

The Viet Nam Triple Deuce, Inc.

An Association of 2 Bn. (Mech)

22nd Infantry Regiment

Viet Nam Veterans



Together Then.....Together Again!.....

Thanks for Being There...&...Welcome Home



Editor: Dan & Vera Streit D 69 DMOR - HMOR

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website www.vietnamtripledeuce.org for current contact information.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello again from the sunny Midwest. There have been some robins around here with a very sour look on their faces with the temps and snow on the ground, but Boom! Mother Nature has suddenly evaporated all of winter and every critter is in a better mood, especially the people around here. This has been a winter, heck this has been a year to get put behind us all asap.

Not to sound like a broken record, but it's time to make sure you are signed up for the next greatest reunion ever in Dallas this Fall. September 30 to October 3 offers us all a precious time to gather with our "other family". To you first timers, do the bad memories come up? Sure they do, but I promise that the feelings of healing, closure, patriotism, and discovery of the fact that you soldiered as well as any ever did will dwarf those bad memories. And you will leave the reunion with a sense of pride that may have been missing for half a century. Worth the time, trouble and expense as far as I can tell. Hope to shake your hand there Troop...

Dick Nash, A Co. & HHC, 69

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

To quote one of my favorite movies (*The Postman*), "Things are getting better." More and more people are getting vaccinated (including yours truly), fewer people are being infected with the virus, businesses are opening back up, the economy is improving, and the ice storms are over. It looks like this time the reunion is really going to happen, and I certainly plan on being there. Even if it is in Texas.

I have had many responses to my appeal for more material for this newsletter, and I want to thank you. That does not, however, mean that I don't need more. Keep it coming, guys. Your stories and pictures are what keeps the newsletter interesting and meaningful.

I met a man this weekend who was a retired USAF colonel. He told me he had started out as a sergeant, but he had been given a "battlefield commission" during the Viet Nam era. He had not actually been to Viet Nam, and was stationed in the States at the time, but he had solved some logistical problem the Air Force had been wrestling with so they made him an officer. I'm not sure I would call that a "battlefield commission," but then, I'm not a zoomie. We grunts may have always gotten the dirty end of the stick, but we can at least be proud of what we did and how we survived. Like the words engraved on Zippo lighters: "I know I'll go to Heaven because I've served my time in Hell."

David Allin, A Co. & HHC, 69-70

REUNION UPDATE

The 22nd Infantry Regiment Society reunion has been rescheduled for September 30 to October 3, 2021. It will still be in Dallas, TX. If you registered for the original date, last year, and submitted your registration fees to the 22nd IRS, those fees carry over to the new date. To verify your registration status, contact **Martin Oelklaus**:

moelklaus@aol.com [If no email, call 816-805-0845]

If you made hotel reservations for any of the previously scheduled dates, those were canceled, and you will need to make new reservations. It will be at the Embassy Suites Dallas Park Central. The link for making hotel reservations is on the 22nd IRS website (www.vietnamtripledeuce.org), or you can contact the hotel directly at (972)234-3300. Be sure to let them know you are with the 22nd IRS reunion to get the special rate.

WEBSITE UPDATE

There are new items on the VN222 website (www.vietnamtripledeuce.org). You can read about the latest items in the Announcements and New Items section. These include hundreds of map locations for fire support bases, and daily locations for each unit in the 2nd of the 22nd Infantry from January 1967 through December 1968 and more.

Also, if you scan through the picture albums and recognize someone, send the webmaster (Steve Irvine, svirvine@gmail.com) the person's name. If you have ideas for the website, let Steve know.

