

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

Hawaii



Viet Nam

*On Time, Sir!*

## From Georgia to Viet Nam

### Section 16

### On LZ San Juan

### "Almost Murder" II

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

As stated this is the story about Jeff and his altercation with "Sgt. B.B". I'm not sure where he came from or what job he had, but I don't believe he was with B Battery when I came on board with them. And I'm thinking he came after "Sgt. B.B" had been assigned to us. Lance was a people person and he became friends with many people up and down both hills. Most of the time those on our hill, also became our friends. And would spend a lot of time around us when they could. Jeff became one of those. We were sitting around FDC one night. When he told us that the rumor of a river of blood running down hamburger hill, was true. He had been there and seen it for himself. He told us it was: one day we were on top, then the next day we were back at its bottom. He didn't know what was so important about that hill. Seems we wanted it and the NVA also wanted it. The sad part about it was that after all the men we lost, and what the NVA lost, it was decided one day that the hill was no longer important to either side and we all just walked away.

He also told us about the beef, he had with Sgt. B.B. He had been wounded and was shipped back to the States to recover. It was the Chief Sgt., responsibility to gather his property and send it to where ever he was at. He had a sound system he had purchased at the PX, and it was very expensive and had a great sound to it. He did not receive it when the rest of his property got to him. He believed that the Chief Sgt. which was Sgt. B.B took it and kept it for himself. Sgt. B.B denied it, but Jeff still held him accountable for the sound equipment and believed that he had taken it. And to be honest, we all did too. Every time these two came in contact with one another it was like water and electricity, sparks would fly. If I remember correctly it was around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Our BC had given an order, that there would be no fireworks shot off that night. This included firecrackers, cherry bombs, Rifle's, claymores or 105's. It was to be a quite night.

Lance and several others, including myself, were sitting around FDC. There was not any light, but we could see one another with just the starlight and being close to one another. Beyond twenty to thirty feet it was total darkness around us. Jeff was not there among us. At midnight the night was broken with the sound of weapons going off, didn't last but for maybe thirty seconds. It came from around

the guard bunker that was ours, this was behind FDC. A minute or more later, Jeff came walking into the area we were in, from the opposite direction of the firing.

“Sgt. B.B” had come out of his hooch, very soon after the firing had stopped. He was wearing a pistol on his side, something I had never seen him wear before. Of course the minute Jeff walked into the command area Sgt. B.B started cursing and accusing him of setting off the fireworks. Told him that he had disobeyed a direct order given by the BC and was subject to a Court Martial. Jeff denied that he was responsible for the fireworks. Let it be noted that it was not only our BC, but the infantry BC had first issued the order and our Captain was following his lead. I don't believe that Jeff had fired off the fireworks. From the time they went off and ended, and he came into the area from a different direction, would not have been enough time to do both. To do it he would have had to run, in the dark over ruff ground to circle around and come back into the command area. And he didn't appear to be winded when he entered our area.

Sgt. B.B then started accusing him of dropping a hand grenade into his hooch. He told him that if he had not heard the grenade hit the floor and gotten behind something it would have gotten him. And he said that he could tell the difference between the explosion of our grenade and a Chinese made hand grenade. He was sure that Jeff had thrown it into his hooch. I didn't quite understand this, wasn't sure if he was relating a past event or if it had happen that night. Any which way it was, it increased the tension between the two. At this point Sgt. B.B, pulled his pistol, to which Jeff told him he wasn't scared of him and he was going to kill him. Jeff charged toward him, and Sgt. B.B started backing up toward his hooch threatening to shoot him. When Jeff came by us in his charge toward Sgt. B.B, Lance reacted quicker than I did. He reached out and grabbed hold of Jeff, when I saw that Jeff wasn't going to stop and was going to pull away from Lance. I jumped in also and together we brought Jeff to the ground. Even then he was a hand full, but we were able to pin him down. And we both began to talk with him about not doing what he wanted to. We explained to him that Sgt. B.B wasn't worth ruining his life over.

We finally convinced him to calm down. I looked up to determine where Sgt. B.B was to be sure he didn't do anything stupid. Located him at the entrance to his hooch with his gun still drawn. All I could see of him, was his head and his hand that held the pistol. When he saw that we had subdued Jeff, he came out of the hooch and started toward us. At this point guess who showed up! The BC came over and ordered Sgt. B.B to retire to his hooch. Then he turns to Jeff and orders him to his hooch, he was to stay in it until morning. At which time he would report to the chopper pad with his bags packed and wait until the chopper came in. He would then board the chopper and return to Duc Pho, where he would be reassigned to another unit. This was often the case, when something of this nature happened, they would be transferred to another unit and their record would be

sealed. To my knowledge, neither the BC nor Sgt. B.B went to Duc Pho to press charges against him. The next morning Lance and I saw him off.

Some may want to ask us, why keep, Jeff from killing Sgt. B.B. Seeing, as both of us had experienced problems with Sgt. B.B. I cannot answer for Lance, but as for me, *for crying out loud. I was the medic*, I would have had to try and save his life if he was injured real badly. And then on the other hand if he had started firing his pistol to kill Jeff, the way he was running away from us, he might have hit one of us.

**BUT!**

I think that because Jeff was a friend, and friends have one another's back. We did what we did, in his best interest. Only friends could have stopped him from killing Sgt. B.B.

### **Life's a Ball**

Sometimes you roll along

Sometimes you bounce along

Then every once in a while:

Someone comes along

Dribbles the hound out of you

Slam dunks you

Then without any concern

Walks away thinking, they have done you a favor.

The measure of a man, is in his choice, of his friends. We came from all parts of this Great Nation and served together, became friends. As each one of us left the hill, we knew that we may never see one another again. But yet the friendship we made still last even as the years pass away. We may not can recall their name or remember what they looked like (who looks the same as they did back then anyway, I know that I don't). And yet, if by chance we do meet again, the heart will know it's a friend, from the past.

Getting close to closing these stories out. In the next section #17, its title will be:

“Last Man Out”.