



101st Airborne Division
A Rendezvous with Destiny

The Military Career of
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The Military Career (however short) of Ted Tees (AUS 1968 - 1970)

Before the Army

Ted Tees grew up in Buchanan, Michigan during the 1950s and 1960s, the oldest of three kids. We lived in a nice house in a town with enough industry to support many middle-class families, good schools, and a community that had much to offer.

My mother did not work outside our home until all of us were at least in high school. My father worked as a machinist at Clark Equipment Company, retiring after over 40 years. Buchanan was a great place to grow up and could have easily been the hometown of Wally and the Beaver from "Leave it to Beaver."

My introduction to military service was a result of my own actions. After graduating from Buchanan High School at 17 years old, I entered Lake Michigan College in the fall of 1965 at the old campus on Napier Avenue. Classes went fairly well, yet a new set of friends, new experiences, new found freedom, and a level of immaturity all contributed to my focus shifting from academic pursuits to socially available activities.

I continued at LMC, taking a variety of classes required of every freshman including English, history, sociology, a foreign language (French) and math. Things were going rather well and with minimal effort I found myself an average student receiving average grades. However, throughout my sophomore year my focus continued to shift from my studies to the extensive social opportunities presenting themselves to the average 19 year old in the late 1960s.

I feel obligated to clarify early on in this story that despite the reputation of the sixties, my friends and I were not engaged in the drug culture or any form of the so-called counterculture. We did, however, consume our fair share of cold beer on the weekends. This was a great time with groovy music and there were always dances within a short driving distance, often with first-rate live bands. Virtually every weekend we would congregate, dance, make new friends, and sometimes find someone special.

The first semester of my sophomore year I enrolled in a five credit hour Analytic Geometry and Calculus class that included differential equations. Those familiar with these "Diffie Q's" know that this is not a class in which you want to fall behind. Due to my extensive social calendar, I did in fact fall behind and ended up failing the class. A failing grade in a five hour calculus class has a destructive effect on the GPA of a first semester sophomore whose historical grades were average at best.

I was called into the registrar's office and notified that I was being placed on academic suspension for one semester due to my GPA falling below 2.0. To my dismay, he also mentioned he was obligated to notify the draft board that I would not be returning next semester. As I sat there wishing I could melt into the chair, he mentioned that my student deferment may in jeopardy.

My intent was to return to LMC after sitting out for a semester but I was also sure Local Board #11 was also interested in me. It was suggested that I might delay being drafted long enough to get back into school if I caused some sort of "administrative delay" in their system. I began changing my mailing address every 30 days and reporting via long form, through the mail to the board. In retrospect, I sometimes wonder if my efforts actually managed to move my name to the top of the pile.

Greetings

I was drafted and inducted into the army on 28 May, 1968. I got on a bus at Local Board #11 in Benton Harbor and was off to begin my military career. They took us to Detroit, Michigan for a physical and in-processing and then dashed most of us off to Fort Knox, Kentucky where the intent was to make Government Issue soldiers (GIs) out of us.

Once you entered the military, you got a variety of shots and inoculations, were tested for a variety of diseases and conditions, were issued virtually everything you needed in life or needed to survive, and sent to an initial training course, typically referred to as "basic training" for nine weeks. This was unfortunately followed by additional shots and inoculations.

Basic Training

During basic training, we learned fundamental military courtesy, physical training, and knowledge needed to become a productive soldier. Training also included weapons initiation. Here we learned everything that every soldier needed to know, no matter if you were to be the battalion surgeon or the toilet attendant.

Each morning began quite early for our basic training company, starting with Master Sergeant Webb calling everyone to attention asking, "give me my sick, lame, and lazy," for sick call. This was followed by a nice, refreshing run, a cool-down period, and finally breakfast. On a personal note, I feel I benefited from being rather tall, as when our platoon "fell in" (aligned ourselves in a formation, specific width and four men deep) I was assigned a position in the back row, as the height arrangement had been shortest to tallest, front to back. This put three rows of other trainees between me and our Drill Sergeant. The rest of our day was filled with new and exciting training sessions, running, practicing our brand-new skills, inspections, two more meals, and perhaps another shot or inoculation. We finished most of our days quite tired and ready for a good night's rest.

Our platoon was made up of individuals from all over the country, draftees and volunteers, all with various levels of education. Before moving on, I should explain that becoming a "Drill Instructor" or "Drill Sergeant" brings with it the right to wear a drill sergeant hat, often called a "Smokey the Bear" hat. Not everyone who attempts to qualify as a drill sergeant is successful, and the hat is worn with pride and garners respect from others. This leads me to one particular situation where Drill Sergeant Carlisle announced that he had an important yet difficult task and would need someone who was well educated. He had everyone who had at least attended high school raise our hand. He then began an elimination based on education (graduated high school, attended college, graduated college, etc.). I was surprised by the level of education among us, noting that many held four year degrees. Ultimately, the "winner" was a guy by the name of Tom Masters, who coincidentally held a master's degree. By now, we were sure that Tom had certainly escaped running or physical training that day to take on some difficult administrative task, perhaps in an office.

It was at this point Sergeant Carlisle called Tom up front (the first of many times throughout our basic training), turned to him and carefully handed Tom his hat saying, "Hold my cover, and if you drop it, you will NOT have a good day!"

Philisophical statement

I would not be surprised if told that not much had changed since WWII as far as the Army's basic training. New weapons and lessons learned, of course, but the fundamentals of military courtesy, processes and the required adjustments to basic human behavior had not changed. Many of us were sons of the *Greatest Generation* and the strategies were the same. One thing for sure, the system and methodology worked!