NOTICE

**If your mailing label shows
“2020” then your membership is
expiring and you need to send
in your dues.
ASAP**

NATIONAL INFANTRY MUSEUM LEGACY PAVER UPDATE

Hello all. With the announcement that the 22nd Infantry Regiment Society's 2021 Dallas Reunion moving to 30 September-3 October 2021 timeframe, I wanted to remind and encourage my combat brothers to consider participating in the National Infantry Museum's Legacy Paver Program. Most of the information on this initiative (and the sign-up form) have appeared in both the Regiment and VN222 Newsletters in past issues with a cut-off date in early September 2021. Men, I know this is a \$200 contribution to purchase a legacy paver and that is a big chunk in today's budgets; however, this is a chance for you to support NIM and leaving a lasting reminder of your service and sacrifice to this great nation. (NOTE: two pavers have also been purchased recently by families of KIA brothers.) I have attached a recent photo by Bob Babcock of our dedicated paver section 22A along Heritage Walkway that leads up to our awesome 22nd Infantry Regiment Monument and one of our Legacy Tree up by our monument. As of this story's writing we have in place (or on

order) over three dozen pavers that will be formally dedicated at NIM on Veterans Day 2021. I will be there and want to invite anyone who can to join me for that great day! Contact me for any questions.

DEEDS NOT WORDS

Lon Oakley 3rd Plt, Alpha Co, 1969
ldo82288@icloud.com



RED ANT CEREMONY

In September, 2020, Errol "Paige" Lanier and William "Bill" King gave a lunch for Bravo Battery, 2-77th Field Artillery as they had just returned from a month of training at FT. Irwin, Barstow, CA. The lunch was pizza and chicken wings. I, Paige, decided it was a great time to give Jerry Cupp his Red Ant award. With the help of LTC Thomas we pulled it off in good fashion. LTC Thomas had read the info on the award and liked the levity of the Red Ant award. He was able to explain the award to the more than 100 Redlegs present. Jerry did a great job in entertaining the Redlegs with a very funny story of stripping out of his jungle fatigues to get rid of the ants.

Errol "Paige" Lanier ARTY, FO 2-77th FA



Picture left to right: Bill Hing C 2-22nd INF, Jerry Cupp A 2-22nd INF, Errol "Paige" Lanier ARTY, FO 2-77th FA, LTC Aaron Thomas BN. CO 2-77FA, reading and explaining the RED ANT award to the troops.

JERRY CUPP'S RED ANT STORY

Like many of you, I received a letter in the mail from our friends and neighbors telling me I had been selected to serve in the Armed Forces. A couple of months later I'm in Ft Lewis, Washington, assigned to A CO, 2 ND BN, 22 INF Regiment. I can't remember even one time being told about the Red Ants that were waiting for us and that we would all learn to hate.

I can say with great pride that I was an expert at doing the Red Ant Dance. The Track (APC) I was on got the privilege of Breaking Brush and we hardly missed a Red Ant Nest. It was the same if we were breaking trail.

Sometime in May 1967, an Ant got me in the elbow and my arm swelled up. I could hardly move my arm. One day a shot rang out, so I hit the ground and tore the elbow, ending up in the hospital getting a shot of penicillin 3 times a day in the rear area. After a week in the rear area I was back in the jungle, to the waiting arms of more ants.

In 1971 I got the privilege of getting to see them again with the 2/8 Cav. The Red Ants must have known I was coming back, because they started all over again. I believe they spread the word to the leeches, wasps, and mosquitos that I was back.

1SG Jerry Cupp
A Co 2 ND BN 22 INF 4th Inf Div
719-260-6740
Cell 719-493-2530

SALUTE TO 2/22d 'NAM HEROIC TRACK DRIVERS

I was looking thru some old 3rd Platoon photos the other day and came across several that called to mind the selfless and heroic actions of the guys who manned our APCs in the 'Nam. As ugly as they are today, in the photos I saw the young faces of Ken "Lumpy" Schulte and Larry Gallagher. Both drove "Phantom 3/4" for 1LT Dick Nash's internationally acclaimed THIRD HERD platoon and later for A Company's "To The Alps" HQ APC (CPT Crocker/CPT Kush) in 1969. I was only on the ground with THIRD HERD from February to July 1969, but in that short time I witnessed numerous times their demonstrated heroism and that of their fellow APC drivers. Kenny and Larry and all the track drivers in Triple Deuce definitely deserved this story of recognition. Guys, your actions SAVED LIVES!



