY

Hawaii



Viet Nam

On Time, Sir!

From Georgia to Viet Nam Section Eight Rumors of War and Tall Tales II

by Clenton Thomas, B Btry, '68-'69

Section Seven, at first contained these stories also. I felt that I needed to shorten it. From section eight to section eleven will contain these other stories.

RUNNING BACKWARDS

On LZ San Juan, Gun One was next to the Command area and I spent most of my time around them. There was two guys that was named John, John Balogh we called him "Big Bad John" and John Dort. They shared the same hooch and Dort to keep from being confused with the other John started calling himself "Jack the Crack". One day I was headed into Gun One's position and Jack was standing by their hooch to the left of the Conex building. He motioned with his head for me to come over to him. I turned toward him and was walking up to him while Big John was coming out of the gun circle toward us. When I got to Jack he asked me: Doc you see that camouflage blanket hanging on the perimeter wire down the hill.

Looking down at the wire some one hundred feet, more or less from us I saw the blanket he was talking about. Jack told me, I don't know how it got down there nor who it belongs to. But I've watched it for two days and nobody has went down and retrieved it. I don't have a camouflage blanket and I sure would like to have one. But I'm scared to go down there by myself to get it. Well, Jack if you want it I'll go down there with you to get it. Big John had come up behind me by this time and hearing the conversation said he would also go with us to get it.

So we three started down the hill, Jack was on my right and Big John on my left. We naturally spread out some eight to ten feet from one another. This was drilled into us by Command, not to gather in a wad so that if a mortar round hit it would not kill us all. Even when in the chow line, an Officer would instruct us to stand five meters apart. Now the slope of the hill was such, that as we went down it our speed increased. Now we were not flat out running by no means, but was traveling at a very fast walk going down it. Because the ground was rocky, with small bushes and with drops and dips we had to watch our steps. We had well past the midway point when on the other side of the wire we saw what I thought was a mortar round hitting the ground. By the time we had stopped our downward descent, another round had hit and was coming closer toward us. Later we found

out it was not mortar rounds but a 75MM Recoilless Rifle being fired at us. Now we did not have a discussion about what we were going to do, but we all three did the same thing.

What occurred to me was that if I turned around to run back up the hill I would be at a disadvantage. I would not be able to see how close the rounds were coming and if I tried to keep track of them by looking over my shoulder it would slow me down. And I might even fall and could not get up in time to avoid getting hit. By keeping an eye on where they were hitting, I could change my direction away from the next hit if necessary. To me the only logical thing to do was run up the hill BACKWARDS. And that was what all three of us did.

Running backwards we finally reached level ground close to their hooch. Believe it or not, we all three reached the level ground at the same time. Jack was closest to the hooch, myself and then John. Now their hooch had a wall in front of the door into it some five foot long. We would have to enter into this short hallway and at its end make a sharp left hand turn into the hooch itself. Well John was pushing me and I was pushing Jack. When we got to the door Jack stumbled thru it. John was crawling over my back and I was trying to get over Jack without the combined weight of us both, killing him.

Once inside and we got untangled from one another, we sat on the floor looking at one another. Jack made this comment: *I sure did want that camouflage blanket, but I figure I can LIVE without it.* And I told him: *Jack I think we all could live without you having it.* About that time, we heard Gun One start firing, Jack and Big John jumped up and charged out the door to join their gun team. I eased out the door and at the end of their hooch peeked out toward where those rounds had come from. To get to my hooch and retrieve my Aid Bag in case of someone being injured, I would have to cover a lot of open ground. We don't know what ever happen to the camouflage blanket, a couple of days later I looked and it was gone. What I do know is that none of the three of us got it. It was a "Dinky-Dau" (crazy) thing for us to have done. We didn't even take a weapon with us, if there had been some VC down there instead, I wouldn't be writing this story today.