Marching, running, fighting, shooting - all were taught and learned as a unit as opposed to individual. In many cases, if one failed, all would fail. This outcome was avoided as trainees began to understand individual strengths and weaknesses then took measures to help others succeed. These tactics resulted in unit success (and maybe a little less running). Our training continued, and though it did not become any easier, it became more manageable. We learned to deal with the unexpected as our bodies and minds adjusted to this new, regulated world of military life. Though many of us did not "want" to be there, our moral and ethical principles would not allow us to quit or run away. We finished our basic training, graduated, and were granted a weekend pass before moving on to our next destination, where our newfound, basic military skills would be combined with a specialized set of military skills that we would learn in an advanced training setting.

An assumption

Having a year and a half of college and a strong, rural work ethic behind me, I knew that I would most likely end up with an assignment requiring strong thinking, writing and math skills, attention to detail, all combined with strong interpersonal skills. My assignment would

become an opportunity perhaps dealing with the public, or possibly preparing important governmental documents, never landing in the

Infantry - Advanced Individual Training at Ft Polk, Louisiana

It had to be a mistake! Why would the Army want to waste a skilled and charming fellow such as me in the infantry as a rifleman? I eventually found out, but it took many, many months.

Advanced individual training for the Infantry (Military Occupational Specialty MOS 11B) built on the basic skills and took them to the next level, including advanced proficiency with ALL weapons in the current arsenal for the US Army.

Weapons proficiency was combined with effective unit strategies: how to make the most of an individual, fire team, a squad, and a platoon. For the most part, strategies for units larger than a platoon were not "taught" in this venue, as once at the "Company" level, command was normally the sole responsibility of a commissioned officer.

Confidence, though not "taught," was instilled in us by virtue of success and proficiency. Only small portions of the training were done in classroom settings, where important facts and concepts would be presented. The majority of our training and proficiency were gained in practice with oversight, criticism and praise given by experienced individuals. Proficiency was measured and determined by testing with real equipment in very real simulated settings.

We became extremely proficient with the M-16A1 rifle (we used the M-14 in basic training). Other weapons we learned to operate were the M-79 grenade launcher, the 90 mm recoilless rifle, the M-60 machine gun, and various types of fragmentation and white phosphorous grenades. We learned to deploy and fire a claymore antipersonnel mine, set trip wires with flares, and built on our hand-to-hand combat skills. We worked to enhance our ability to fight as a last resort with a knife and/or bayonet.

Staffing and playing a key role in our training were both seasoned noncommissioned officers (NCOs or Sergeants) and some "shake and bake" instant NCOs who had gone to training to become sergeants more quickly than the traditional method of coming up through the ranks. These sergeants were nicknamed "Shake 'n Bakes", referring to the Kraft Foods product that was used by placing raw meat pieces in a bag containing the coating, closing the bag, and shaking so the particles adhere. The coated meat is then baked in the oven. This resulted in a quick and easy meal that did not require much effort. Thus was born the nickname for these sergeants.

Beyond the shooting and fighting skills, we learned much more about strategy and maximizing unit effectiveness. We were taught the use of military radios, afforded practice using secure (scrambled) and un-secure radio operation and use. We built upon our map

reading skills and were actually tested. Our trainers took us to a remote location and handed a compass and a contour map. We were shown our current location, given a destination and a reasonable amount of time to get there. We learned to call for and accurately adjust artillery fire (onto the enemy - not you, your unit, or other friendlies!).

In reflection, I can only compliment the infantry for how it selects, trains, and uses the best and the brightest of this nation to accomplish the designated mission.

NCOC - more training (an honor to be considered!!)

During the Vietnam War, a shortage of infantry Noncommissioned Officers (sergeants) developed. The standard tour of duty in Vietnam was 12 months in-country. As troop deployment numbers rose, many of those deployed were draftees, and many chose not to re-enlist after returning from Vietnam, knowing that jobs and/or educational opportunities seemed a better choice than a military career. This contributed to a growing shortage of Noncommissioned Officers (sergeants) to fill the role of squad and fire-team leaders. Thus was born the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course at Fort Benning, Georgia which operated from 1967 to 1972, graduating over 26,000 who served valiantly in Vietnam and around the world. It was an honor to be offered the opportunity to attend, and I took it. Perhaps the most notable aspect of our training was being put in difficult, near impossible situations with resources depleted and more being taken away. It was then that our trainers would issue that unforgiving question: "Whattaya gonna do now, Patrol Leader?" They taught us that impossible is relative. We received an abundance of harassment both day and night. Obedience to orders had to be blind at times. I don't know how OCS (Officers Candidate School) could have been much tougher; low crawling, the bars, and, of course, more running came at all hours of the day and night - not to exclude surprise inspections.

I thought the Army was trying to break us at times during NCOC training, especially during Ranger Week, where the challenges and difficulties became too much for some guys. NCOC School lasted 13 weeks and the last week was called "Ranger Week." We carried 60 pound rucksacks everywhere we went and the week culminated by dropping (while hanging at the position of attention) from 30 feet up in the air into 12 feet of water at "Victory Pond." The intent of that exercise was to help us overcome two of man's most natural fears - heights and water! My personal issue was that it was January and there was a thin crust of ice on the pond when we arrived. We got a bonus that morning, "ice cold water in Victory Pond!" Many of the training days were long and hard, sometimes boring and sometimes very interesting. They kept us awake by telling us that our training and learning to stay alert might keep us alive in Vietnam.

The training was good but it was a lot to digest in such a short time frame. To be at NCOC School at Fort Benning was indeed a privilege. We felt we were different, some of the best, but it was a whirlwind for body and soul. The two most memorable parts of training for me were the rappelling and the tower at the pond (heights and natural fears again).

Compass courses, map reading, artillery missions, adjusting fire, and honing basic leadership skills would be the most used courses once we arrived in Vietnam. Our job was to follow orders, accomplish the mission, lead the men, kill the enemy, and be a parent to our squad all while aiming towards the underlying mission of getting us all home safely. Our job was a little more difficult because of our rank. Consider the first line supervisor in industry, the foreman, or the high school principal. My training gave me leadership skills, made me competent, and caused me to realize that I could do anything if I put my mind to it. This has helped out time and time again in my post-military life.