Lumpy with Tex Holt's monkey (Lumpy's the one on the right). Pine Heath in the background



Larry Gallagher and Lon Oakley

Let me cite a couple of stories that come to mind. One involved the actions in the Ben Cui in late April 1969 when, while on a sweep, A Company made contact. I was a 20-year-old squad leader for Nash's THIRD HERD and our track was in lead that day when we came under heavy light arms fire. As per the SOP of CPT Crocker, we backed out of the Ben Cui wood line and called in RED LEG Arty. We started back into the wood line and received small arms fire again. We pulled out a second time and called in COBRAS to prep the wood line. Then we started back in and still made contact. Backed out a final time and CPT Crocker called in air support. It was the first time I saw napalm used on the enemy. Needless to say, as we started back in there was no contact and I witnessed the hell laid on the enemy when napalm was used. I am sure many of you will attest to having seen the death and destruction of napalm. My point in all of this was at every juncture in this operation that day, the track drivers led us into conflict with the TC pouring 50Cal everywhere, while affording us the cover of

the APC as we flanked out to engage the enemy. Now, at least in the TC turret there was a bit of cover from small arms fire...NOT SO for drivers, who most often had their heads popped up to make sure they had as much visibility as possible with friendlies in front of and beside our APCs. Their bravery that day (and so many others) was commendable, but at the time it was so often overlooked.

For you guys that is my first salute to you! My second and final salute to track drivers comes on the day "Tex" Holt was wounded in Ben Cui and the heroic action of Phantom 3/4 drive Larry Gallagher and the Medic Track driver (name unknown) who moved their APCs as blocking force to protect "Tex" from enemy fire as medics got him into track and out on the road for helicopter medical evacuation (MEDIVAC). Once again the bravery of their action while being exposed to enemy fire was commendable. It just reinforces my strong feeling that track drivers SAVED LIVES!

One last comment: after all the track drivers did during the day, their reward was coming back in and topping off the APC, checking the basic load of ammo needed for the next day, cleaning out the track and often having final duty of cleaning the 50 Cal before maybe getting done in time to get what was left of chow. Finally, I salute my track drivers Larry & Lumpy. I will never forget that hot cup of coffee every morning to start the day. What dedication! To close, in my humble opinion every Triple Deuce APC track driver in the 'Nam should have been awarded Bronze Star with V device. That's my simple observation some 50 plus years later. Men, please accept a simple salute from this OLD GOAT and so many others that appreciated your often unheralded bravery. JOB WELL DONE!

TODAY



Back row: Ken "Lumpy" Schulte, Dennis "Tex" Holt, Joe Goike. Front row: Dick Nash, Larry Gallagher, Lon Oakley

Deeds Not Words

Lon D. Oakley Jr LTC(S) USA (Ret)
Past President 22nd Inf Rgmt Society

ANOTHER BRAVE DRIVER



Kenneth "Pine" Heath

Late in the summer of 1969, after I left A34 to work for the S-2 in HHC, and Larry Gallagher left A34 to drive the commander's track, Kenneth "Pine" Heath became the driver. He told us that the nickname Pine was short for Porcupine, a nickname he had been given as a kid. I don't remember why he had been given that nickname--maybe because of the way his blond hair stuck up like spikes. Pine was from Gadsen, Alabama, and he really liked country-western music. Pine and I didn't

always get along, probably because I was a smart-ass college boy who tended to talk down to people. We may have squabbled, like siblings, but we were family, and we knew we could depend on each other when push came to shove.

On October 23, 1969, Pine was driving the track, with the squad on top, down the MSR, when it hit a large mine. The explosion was so fierce that the track was flipped onto its roof. The other members of the squad were thrown free, suffering numerous but non-life-threatening injuries, but Pine was caught half-way out of the driver's hatch and crushed. I was told he died instantly. I heard a little about it a week after it happened, and then in December I ran into Chuck Blair, one of the members of our squad, who told me the rest. I didn't always like Pine, but he was a Brother, and I still mourn his loss.

