

# Who Am I?

Name: Mike Bluemel  
Arrived RVN: January 1970  
Left RVN: November 1970  
Unit: 'A' Company  
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## Mike Bluemel

I was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. Drafted into the Army at age 20 in early 1970. Basic and Infantry AIT at Ft. Dix, New Jersey. Selected for the 3rd Infantry, Old Guard in Washington DC right after Infantry AIT. Stationed at Ft. Meyer and Ft. McNair in the metro DC area. I did not like the "strack troop" part of the Old Guard with weekly haircuts and heel plated boots and such. Became just a garrison troop doing odd jobs. Was in DC during the huge marches and some of the protests at the White House where busses were burned and the 82nd Airborne was trucked up for security and stayed in tents on our parade field on Ft. McNair.

Went to Vietnam when a levee came down to move infantry troops from various garrisons to the Nam.

Entered VN in January 1970 as a PFC and assigned to 1st platoon as a dismount. Sgt Paul was the Platoon Leader and I recall Lt. Alchiss was the officer...and his replacement escapes me. I was later the 50 gunner and replaced "John" as the driver of the 1-1 track. Went to Cambodia during that incursion and recall the 1st of the 5th Mech got hammered pretty bad. I blew an engine pack busting jungle in Cambodia and was taken by VTR back to the base camp on the VN side of the river for a pack replacement. Hit a mine while driving later in my tour and was dusted off with punctured ear drum and slight wound., nothing serious but awarded the Purple Heart. I recall the operations where 1st platoon members David Santa Cruz lost his life and when Don Wishon was killed by a booby trap. David Hansen injured and returned to the "world". Lurch exploding a VC grenade he found and injuring himself after he had just earlier won a Silver Star for an operation in the Bois Lois Woods right before my tour.

I exited Vietnam on an early drop on November 9, 1970 and was home by November 11, 1970. 19 months and 23 days in the US army.

Guys in my platoon I remember:

Bobby Milner., "old man" oldest guy in the company.

Had kids but got divorced and then drafted but hooked back up with his former wife.

She always sent goodies and he was a good ole boy from Leeds Alabama.

Always carried a Buck knife.

Karl Yamasaki..., "snake" Japanese decent from Hawaii. No hips and hence the nickname. Smiled a lot.

Dwayne Rice .., "red" big red headed guy.

Was hit by a star cluster on the weird night operation we had where we took fire from a village.

Thought he was shot but a wild star cluster hit him in the head.

Harvey Willis..., short guy from Wyoming. Chewed tobacco., the rancher type guy.

Sgt. Paul..., platoon leader., I remember him getting drunk or something at a firebase and wearing only a sand bag fore pants and a CVC helmet.

I have a picture of him in the get up.

Juan Santiago..., from Puerto Rico..., I recall learning that those fellows could not vote and English as a second language but the did get drafted.

Billy Beadouin..., from the east coast perhaps. Transferred into our company as a sergeant when the 82nd Airborne left country.

I guess that is enough stuff. mostly remember the good or not bad stuff these days. Long ago and far away. Never kept in touch with anyone that I served with.

I returned to Vietnam on a vacation in 2006 (unrelated to my military time). Stayed in Saigon for several days and took a tour of the "Tunnels of Vietnam in Cu Chi". This is a tourist attraction right in the area we operated in. The old base camp is a small military station now. Could not recognize it now. There is a rubber plantation right outside the old base with 40 year old trees. There are old tunnels that you can crawl through and displays of bobby traps and you can fire AK's, M60 etc for a fee. Continued up the Mekong river on a tour boat and into Cambodia and Ankhar Watt. I was impressed by the

countries physical and "people" recovery from the war and their welcoming of Americans,. According to our guides and some locals the whole communist government action of moving people out of the cities and creating a common state of farmers etc. was a terrible failure with lack of food and motivation. By 1985 the whole thing turned back to a free market and more individual rights.

Interesting in that it appears we may not have lost all that we set out to do. But I have no hard political views on that. Glad I did my duty and got out in one piece physically and mostly mentally., ha!.

Cheers...,

Mike



1-1 trk, Me on left, Milner frnt, Juan Santiago-r, Dave I rear, Harvey Willis-ctr rear, Karl Yamasaki rear r.jpg (640x480)



Captured VC-NVA in Cambodia.jpg (640x480)



Entrance to the Cu Chi base camp-2006 when I returned to Saigon- Cu Chi and Cambodia, Still a military post.jpg (640x480)



First Platoon track being sky-hooked by a Sikorsky.jpg (640x480)



First Platoon track hit by RPG.jpg (640x480)



First platoon track in which David Santa Cruz was killed after we pulled it from the jungle. by a Sikorsky.jpg (640x480)



Maniacs-mechanics track after being hit by an RPG in Cambodia.jpg (640x480)



Me in drivers hatch of the 1-1 track - I was the driver at that time.jpg (640x480)





Me with captured weapons during the recon in which Santa cruz was killed - DP28 and other weapons.jpg (640x480)



Me with RPD captured machinegun-Sgt Paul-1st platoon leader on left-David SantaCruz on right front, later KIA.jpg (640x480)



My track 1-1 after hitting a mine - I was the driver and was Dusted off.jpg (640x480)



whoaml.jpg (640x480)