Pictured below is a memorial at the National Infantry Museum at Fort Benning, GA.



"To Brothers In Heaven"

by Gary Higgins - NCOC Class 15-69

A Soldier boy, A Shake 'n Bake,
Our unique name, we had to take,
Young and scared, tested and dared,
A.I.T. to Benning, NCOC always winning,
Weapons, grenades, we made the grade,
Tested and proven, grunts always movin',
We come and go, at times Gung Ho,
So glad to be,
From the home of the Free.
"Follow Me" We did our best,
Your C.I.B., proud on your Chest.

I graduated in January, 1969 and Col John Glenn (USMC Retired) was the keynote speaker at our graduation. Virtually all of us knew our destiny, which was to spend a single stint with trainees fresh out of Basic Training and assigned to the Infantry. The time we spent with these trainees allowed us to practice the skills and apply the knowledge we had acquired while at Fort Benning NCOCC School.

My time back at Fort Polk with the trainees was relatively uneventful. I am sure that I learned from it, but at 20 years old, I did my job and did it well. Somewhere during this period of time, I realized I had somehow become an adult, had responsibilities, not only to myself, but others as well!

Off to the Republic of Vietnam

I arrived in the Republic of Vietnam on 15 May, 1969 at Ton Son Nhut airbase in Saigon. Knowing the army practice of "hurry up and wait" would surely continue here, I was amazed to find out how fast and effectively the staff there were at checking me in and getting me off to my next destination of Camp Evans, northwest of Hue. Upon arrival, we were picked up and delivered to our respective destinations; mine was an assignment with Bravo Company, 1st of the 506th Airborne Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. Ah, home sweet home. I could settle in, put away my personal items, get a little rest, write a letter or two, and find out what was next. Little did I know...

The company clerk, armory NCO, and "everything that needs to be done" guy came and told me to bring my "stuff" over to Company HQ and he would get me ready. "Ready for what?" I was thinking. I followed him and he asked me to dump out my duffel bag. I did and he helped me re-pack it with those things I would need when I returned for Rest and Recuperation (R&R - a one-week leave - similar to a vacation) or when it was time to go home. He matter-of-factly asked if there was anything in my duffel bag that would embarrass me or my family if its contents (personal-non military) were returned to my family. Oh my!

He then told me that the Captain I came in with was "Viking," whose real name was Captain Harold Erickson. He had been on R&R with his wife in Honolulu at the time the battle of the year had unfolded. Bravo Company, along with three other Companies from the 1/506th were among the US troops attempting to drive off a fixed enemy force occupying Ap Bia mountain, hill 937, later on known as "Hamburger Hill."

I have the original first letter I wrote from Vietnam to my parents (actually, I have all of them, because my mother kept them, arranged chronologically with a note on the front recording when they arrived). Reading what you wrote to your parents 40 years in the past can be entertaining and puzzling, as it is a reflection of what and who you were as opposed to who you are today. I talked about how hot it was and noted, "this 101st Airborne Division has a lot of spirit behind it. They are the only division in Vietnam that doesn't wear a subdued or camouflaged shoulder patch. This is because of their reputation. Higher enemy headquarters have sent out memoranda to their smaller units saying, 'do not engage in close combat with the American GI's bearing the patch with the chicken on it. They don't know what an eagle is here.'"

We continued my preparation to go to the field and join up with my company. The NCO (I think his name was Tim Coder) was very deliberate about preparing my rucksack and everything else. We put together three bandoleers holding six magazines each of M-16 ammunition. A box of ammunition holds 20 rounds of ammo, but he emphasized I should only put 19 rounds in each magazine in order to prevent a jam initiated by a magazine packed too tightly. I have spoken to several other infantrymen that practiced our trade in Vietnam and almost all never loaded more than 19 rounds in a magazine.

He continued to prepare me, packed my rucksack with C-Rations, canteens of water, iodine tablets for disinfecting water gathered on the trails from streams or bomb craters, and then he gave me a steel "ammo box." This was a latchable, waterproof container for mail, cigarettes, writing materials, and anything I did not want to get wet. Next, I was given a poncho, jungle blanket, claymore mine, clacker (electrical detonation device), and a length of wire to connect the two. This was all followed by his generous donation of three or four pounds of C-4 (composition C-4, a plastic explosive) which he indicated was sometimes needed to blow trees for a Landing Zone (LZ). He also explained that C-4 was a much quicker means than the "heat tabs" we were given to heat water for coffee. C-4 was indeed quicker and hotter, and could burn a hole right through a dry canteen cup.

I was then outfitted with the rest of my needs. He felt that four frags (fragmentation grenades) and two smoke grenades would be all I needed initially. He said they didn't carry any "Willie Petes" (White Phosphorous) grenades in the field, but kept them in the bunkers on the fire bases. It was then that he presented me with an item which remained with me the rest of my tour: my M-16A1 rifle, which he claimed to have meticulously checked over the previous day. The serial number was 996131. My son makes fun of me because I can remember my Army serial number and the serial number from my M-16, but may have forgotten what someone told me half an hour ago!

It was late in the day and I was told that I would be going out in the morning with Viking. I was introduced to him and he spoke with a little bit of a southern accent. That was comforting. He also reiterated I NEVER salute him again until he told me it was ok. If a group is being targeted by a sniper, the one he wants to kill is the one in charge.

Bravo Company would move after daybreak to a Landing Zone for re-supply and a turnover between Viking and the temporary Company Commander. I wrote a couple of letters and went to bed on a cot, wondering if I was up to carrying that rucksack and all the other items in and attached to it (hand grenades, ammunition, water, and food all weigh up pretty fast). I was told that I would soon figure out what I really needed.