Dave Allin, A Co./HHC, 69-70



Pine Heath on the far right, having a snack. In front is Lon Oakley. Left to right on top: Doc Michalec, Joe Esser, Larry Gallagher, Dave Nielsen, and Pine.

Mother's Day, 1969

NVA attack on Night Laager Position

This is a recollection of the events and actions that occurred on 6/6/69. There are many battles and skirmishes that occurred in my tour in Vietnam with the 2/22. Some of these are hard to remember after 51 years, but events such as this night battle are still etched in my mind.

Here is a brief personal background. Just like a lot of enlisted men who served in the Vietnam war, I was drafted. I obeyed my local draft board, and on 4/8/68 was I inducted into the Army in Oklahoma City at the old Journal Record building, which is now the Murrah Bombing museum. On that day I almost became a Marine. The national call that month was terrific and there was a huge demand for men. The Marines needed manpower very badly. They were taking every 5th man that day in Oklahoma City. The remainder of us were sworn in and put on a plane for wonderful Fort Polk, LA, where there were just as many copperheads and water moccasins as there were pine trees.

Fast Forward through basic and AIT: yes, wonderful Tigerland, where every EM was an 11-Bravo. Other than firing an M60 and 50, I think I saw an M113 at Fort Polk one time. Nothing whatsoever was much help in preparing for the experience that I was about to receive in Vietnam.

I arrived in country on 8/31/68 Bien Hoa. Then over to Long Binh and assigned to the 25th Inf. Div. at Cu Chi. I joined Bravo company 2/22 very shortly after arrival. Fast Forward to 6/5/69. I was now squad leader, basically thru attrition. We were pulled off our usual convoy security work. Since I was squad leader, I was required to be in the next day's intelligence meeting

and briefing for our next day assignment. Our platoon leader (2-6) was new and very green. I worried about that. He looked very grim. We were going into the Crescent area the next day and perform RIFs (recon in force.) He informed us that intel said there will be, at the very least, two NVA regiments in the area. Great, what else is new?

We were in the Crescent! We pulled into the area for our night laager position at about 5pm on 6/6. This was about 9 clicks west of Dau Tieng. Our two FNG's started complaining about having to put up the RPG screen and dig a fighting position on the side of the track and fill sandbags. I told them to shut the f**k up. This is what we have to do.

And boy, was I right!

At about midnight, I came off my watch duty and ran into Cecil, our Kit Carson scout. He was extremely nervous, telling me "Beaucoup VC." I gave him a pack of Pall Mall cigarettes from an SP pack and told him to go to sleep. Normally Cecil would not say something like that unless something was up. I decided to get the starlight scope for a look, but I could not see anything. 2-1 had the LP right in front of us about 100 meters out. All of a sudden I get a sit rep from Harold Miesel in the LP. He has movement. At about that time the first mortar round arrived. The NVA were "walking" the mortars across our position. Also, we started receiving ground fire from the wood line about 200 meters out. 2-6 was yelling at me to get on the .50, but I had to wait to get my LP in. When we got them in, we opened up with everything we had. Each track had a .50 turret and .50 ground mount, along with at least 2 M60's. Bill Noyes in 3-1 in the third platoon had a minigun mounted on their track. The NVA had gotten very close. Between our

position and the wood line were old dormant rice paddy dikes. Our .50s chewed them up like hamburger meat. To this day, I am always impressed with the fire power of the Browning .50 caliber machine gun. I still see it mounted on modern day fighting vehicles. This battle went on for some time. Some of you that have been involved in a firefight, especially at night, know it can get lengthy and you lose track of time. The noise of the battle never ceases. Finally we got Artillery support and two Cobra gunships.

Just before daybreak it was over. 25th Div. Intel. estimated this attack was by a fairly large NVA force. They were well trained and well armed. A large number of NVA were killed or wounded, but an accurate body count could not be determined because they removed a lot of their dead and wounded. One NVA soldier that we captured stated that they were part of an NVA regiment that had been marching for two days, looking for a target of opportunity. They saw us setting up and decided to hit us. Big Mistake!

