

# 6<sup>TH</sup> BATTALION, 11<sup>TH</sup> ARTILLERY

Hawaii



Viet Nam

*On Time, Sir!*

## From Georgia to Viet Nam

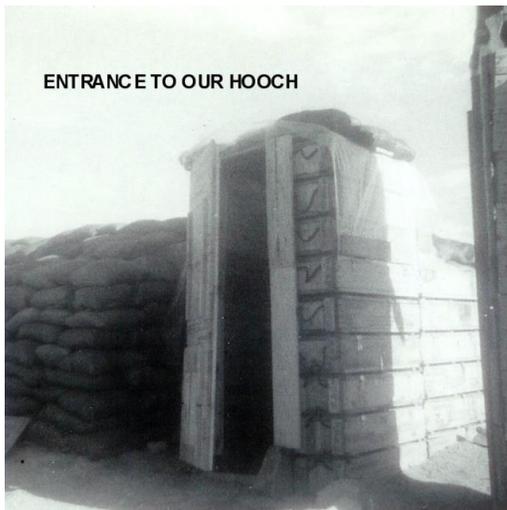
### Section Nine

### Rumors of War and Tall Tales III

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

## BOOM! UH - OH!

Pictured below on the left side shows the front and only door into our Hooch. It faces toward the hills in the right hand photo. The bunker pictured is an Infantry guard bunker and it is right outside our front door around some fifteen feet from us. When you entered into our hooch, you walked inside a boxed in area. On the left side was a door opening, with a blanket over it. We did this so that coming in or out there would be no light exposed that would give our position away at night. There were three of us housed within the hooch up until we got close to going home. Glen Evans was a replacement for Olsen before he left in Nov of 1969, so we had to add another bunk for him. Our hooch was eight foot wide by eight foot tall and twelve foot long. On the far wall facing the door were two bunks Ramsey had the bottom one and I had the top. On the right, a bunk for Olsen, and later we built a top bunk for Evans (better known as "Sparkie") because he was so full of energy he never slowed down.



I was inside our hooch one day by myself, probably read a book in my bunk. I had just gotten out of the bunk and was slipping my shoes on when "**Boom**". It shook the ground, along with our hooch and sounded like the world had come to an end. Dirt and dust was falling all around me, and I hit the deck. Oh! *Dirty word*, with that big of an explosion there was going to be a lot of injuries. I grabbed my Aid Bag and charged out the door of our hooch, fully expecting to hear a choir of "Medic, Medic". And I didn't know if we would be hit again when I got out there. Outside I didn't hear any one calling for a Medic, and before I could turn to my left to go into the battery area. I caught movement to my right on the side of the hill. It was a couple of Infantry men waving their hand and saying "We're Sorry" we didn't mean to do that. I moved toward them enough that I could see over the top of our hooch, glancing over the battery area I didn't see any problems.

So I gave my full attention to the two Infantry men. What are you talking about, you're sorry about what, I asked. They then explained that they had a rock by their guard bunker (see arrow in right hand photo) and they wanted to clear it out of the way to enlarge the bunker. Their intent was to blast it up and over the guard bunker toward the perimeter wire down the hill. He stated that they had put the charge on the wrong side of the rock and when it blew it went up and over our hooch. I thought that the Infantry was supposed to be on our side, I didn't hear any call of "Fire in the Hole" before it went off and nobody had knocked on the door to warn me of what was fixing to happen.

Now that rock in the picture doesn't look all that big, but consider that a lot more of it was underground. I went around to the other side of our hooch and that rock had come down at the front corner and had clipped the sandbags on the top two layers. The rock itself was around waist high and around thirty inches wide. If it had come down on top of our hooch, **my tour of duty would have been over with**. Now our hooch was some four feet below the bottom layer of sand bags. They had to dig down under the rock to place the charge. That charge had to lift the bottom of that rock at least over eight feet high and propel it some twenty foot to the other side of our hooch. To achieve the distance to where it landed I figured it went up and over some twenty feet above our hooch.

By that time the Infantry men had come around to me and told me not to worry about the rock, they would get it out of our area. When he told me that my eyes must have went big as hen eggs, and he quickly told me that they would not blast it out of the area. We'll role it out of the way. OK whatever! There is a couple more stories that this rock will be mentioned in I'll dub it "**The Rock**".

## TWELVE MEN DOWN

We had a regular chopper that delivered the mail and any replacement troops and other small deliveries to us. When we needed ammo or heavier supplies we would be serviced by a Chinook. Our water was delivered in a large rubber tank called a Blivet tank and was air lifted into us by a Chinook. We had a Chief of Fire Sergeant that we call Blivet Belly (*behind his back of course*), didn't any one of us cared much for him except the Battery Captain. Most of the time choppers coming in to the LZ with our supplies would approach from the East over the Infantry area and up to our landing pad. For some reason one day we had a Chinook coming to us out of the southwest where there was several high hills. This was the area that our hooch was facing. We heard gun fire from a Fifty Caliber machine gun. It came from a VC machine gun position in the mountains. Our thoughts was that they had a cave in the side of the mountain and would fire and withdraw into the cave. And it had hit the Chinook. It didn't hit an area on it that would cause it to explode, but just crippled it so that it had to land on the side of another mountain closer to us and could not lift off and escape.

We started a fire mission and the infantry mortar team also fired on the position. We even called in an air strike on it. And we thought that we had gotten it and sent help to the downed ship. Only to hear the 50 crank back up and the rescue chopper had to abort. Again we all took up the fire mission, and again thinking we had destroyed it. We sent in another chopper and was able to extract the crew from it.

We all stood on the hill watching wondering what would happen next. We heard and saw three choppers come from the direction of Duc Pho and figured they were going to send ground troops in to check it out. All three choppers were flying one behind the other. And instead of coming in front of the hill the 50 was located on they circled around behind the mountain to it. When they reached the front of the hill each chopper was flying past the position of the 50. Number one and number two chopper cleared the position and number three chopper had just gone past it when the 50 started shooting at it. From what it looked like they took a direct hit to the engine and black smoke was boiling out of it. It was strange to me as I watched, it looked like the propellers stopped and the body started going around and around. It spiraled down toward the ground and when it hit it exploded.

Someone said that the choppers had a four man crew, two pilots and two gunners manning M60 on both side of the chopper. And there was eight infantry men in the belly of the chopper. When it crashed it killed all but three of them. Our Captain had a pair of Binoculars and was standing on top of the Rock. He informed us that the VC was sending out a patrol to check out the crash. I asked him if I could use the binoculars after he said he could see movement coming out of the trees head for the crash site. As I looked thru the binoculars I could not see any close details of the VC but I could tell that they were men dressed in the VC clothes. I handed the binoculars back to the Captain and a few minutes later we

heard three shots from their AK47's. Those that had survived the crash were now dead.

We watched all this and could not fire a shot at them because we didn't know if we would hit our own men instead of the enemy. As I stood there this is what ran through my mind: *"I'm glad that wasn't me"*. If I had not been assigned to the 6-11 Arty it could have been me on that chopper that day. We later heard that our infantry mortar team was the one that finally took out the gun position. And when the infantry checked it out they found a dead VC chained to the 50 caliber machine gun. Didn't he have some great friends?