Out to the A Shau Valley- the breeze, the view, and then reality

We flew out at daybreak and it was great - it is about 25 degrees cooler once you get above 1000 feet. I will talk about helicopters quite a bit in this story and will often refer to them as "birds." That's what we called them. The Bell UH-1 was in the service of the US Army during the Vietnam War. The original designation of *HU-1* led to the helicopter's nickname of *Huey*. Another term often heard was "slicks," which were nothing more than a Huey with the seats removed (we sat on the floor with our feet hanging out). In September 1962, the designation was changed to UH-1, but Huey remained in common use. Approximately 7,000 UH-1 aircraft saw service in Vietnam.

Our training back in the states was very complete as far as preparing for what was in store for us. Though I had been on helicopters many times before, I now realized a few things had gone overlooked. The trip to join up with Bravo Company ended at what was not really a Landing Zone, but rather a patch of six to eight foot tall elephant grass. They hovered over the grass and the door gunner indicated I should jump! A six or eight foot jump into soft soil and elephant grass by a 20 year old in prime physical condition should not be an issue, right? We had done this numerous times in training back in the states and it went well.

What they didn't necessarily tell us is that you don't do it with a sixty pound rucksack on your back - which would have rotated me into a slamming fall on my back, possibly injuring me badly. The door gunner helped me remove my rucksack, dropped it down, and I jumped with no consequences. I noted Viking was gone and undoubtedly well into his turnover with the temporary company commander.

I was introduced to my Platoon Leader, a first lieutenant who was from Idaho, ergo his name was "Super Spud" or "Spud" for short. Smart guy, seasoned, competent - everything you wanted in a Platoon Leader. I later learned that competency was valued as much or more than bravery. We were roughly 2000 meters from Dong Ap Bia (Hill 937). The battle for this little piece of real estate has been well documented in the history books as well as Hollywood. I remember my thoughts based on my first week in the boonies (a term used for any time you are not in a secure area), "it is going to be a long year." After all, I was engaged in my first fire fight the first day I was in the boonies!

We moved up the hill until we made "contact" with the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), exchange fire, pull back and call in an air strike or ARA - Aerial Rocket Artillery. We were supported that summer by our good friends from "C" Battery, 4/77 Aerial Rocket Artillery. They would fly their Cobra Gunships into the heat of any battle and fire rockets and mini-guns with pinpoint accuracy. These pilots went by the call sign of "Griffin," aptly named as they seemed to be part lion and part eagle! We would then move back up the hill and do it again. It was all about real estate and who owned it. Our wounded would be moved back to an LZ and a medevac would pick them up.

I was new (the slang term used was "cherry") and was not thrust into a situation for which I was not prepared. My duties were "administrative" in nature for the first week. Spud had me watch the map and track our movements, ensuring I knew exactly where we were at all times. This sounded easy enough, but I soon found that even though we had been "moving" for a half hour or more, we may not have covered much distance on the jungle trails. It was 20 May, 1969 when we made the final assault up the hill. Three Companies from our Battalion and numerous other units from the 101st along with a battalion from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) marched up the hill, driving the NVA back into Laos. It was then that I realized something important about the NVA: they were well trained, well fed, well equipped, and well motivated. They were fighting us from bunkers constructed of reinforced concrete, deep in the ground and had plenty of rice and water, plenty of ammunition, communication devices, medical supplies, clothing, and many other supplies too

numerous to list. I watched the 1987 film *Hamburger Hill* and found the most memorable and accurate moment was when the medic (Doc) said, "We've been up on that hill ten times, and they still don't think we're serious." That statement, purposely full of sarcasm and cynicism, is clearly the most insightful line in the film.

A and C companies, 3rd of the 187th had taken many casualties and were airlifted to a secure area on the Gulf of Tonkin called "Eagle Beach" where they were afforded a brief R&R and did some reorganizing due to the losses at Hamburger. Other units involved coordinated the organizational and logistical tasks necessary after the ten day battle to take possession of Dong Ap Bia.

Over the next few weeks, we continued patrols in the area, locating dead NVA and continued to make minor contact with NVA. The casualties we ("B" Company) took on Hamburger were enough to put us in line for a trip to Eagle Beach. We were there for almost two days and I even had an opportunity to water ski in the Gulf of Tonkin! I remembered writing a letter to my parents where I mentioned a hill we called "Hamburger Hill" and wondered if there had been anything in the paper about it. Evidently there had been and continued to be, as I still have the June 17, 1969 Headline from the Niles Daily Star: "North Viets Back on Ap Bia Mountain." We kept chasing them away and they kept coming back.

Esprit de corps



While at Eagle Beach, after casualties were considered, Viking determined that 3-6 (our Third Platoon) had taken enough casualties to warrant reorganization. The lieutenant leading the third platoon had been wounded and would not be returning. With other casualties and numbers down, they disseminated the remaining men among the first, second, and fourth platoons. This re-org gave me a full squad (pictured at the left) to lead instead of the three men with whom I had started.

What happened next was somewhat revealing as to the nature of unit mentality. When we reorganized, the third platoon, whose numbers were down and the lieutenant had been wounded, was dispersed into the first, second, and fourth platoons as I mentioned. A short time after that, we were told that Battalion Headquarters knew that "B"

company had three platoons, but found it confusing that they were identified as First, Second, and Fourth Platoons. This cannot be! When they monitored our radio traffic and we reported locations, it caused confusion for the REMFs (Rear Echelon Motivational Forces?). Viking was directed to have the fourth platoon assume the designation of Third Platoon. It turned out this was more difficult than one might expect. The fourth platoon wanted to remain the fourth platoon and the guys from the third platoon wanted no part of a "new" third platoon. This went on for several days until Viking convinced the right Colonel that we would be more effective with no third platoon. When I left ten months later, there was still no third platoon in Bravo Company. The Third Platoon was a casualty of Ap Bia Mountain, Hill 937 - better known as "Hamburger Hill."