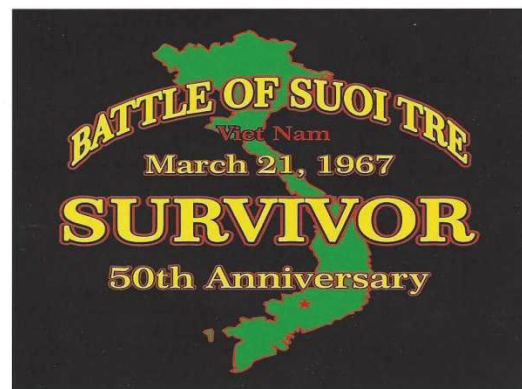
Unfortunately, we lost three men that night. One of the men was a kid that I had gotten to know really well, by the name of Terry Jenkins. Terry was sitting in the turret on the track firing a .50 when a mortar round hit directly inside the turret. Horrible. We went through the 25th Div. LCLC school together. It really sucks when you lose a friend over there in combat. It still hurts today when I think about it.

Bottom line: This was a brawl: nothing more nothing less. We were in their backyard and they wanted us gone! This night battle is a story of bravery and courage of the men of Bravo Company that occurred many times during the Vietnam War.

J. D. Bailey B Co., 68-69

SUOI TRE CEREMONY

As you may know, your humble editor is working on a new book about the battle of Suoi Tre. I put out the word that I wanted to talk to those who were there, and one of the people who responded was Errol "Paige" Lanier, who was the artillery forward observer for our battalion during the battle. Among other things, he sent me these photos of a Suoi Tre reunion that was held a few years ago with members of the 2/77 Artillery and 2/12 Infantry. At the podium in the picture is LTC Don Cherry, 2-77th BN CO. The 2 collages are of each trooper KIA at the battle Soui Tre.



If you are not familiar with the battle, as was I, it occurred 54 years ago, in March 1967, and is considered one of the biggest battles of the war, although now it is largely forgotten. Our sister unit, 3/22 Infantry,

along with 2/12 Infantry and 2/77 Field Artillery, were airlifted into a clearing northeast of Nui Ba den, in War Zone C. Triple Deuce and 2/34 Armor were trying to reach the clearing to provide additional security, but they had been blocked by the thick forest and a river. The day after the insertion, 2/12 left on a sweep to the northwest, leaving the FSB guarded by just two companies of 3/22. The day after that, 2500 Viet Cong attacked. Just as the base was being overrun, Triple Deuce and some tanks, along with advance elements of 2/12, made it to the clearing and swept the enemy back into the woods. Over 800 Viet Cong were confirmed killed. I believe the battle pretty well broke the back of the Viet Cong, who then had to be reinforced by regulars from the North Vietnamese Army.

Dave Allin, A Co/HHC69-70

APPEAL

We always need more stuff for the newsletter. I received a lot recently, but I can always use more. Please send in any stories or articles that are appropriate. Don't worry if they aren't polished—I'll edit and massage them to make them entertaining. Send them to dnjallin@gmail.com. Thanks

MEMORIES of ROUTE 14 / HIGHWAY 14

Actually, the road was LTL-14. It was an Interprovincial Highway, the Vietnamese equivalent to an Interstate Highway in the US. But even for Vietnam it was not really a highway! It was hardly a road. It was one

lane, dry-weather-only, loose surfaced dirt and a bit wider than an Armored Personnel Carrier (APC). Alpha Company swept and secured the part of LTL-14 that ran south from Dau Tieng and was east of the Saigon River. Compared to the Main Supply Routes (MSRs), Hwy 22 and Hwy 239, it was poorly built and required much more effort to maintain. Along much of its length, the jungle was very dense right up to the edge of the road. It hadn't been used by US vehicles during the rainy season because these vehicles would have completely destroyed the wet, muddy road.