BIRTH CONTROL

In my story "Whatever became of Bravo" I had another incident in it that I didn't tell about. At this time I will also correct an error in that story and answer the question. In talking with Lance a few months ago he informed me that there was some that were injured when the zapper squad hit us. And he was one of them that was injured from it. I just flat don't remember it, although I most likely changed any bandages he had. The answer to my question about Bravo came in an e-mail from Cliff Misemer (Section Chief FDC) and the e-mail content is this: Was looking at the photos and watching the video and what memories they brought back.

Great seeing Bravo and I think Peanut, our Dogs!! People have asked if I remember what happened to them and all I could say: "one day they were gone", I don't remember how long we had them.

We don't know what happen to them, but they were Great Dogs and they were part of our LZ's family. Just some thoughts Lance had, I wonder if it was possible that while wondering around outside the perimeter wire they tripped a mine and it killed them. Or someone on guard duty saw movement outside the wire and fired on them.

While in Chu Lia, having to spend the night there, I went down to the mess hall somewhere around five in the afternoon. When I got there I saw a notice that supper would not be served until six. I noticed beside the door two canisters, one had cold regular milk and the other one had cold chocolate milk. Man I hadn't had any cold chocolate milk in like forever. There were glasses stacked beside the canisters, so I got me a glass and filled it to the brim. I stood in front of the canister and filled me one glass after another. I had six glasses full, that's one full hand and two fingers on the other hand. I felt like I was going to explode and I knew I had to quit or I would not be able to eat any supper. When I turned away and took a few steps I could hear it sloshing with each step I took. I needed to walk this off so I looked around to find something that might interest me and I could walk to it. I saw a dust-off chopper pad about two blocks up a slight grade. There was also a Huey Cobra Gunship up there.

I hadn't really had a good chance to look at the inside of a dust-off chopper other than a quick look while loading someone into one. Figured this would be a good time to check one out seeing as there was a dozen or so up there. Plus the only time I had seen a Huey gunship was the time one had visited the LZ and it hadn't landed that day. It was conducting a fire mission, a NVA camp had been located about a mile or two from the LZ. They hovered just off our side of the hill and to our right. The ship has two mini guns mounted under the nose of it. I was told that every fourth round was a tracer and when it was fired it looked like a red line was arching down toward the target. It also sound as if a Loin was roaring when both guns were firing. When I was up close to the Huey gunship that day, I counted the rockets on both sides of it, there was seventy nine rockets on it.

They fired several rockets on the fire mission at our LZ. I noticed that when it fired them it would knock the Huey back some three feet each time. Command also sent some jets with napalm to hit the target that day also. I don't remember if we fired on it or not. But that little Huey had some kind of firepower. We cheered them on as we watched it firing away that day.

After looking over the Huey real good, I went over to the dust-off choppers. I had checked out one of them and was going to another one to see if all of them had the same standard equipment. There was a fellow cleaning out one of the choppers and when I got close he struck up a conversation with me. He noticed the medical symbol on my helmet I reckon because he asked was I a medic and where was I stationed at. I told him and he says you're lucky. I didn't see how he could think I was lucky seeing as he could fly above the dangers of the ground. And him being somewhat in the center of the base in Chu Lia. I thought he was the lucky one. But before I could state that, he said be glad you're not in this Chicken—Shi--- outfit, I reckon you heard about what happen.

No, I live out in the country and very seldom get into the city, so I was at a loss to his meaning. He then told me this story, not too long ago they had received a call to pick up a Vietnamese woman that was pregnant. A chopper was sent out and had picked up the woman and she started going into labor. The Pilot told the medic not to let her mess up his chopper, and instructed the medic to sit on the front of the woman's stomach to prevent her from delivering the child. When an Officer gives an order whether you agree with it or not, you are to obey the order. So the Medic sat on her stomach and she did not have the child in the chopper.

I figured that they would put the screws to the Pilot and made the comment that they probably come down on him hard. To which he replies they docked him two weeks flight pay and also he could not fly for another two weeks. What did they do to the Medic I inquired, he was only following orders. He replies that they docked him a month's pay and for two or three months he was to clean out the choppers every day. At this point he told me that it had been good talking with me. That he had better get back to work that they would be upset if he didn't have all the choppers cleaned up by six o'clock. I went around to a couple more choppers and headed back down to the mess hall.