Over the course of my tour, I became well aware of how our enemy had learned that they could no longer expect to defeat us in conventional warfare practices. In WWII and Korea, there were often battle lines and the military would focus on controlling real estate. Once defeating or "pushing back," the enemy, the victor would continue on, gaining ground and controlling the land behind them. However, both the NVA and Viet Cong had adopted "hit and run" practices which could be characterized as early versions of terrorist tactics.

Our days were made up of patrols, rotating on point, hours and days of boredom complicated with moments of terror. Always on guard, alert, and quiet when in the boonies, we were "boonierats" or "11 bush" (slang terms associated with our Military Occupational Specialty of 11B Infantry). The following link provides further insight:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58vQ7_4I2P4.

In the "boonies" - we needed to be quiet, stealthy, and "ready" while moving up and down the trails and paths. Humans are a social animal and being asked to constantly be quiet and not interact presented its own challenges. Often written on the back of the camouflaged cover of a boonierat's helmet were the words, "IF YOU CAN READ THIS - YOU ARE TOO F***ING CLOSE." This was rooted in understanding the basic psychology that says that a combatant (your enemy) will instinctively shoot at one in a group of enemy before shooting at a lone enemy. People have a natural desire to congregate, talk, and socialize. But in the boonies, we avoided these "crowds" to save our own lives and the lives of others in our platoon. For many of us, these habits returned home with us. I can state honestly that one of the most challenging experiences in my adult life was entering a subway car during a morning rush hour. It was not terrifying, but terrifying was one of the adjectives I considered using to describe it.

Another outcome of my time spent in the boonies was the need to sleep very quietly. Upon my return from Vietnam, my wife noted that she would sometimes need to reach over and touch me to see if I was even in bed, as I made no noise and rarely moved while sleeping.

There were countless things I continued to learn as a new guy. A couple of important lessons I learned in the first couple of weeks were related to water. You can only carry so much water and you need to ration it. Drink what you need and not necessarily what you want!

Another lesson was related to eating a LRRP meal. LRRP (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol) meals were lightweight, dehydrated meals to which you added hot water, allowed soaking and swelling, and it would turn into a nice warm stew, chili, or other delicacy. Often we would eat very late in the day with little to no daylight left, and sometimes I needed to heat my water under my poncho in order to avoid detection from the light of the heat tab or C-4 burn. I would be extremely hungry. So hungry that I sometimes did not allow adequate time for the LRRP to completely "soak and swell." If this process finishes in one's stomach, it can wreak havoc and up it comes. I soon learned to wait until the meal was ready. We would often locate our NDP (night defensive position), but stay back several hundred meters and not enter it until right at dark. We would usually eat our evening meal during this wait, then quietly enter our NDP, establish a perimeter, deploy claymore mines and trip flares, and finally settle in for the night, rotating on guard duty throughout the night. We would wake everyone before daylight, telling them, "Stand 2" and be prepared. This strategy and the phrase "Stand 2" is rooted in the hour in which the French and Indians attacked, therefore you are up on watch an hour before dawn and an hour after dusk. After daybreak, we would accommodate our personal needs, i.e. shaving (using precious water!), coffee, breakfast, visit the "restroom," repack our rucksack and do the same thing all over again. You would have been impressed how 60 to 80 men could do so much so quietly!

Though I cannot put a date stamp on it, it was not too long before I realized that I was no longer a new guy. I had seen battle, had been on several CAs (Combat Assaults) - where they "insert" you in a new location via helicopter. What a beautiful country from a couple of thousand feet! Problem was that they kept putting us back down on the ground! We would do this on a regular basis, moving here and there within our Area of Operation (AO). But along with being moved came the most important things we needed. Mail was delivered for our mental health, water and meals (C-Rations) were provided for our physical well-being. Ammunition and grenades were provided on request and would be delivered anytime we needed them, as long as the helicopters could fly.

About ten years ago I had an opportunity to speak with a guy who I had gotten to know while in Vietnam. We spoke just once, but we talked at length about kids, careers, etc. Recently, we have been exchanging emails and he told me that the most memorable part of our earlier conversation was my reply to a question he had asked me: "What do you tell people who ask about Vietnam?" My answer was, "I tell people that I served in an exotic place 10,000 miles from home and I don't remember a thing about the flora or fauna of the country." As a person who grew up outdoors and close to nature, that was so true and yet, so profound; a true indication of our intense state of mind at the time.

Over the course of my tour in Vietnam, I was impressed as to how effective the defoliant was in the jungle (weed control for us farm boys). The trails and crude pathways coming from the North and from Laos were not overgrown and could be easily observed from the air. "Crude pathways" may be a misnomer, as many of the well-worn trails had bamboo steps constructed on the steeper hillsides, facilitating the constant flow of ammunition and supplies being brought from the North day and night. It was a number of years later when

we began to learn the long-term consequences of what was done to preclude growth of vegetation in the rain forest.

A Long and Deadly Summer in the AShau Valley



His stomach is churning as fast as the Huey's blades, but the world's lowest paid professional man jumps anyway.

We continued to pursue the NVA that summer. Many combat assaults resulted in contact with the NVA on a regular basis. Given the choice, I thought it would be safer to be on the second or third bird in on the LZ, as we assumed that the NVA would start shooting right away as we put the first six or seven guys on the ground. NOT TRUE! The NVA had figured out that if they started shooting right away, the helicopter would not put the guys on the ground and

would just pull off and call in a firestorm of various types of shelling on the whole area. As it turned out, they learned to wait until we had committed six, twelve, or more troops to the ground before they started firing. We were committed at that point, with boots on the ground. I only saw red smoke once during my tour, and once is enough. A "hot" landing zone is designated with red smoke (taking fire - get in and get out) as opposed to yellow or purple (called on the radio banana or grape). My platoon was fortunate enough to make more than enough Combat Assaults and we were awarded the Air Medal "for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight."