Due to this non-use, there was a gook buildup in the jungle east of the road. But after the rainy season ended and the road dried out, 2/22 was directed to begin sweeping and outposting it to make it more secure and to resupply a straight-leg unit that was south of Dau Tieng. Hopefully, the unit would then destroy the gook buildup. During late November and into December 1968, 2/22 was sweeping and outposting part of Hwy 22, all of Hwy 239 west of Dau Tieng and part of Hwy 14 south of Dau Tieng.

I believe that the Recon Platoon was first assigned this mission. But it was quickly evident that a platoon was too small a unit to secure the road. Therefore, Recon was replaced by Charlie Company. Since the jungle grew right to the edge of the road in many places and the road was almost always mined, Charlie's progress was very slow along the road. These two things created many opportunities for the gooks to ambush the road sweep mission and resulted in many casualties for Charlie Company. Then one day, one of the troops jumped down from an APC and landed on an anti-tank mine. The impact was enough to cause the mine to explode. They could only identify his steel pot and the bolt of his

M-16 rifle. This went through the battalion like wildfire. Charlie Company was totally demoralized and Alpha Company was directed to replace Charlie the next day. Second Platoon was lead platoon for the company that first day when Alpha took over the LTL-14 mission. We mounted up and drove to the dismount point to meet the engineers and start the sweep. Usually when we stopped, all the dismounts immediately got off the APCs to present a smaller stationary target. But that day was different. No one moved. They just sat on the tracks. Everyone was thinking about what had happened to that Charlie trooper when he jumped off. I could feel every eye in the platoon watching their platoon leader to see what I was going to do. Everyone was waiting for me to do something. So . . . I jumped off.

No boom! And we got to sweeping and securing the road in the usual manner. Shortly after Alpha took over the sweep mission from Charlie, a company of Rome plows arrived to knock down the jungle close to the road. The plows were made in Rome, Georgia. That's how they got their name. They were supposed to have been there sooner but had to complete another mission before they could be released for clearing the jungle along LTL-14. Rome plows were the largest bulldozers that Caterpillar could make at that time. Back then, I was told that they were D-9s which were essentially two D-8s back-to-back. I recently looked it up online and they were actually two D-7s back-to-back, i.e., D-8s. But they were still huge and just tore the jungle apart and pushed the debris back away from the road. Rome plows could even knock down really big trees with their stinger blades. They were really heavy and built to take a beating. Even anti-tank mines would only blow off a track when a

Rome plow drove over it. The drivers only seemed to worry about two things: bees and red ants.



Anti-Tank Mine-Damaged Rome Plow

Rome plows would start busting jungle by one plow smashing into the jungle at a 90° angle from the road. It would go straight for about 100 meters; make a right turn and go about 300 meters; make another right turn and go back to the road; make a third right turn and go back along the road to the starting point. This made a big rectangle with a flattened perimeter as wide as the blade of the Rome plow. The process would be repeated with more plows in echelon until the side of the road was cleared back about 100 meters. Then they would move down, or across, the road and start over. The gooks would occasionally put mines out in the area to be cleared. But other than that, they didn't mess with the Rome plows. I'd like to think this was because we were providing security for them. But it could be that they were afraid the Rome plows would just drive right over them and tear them to shreds.

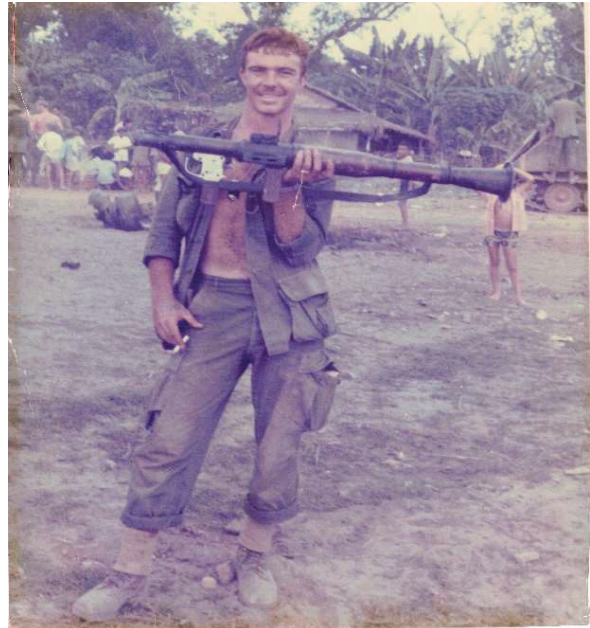
Back then, I didn't know how many Rome plows were in a company. I'd guess around 18 or 20. *I recently looked it up online and there were actually 30!* That number explains my concern with our laager that first night with them. I have a very vivid memory of checking our tracks that night just as it was getting dark. As I

walked from track to track, it was so far between them that I couldn't see the next track in the dark. I kept getting concerned that I had missed the next track and was lost in the jungle. I wasn't. But I think each of our tracks was about 100 meters apart, two or three times the normal distance! A whole company could have walked between them and we would never have known it was there. The reason the tracks were so far apart was that even though we were in our normal circular perimeter, now there had to be space for 30 enormous Rome plows and all their support equipment in the center of our perimeter. Usually only the three rifle platoons were on the perimeter. But that night, I think every track in the company was on the perimeter. And we were still too far apart. But we got through it. And the Rome plows cleared the sides of the road and made it a lot harder for the gooks to ambush us as we swept the road.

Another time 2nd Platoon was company lead during the road sweep again. But this was after the Rome plows had busted the jungle back away from the sides of the road. I don't remember if the engineers had found and blown up any mines that day or not. But, as we neared the village that was the end of our sweep responsibility, I was with the last of our tracks providing security for the engineers. The other tracks had dropped out to outpost as we swept along the road. When we reached the village, we all loaded up on the track and started back to our outpost location. About halfway there, an RPG exploded next to the road on the right side of the track. It had been fired from an area where the jungle had been busted down by the plows. The gooks must have moved into position after the dismounts on the flank had passed by while keeping up with the engineer mine-sweep

team. We were lucky, the gooks missed us. But four gooks weren't lucky, they paid dearly for missing when they fired the RPG at us.

The only one hurt was the squad leader. He got a small piece of shrapnel in his butt. I think Doc put a band-aid on it. I asked him if he wanted a Purple Heart and he said, "NO WAY!!! I don't want anyone to know where I got hit."



The RPG Launcher and the Platoon Leader

It was another day and 2nd Platoon was lead-platoon for the company--again. We were about halfway to the village that was the end of our sweep responsibility when one of the dismounts on the left flank found a booby-trapped grenade. We had some new troops in the platoon, so I radioed the CO and asked if we could stop so the newbies could see what a booby trap looked like. He said OK, so we took ten minutes or so to orient them. Then we exploded the grenade and started moving again. Two minutes later there was a huge explosion. I immediately turned around, and there was the CO's track a meter or two in the air surrounded by a cloud of dust. It went

straight up in the air and came straight down. It had to have been directly over a command detonated bomb, at least 250 pounds maybe 500, buried in the dirt road. We found the wires they used to blow it up, but the gooks were long gone. I'm convinced they waited at the edge of the jungle until the track with three antennas was on top of the bomb, then they detonated it. The gooks were a lot of things, but they were not stupid. They let the squad tracks with one antenna and the platoon track with two antennas pass by before blowing up the CO's track with three antennas. I think everyone on the track, including the CO, Cpt Lightfoot, had to be medevaced. But no one was killed. I didn't realize it then, but looking back, maybe being lead platoon was not the best place to be.

On another day, Alpha had swept and outposted LTL-14 and we were heading back to our night laager position. It had been an un-eventful day. I was riding on the back of the track with my feet hanging down inside the open hatch. All of a sudden, I was up in the air. It was totally quiet. There was absolutely no sound. Time slowed down and almost seemed to stop. It seemed like I could count every one of the dust particles in the air. Then, just as suddenly, I was inside the track, face down on an open box of grenades and dust was everywhere. The track had hit an anti-tank mine and was badly damaged. It would end up being a combat loss. I don't remember if anyone was wounded.