My mother saved a newspaper article written by a journalist/soldier published June 29, 1969 in the Minneapolis Tribune. The article was titled, "Boredom Is Real Vietnam Enemy, State Soldier Says." He goes on to say, "in nearly every division except the war-weary 101st Airborne and 25th Infantry - the foot soldiers main foes are trench foot, blisters, heat exhaustion, and the damnable boredom that comes from having nothing to do but slap mosquitoes....."

There was a great deal of fact in the private's article as we (units of the 101st) were making contact every two to three days at least, with NVA and often with elements of Ho Chi Minh's best, the 29th NVA Regiment, well trained, well equipped, and well motivated. The area of operation assigned to the 1/506th - mostly in the A Shau Valley, up to and into Laos - was a hotbed of activity.

In a July letter to my parents, I described a long day with my squad on point, tense, but uneventful. We were dug in for the night and about 2000 meters from the Laotian border. I told them that tomorrow's official objective was a point about 200 meters from the border, looking for large bridges camouflaged from above that are part of an important supply link from the north into RVN. I told them we would either be extracted or we may slip into Laos and look around. I followed this statement with a request that they, "don't write your congressman! We need to find those bridges." We found them, pinpointed their location and I think it was the Air Force who disassembled them.

Sometime during the summer, Spud rotated back home and my new Platoon Leader was 1st Lt. Steve Bowman (West Point, 1968). Lieutenant Bowman was an Airborne Ranger and a fine officer. With him in charge we continued our patrols, dealt with jungle rot, mosquitoes, personnel matters, the constant heat, and routine contact with the NVA. I was older than many of the guys in my squad - 20 turning 21 - and along with being their leader I had to do my part to keep them on task, ready to do what they were trained. I had to listen, discipline fairly, counsel, and sometimes just be there for them. I believe I even heard a couple of confessions in an unceremonious fashion.

We routinely found psyops flyers on & near the trails in the A Shau near Laos. I thought, "how ridiculous!" I for one knew that these things would not work on the sophisticated, well rounded US soldier. But then again, I can still remember the name on one of the flyers explaining how to surrender to the North. No one would have considered crossing over, but the flyers did seem to have an impact, however slight.

The psyops leaflets left out on the trails by the US and South Vietnam targeting the NVA were also routinely found on the trails - I kept one, not knowing what it said, but clearly understanding the message that went with the picture of the B-52s and the firepower they delivered when bombing the trails from the North. It was a given that the bombers and the devastation they delivered so accurately were both hated and feared by the North.

Over the course of my tour, people in my squad, platoon, and company were rotating out and being replaced with new men. This helped me become established and accepted as an "experienced" squad leader. Other events contributed to my credibility in our platoon and Company. Times were never boring in the A Shau. On 21 July, 1969, during combat operations in the A Shau Valley, approximately 700 meters from Ap Bia Mountain, the following events occurred (verbatim from general orders number 14788):

"For gallantry in action in the Republic of Vietnam on 21 July, 1969. Sergeant Tees distinguished himself while serving as a squad leader in Company B, 1st Battalion (Airmobile), 506th Infantry, during combat operations near the A Shau Valley, Republic of Vietnam. As Company B began to ascend the slope of a ridge north of Dong Ap Bia Mountain, the lead element came under intense enemy small arms, rocket propelled grenade, and automatic weapons fire from an unknown size enemy force situated in well-constructed bunkers. In the initial encounter, the lead man was critically wounded and subjected to further enemy fire. Realizing the gravity of the situation, Sergeant Tees quickly began to maneuver his way

toward the wounded soldier. As he approached the wounded man's position, the enemy force began directing a heavy volume of fire toward him. Sergeant Tees immediately began leveling a heavy base of suppressive fire, killing one of the insurgents. He then placed the wounded man on his shoulders and began carrying him to safety in spite of the constant enemy automatic weapons fire. Due to his courageous efforts, the life of one comrade was saved and friendly casualties were kept to a minimum. Sergeant Tees' personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President of the United States under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved 25 July, 1963."

Described above was the first event in a long day's battle. Our platoon, my squad had the lead for the Company that day. I had assigned the man who was wounded as the "point" man that day and I was walking third, behind his "slack" man. My guy was down, they continued to fire on him, and I went out and carried him back. I had positioned the rest of my squad - machine gun, two guys to keep the ammo coming, a couple riflemen and an M-79 grenade launcher - to cover me. I got to him, carried him back and Viking already had a medevac coming. We eventually loaded him and he went home. The most important part of this story is that his name did not end up on the wall.



The story does not end here. When I got back into the clear with the wounded guy, I noted that a guy named Roberts from the Second Platoon had been up helping cover me. I distinctly remember looking him in the eye and saying, "What the hell are you doing up here, Roberts?" Gordy Roberts could not stay out of the fight. He did not break ranks or abandon his post, but recognized the need for additional firepower at the moment. What happened after that is a matter of record, as shortly after I got back with the wounded man, Gordon Roberts maneuvered his way around and assaulted the NVA in their bunkers, killing several of them and causing the rest to run. His assault allowed the medevac to come into a crude and marginal LZ to pick up the badly wounded man and remove him from harm's way. Both Gordon Roberts and I were awarded the Silver Star for Gallantry in action. In March of 1971, Gordon Ray Roberts was awarded the Medal of Honor for his "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty" on 21 July, 1969. Gordy and I became good friends for the balance of our tours.



Pictured above are Specialist Gordon Roberts and Sergeant Ted Tees

At some point in the July - August timeframe, I was asked if I would be interested in any of the rear jobs that came open from time to time. Recommendations combined with personal approval were required in order to be added to a list of those to be considered for "rear" jobs. The candidate list was long and the opportunities were short, but this was the process used for assignments in these rear jobs. Our records were reviewed and short lists were made for jobs that came up where they wanted an experienced individual (someone who had seen combat) for specific jobs. I was excited when I was considered for a job as a FAC liaison. What this entailed was riding in a plane with a Forward Air controller (controls and directs fire from the fast movers - Jets). The duties of the infantry NCO would be to communicate with the infantry units on the ground, ensuring that nothing was lost or overlooked due to communication styles, acronyms, slang, and any other factors that could cause errors in the placement of firepower. As it turned out, I was considered, but someone else landed the job. It was rewarding to even have been considered.

Each of the companies assigned to a particular AO (area of operation) would rotate into duty protecting the perimeter of firebases. Firebases, usually positioned on a hill or mountaintop, were strategically located throughout the AO, and were available 24/7 to provide firepower in support of activities throughout the area. Firebase duty was a refreshing break for the units that had been in the boonies for a while, as you typically received mail and one hot meal a day. There was potable water available at all times. Other luxuries included two sit-down outhouses - perhaps a misnomer, as there were no walls, doors or roof, but it was a "sit down" facility. In early June, I wrote my parents that we were at Fire Base Berchtesgaden, noting that we had, "two outhouses, with no doors, and the view from either one is really great!"

While on the firebases, the Battalion Surgeon would visit and help with physical problems that anyone was having; what we called "jungle rot" on areas of our bodies was the most frequent issue and we were all encouraged to use the standard issue foot powder and various antiseptic creams to help us heal. These firebases also sported a shower, constructed of 2x4s, a little plywood for structural integrity, and a roof framework that held a five gallon container for the water you would carry and fill. Not very private, but functional - and besides, it was just us guys, right? Not always. One hot July afternoon, with our company once again assigned for a week of duty at Fire Base Berchtesgaden, I decided to take a shower. I went up to a supply bunker and retrieved a set of clean jungle fatigues, clean socks, and a towel. I went to the water supply and carried a full bucket of water to the shower and dumped it. Then I went back to my nearby bunker, stripped, grabbed my M-16, a bandoleer of magazines, soap, and towel and proceeded to the shower wearing only my boots and the bandolier of M-16 ammunition. I had only begun to wash up when several Cobra Helicopter Gunships arrived and began circling the perimeter of the Firebase. This was unusual, as they were circulating as if perhaps enemy combatants had been spotted. I continued to finish my short shower when a Huey helicopter circled the perimeter. This time I spotted what all the fuss was about - there were seats in the Huey, and there was a blonde woman waving to everyone! As it turned out, it was Judith Ann Ford, Miss Illinois and Miss America 1969. She had insisted on visiting some of the troops in the field along with

the more secure areas that had been planned for her tour. I hustled back to my bunker and sent the two men who were on guard at two adjacent bunkers. I took up a position between the bunkers and remained on guard. Judy and I had seen enough of each other for the day! As a follow up, I remain a fan of the long-ago Miss America Judith Anne Ford. She was a champion gymnast, beauty queen, and now a retired educator. She has always been a patriot.

Administrative matters were more easily handled at the firebases as mail came every day and we could be in routine contact with Battalion Headquarters. Administrative matters would include scheduling R&R, health concerns, an opportunity to visit with the Battalion Chaplain and/or attend brief Church services that he would make possible. Squad and platoon leaders would have security briefings along with lessons learned and strategy briefings. One of these briefings (June, 1969) included a recommendation that the 90mm Recoilless Rifle be considered as a viable weapon for defensive measures at a firebase. The anti-personnel canister flechette round (we called them "beehive" rounds) was recommended as a means to repel personnel attacks in some situations. It was much more convenient to handle these and other relevant matters while stationed at a firebase.

Being 'fixed' forward positions, established in the enemy's territory by forced entry, Fire Support Bases were beacons and quickly became targets for enemy artillery and sapper units. At night, the infantry on the perimeter of the fire support base would hold "mad minutes" several times throughout the night. We would preplan these, and everyone would be up and ready to fire, initiated by a flare and ended approximately one minute later with another flare. The objective was to catch the enemy during an attempt to penetrate our concertina wire and defensive positions.

"Sappers" were very specialized and well trained infiltrators who would penetrate a fire base (or other perimeters). Sometimes wearing very little clothing, they would thread their way through concertina wire and other defensive measures; some would disable mortar and artillery on the way through using satchel charges, with a target of disabling bunkers and night defensive positions on the other side from behind. Then, a main attack force would come in and overrun from the disabled sector of the perimeter. These satchel charges were explosive devices, not sophisticated, and did damage by concussion.

Fire support bases would hold "mad minutes" several times throughout the night where everyone would fire all at once. Three or four mad minutes would be scheduled for each night and the perimeter would be saturated with rifle, machine gun, and M-79 grenade launcher fire. We would often change the location of the machine gun prior to firing, so as to not compromise its location for our enemy. The M-60 machine gun is a formidable weapon and was a high priority target for any attacking force.

On August 24, 1969, my company was once again providing perimeter defense for Fire Base Berchtesgaden. We were settled in and the mad minutes had been scheduled. There was something different about the scheduling that night though, as Viking had his radio operator (RTO), a guy named Sutton, pick the times. Sutton thought we had become

predictable with our times, often spacing them about two hours apart. That night, he picked a time for a fourth and final "mad minute" for 3:40 am, just 15 minutes after the third scheduled "mad minute." We started shooting at 3:40 and did not stop until daylight. A large force of NVA had been staged to overrun our firebase that night, and their scheduled time to begin the attack was when the shooting stopped after the third "mad minute." When the 3:40 am shooting started, it did not stop until daylight about two hours later. Their skilled sappers had penetrated our concertina wire, avoided our trip flares, disabled many of our claymore mines, and entered our firebase. The sappers were about to penetrate the perimeter, disable another part of the perimeter, and allow the main force to overrun Firebase Berchtesgaden. We held our own, but it was not easy, as we were up against a skilled, determined, and well trained force. Their intent was to overrun the firebase, blow up the artillery, and kill as many Americans as possible before daylight, when reinforcements might show up and helicopter gunships would be very effective on their ground troops.