When we got back to the laager, the squad had to remove all their gear and equipment because the track was going to Dau Tieng to be scrapped. Shortly after they began emptying the track, the squad leader called me over. He wanted to show me something. He held up a grenade that had

been on top of the grenades in the box I landed on. The ring and pin that kept the grenade from exploding were just dangling from the grenade handle. Only the end of the pin was still in the handle, by about 1/16th of an inch. The impact of me landing on it must have almost pulled the pin out. Sometimes you just have to be lucky to survive in combat.

Shortly after the Rome plows finished busting the jungle along the road, we were in a night laager in an open field just south of one of the villages along the road. It had been quiet for a couple of days. On the third day we started to notice a distinctly foul odor in 2nd Platoon's area of the laager. It seemed to be coming from a crack in the dry ground. As time passed, the odor just kept getting stronger and stronger. Finally, our Platoon Sergeant, Jim Salvatore, decided to stay back for a day and try to find the source of the odor by digging up the ground around the crack. When the platoon got back that afternoon, Jim had dug up and then completely buried a number of bodies. He also had dug up, but did not re-bury, some gook medical gear. The gooks had had an underground hospital there close the village. The weight of the tracks driving over it had collapsed it and the roof had caved in, trapping and killing anyone there. They were not lucky.



Jim Salvatore at the gook hospital's new emergency room

One evening, 2nd Platoon got a special mission for that night. Intelligence had received word that the gooks were going to blow up a large culvert that allowed a stream to flow under LTL-14 and down to the Saigon River. The gooks wanted to prevent reinforcements from reaching the leg unit farther down the road so they could attack them. They had learned, the hard way, that mechanized infantry has tremendous firepower and can move extremely fast even on poor roads. But if they blew up the culvert, they could prevent rapid movement of our tracks and extend the time for reinforcements to arrive. This would give them more time to over-run the leg unit.

The culvert was at the south end of one of the villages, but not the village with the underground hospital. We were directed to protect the culvert and keep it from being blown up. We were to do this without shooting, unless absolutely necessary. Higher-ups did not want any damage to the village or the people in it.

Anyway, there was an open area on the west side of the road at the end of the

village and it was fairly close to the culvert. The platoon set up there for the night. And three or four volunteers took 40 or 50 grenades in a box and set up at the culvert. At irregular intervals, but not more than 15 minutes apart, one of them pulled the pin out of the handle and tossed a live grenade into the creek. When the sun came up, the culvert was still there with water flowing under it. The leg unit had not been attacked. And the village was undamaged. I guess the gooks realized the culvert was too hard to destroy. Success!

All we had to do then was wait for the engineers to clear the road of mines so we could re-join the company and start the day's mission.

James F. O'Leary , A Co. 1968-69



HELLOS & COMMENTS

David S. Mullins, 4044 Lane Road, Millen, GA 30442-5804
Associate Member. David S. Mullins is a Vietnam Navy Vet who believes he spent time with a Triple Deuce Unit between February 1969 and June 1969. If anyone remembers David S. Mullins, please contact him at 706-829-5016. Also, please contact VN 222 Leadership.

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James F. O'Leary
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Jim would like to hear from anyone who served with him during his tour in 2nd Platoon. Jim would also like to contact Larry Peek, his first RTO.

Jerry Harder
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Jerry would like to locate Mike Hudak from Youngstown, OH

Thomas R. Largent
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Tom would like to locate **Ben Hawthorne**, **George Hooper** and **Crawford White**

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GUEST BOOK HITS

NEW FINDS

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TAPS

Gary Hartt
Died 1-29-21
A Co. 2/22 65-67

Jim Frost
C Co. 4th & 25th ID 67-68
Died 9-23-20

Clyde E. Comer Jr.
B Co 2/22 12-65 to 12-67
Died 1-12-20
By Harvey Nall