We held our own, but after the first hour, ammunition began running low in several of the defensive positions. The lighting provided by flares released by helicopters was good, but not good enough for the pinpoint accuracy needed. At some point, I maneuvered my way through the bunker areas, gathered and redistributed ammunition, took more ammunition to my machine gunner, and then went to the ammunition bunker and brought out a 90mm Recoilless Rifle and some flechette rounds ("beehive" rounds). I made my way over to a bunker where we could see NVA working their way up the hill. To be effective, this is a two man weapon, one to aim and shoot and the other man to spot, load, and unload the weapon. I loaded the Rifle, and we waited until we could see several NVA working their way up the slope again. The time came and we fired several rounds, raining tens of thousands of steel wire flechettes at them. This removed all motivation from them at that point. I left my man with the 90 mm, several flechette rounds and instructions to watch over that same ridge. He still had his M-16 and plenty of ammunition. I then went and retrieved more hand grenades and determined that our M-60 machine gun still had plenty of ammunition. None of my men received more than superficial wounds that night. We had repelled a determined force and daylight was near.

The enemy departed with their wounded and disappeared into the jungle. We gathered 31 dead NVA and suspected many others may have escaped with fatal wounds. The spooks arrived at daylight (we called them spooks - really army intelligence - they arrive with cameras, take pictures of the dead, gather anything in their pockets, don't say much, and then leave). Our impression of them was that they had no sense of humor. A helicopter arrived with a sling with a webbed net and we placed their dead bodies in the net. The helicopter then removed the sling with the dead and dropped it on trails where enemy activity was suspected. They were allowed to retrieve their dead this way. This served three purposes: a potential bio-type hazard was removed from the area, the enemy was allowed to collect their dead, and the psychological impact on the enemy was obvious. Reciprocal behavior was expected.

For the actions I took during the battle that night, I was again awarded the Silver Star for Gallantry in Action. The award was based on the evenings events, "...quick thinking and sound judgment minimized friendly casualties and resulted in the rout of the enemy force. Sergeant Tees' personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Authority: By direction of the President of the United States under the provision of the Act of Congress approved 25 July, 1963."

Opportunity Knocks Again

During late August, I had a brief interview for job opening in the Battalion Tactical Operations Center (TOC). The TOC was maintained operational at Camp Evans and sometimes out at Fire Bases in the Valley. Each line company submits candidates for the upcoming opening and I was one of four who were interviewed. On September ninth, I wrote home telling of the good news about my new job, working eight hour days, seven days a week. My responsibilities included coordinating with the four infantry companies and one reconnaissance platoon in our area of operation. I reported to a duty officer and supervised two RTOs and an artillery liaison. I maintained a logbook as well as a large map with the location of all friendlies as well as suspected enemy locations. Key to my job was to know all that was going on within the Battalion, where they were, where they were going, what they were doing, and what was needed. This information was always ready for the duty officer, Battalion Commander and his staff members. Coordination with Brigade Headquarters (next higher unit level) was also part of the job. Attention to detail, accurate reporting and record keeping, all combined with accurate plotting on our clear vinyl covered operational map were essential. I did have to begin shaving every day, shining my boots, and getting regular haircuts. I did not, however, have to deal with AK-47s or RPGs on a regular basis. I obviously had some emotions about leaving the boonies and my line company. Ho Chi Minh had just died and we were unsure on how this was going to affect the fighting. I had to get over the thought that I was abandoning them. I had paid my dues, and perhaps I had earned this opportunity. The guys in my squad and platoon appeared happy for me and outside of a little razzing, they wished me well.

The job was challenging, yet rewarding. The time spent in the boonies was tremendously valuable in that I understood what was being reported, could anticipate the needs of the line companies, and be prepared to respond to their requests in an efficient manner. Because I had "done my time," there was no hazing and everyone was very supportive while I learned my new job. It seemed that there was always some sort of activity going on and there was plenty to do, report, plot, and call. The job was administrative in nature and my understanding of what happens in the field helped me learn my new job quickly. I learned to enjoy it as well as the people I worked with. Gordy Roberts had been promoted to Sergeant and was moved to the rear as a "Combat Photographer," largely because of his nomination for the Congressional Medal of Honor. We had as much fun as the situation would allow and all of the guys in the Battalion Support Staff were great to work with. The Colonel had the

good sense to surround himself and his Battalion Headquarters with very effective, quality people.

One of the tasks handled at the Battalion TOC was to maintain a manifest of Battalion personnel. We referred to "line numbers" on the current manifest and the real names of personnel were never used over unscrambled radio. When personnel arrived or when they left, the company and battalion manifests were corrected. I was reviewing updates on new arrivals in December when I saw a name that I recognized. Sergeant Terry Handley had arrived and was assigned to "D" Company. I wondered if it could possibly be the same Terry Handley that I knew growing up in Buchanan. I caught up with Terry before he went out to his Company and we talked at length. He too, had become a Sergeant through the NCOC program. It was great to talk to someone from home.

In early 1970, Terry's grandmother passed away and notifications were being made via the normal military methods. Terry's mother wanted him home for the funeral, a difficult, yet achievable undertaking. Though the system did work, it was not nearly as efficient as things are today with the internet and other electronic mechanisms. The first obstacle was getting the Battalion Commander's authorization. I took it upon myself to notify the Colonel, explaining that I knew Sergeant Handley's family, they were very close, and that they were prepared to wait for Sergeant Handley's return before holding the funeral. The Colonel stared straight into my eyes for somewhere between four seconds and four minutes, waiting for me to blink. I did not blink and he said, "get him in and get him home." We did just that. Terry went home for his grandmother's funeral and then returned to finish his tour. Since our return from Vietnam, Terry and I have gotten together just one time; we had a few beers, a few laughs, and went on our way.

Over twenty years after that, I received a call from Terry's mother, who still lived in Buchanan. In a very emotional voice, she thanked me for helping get her son home from Vietnam for his grandmother's funeral. She shared with me something that Terry had not told me. While Terry was home for the funeral, Delta Company had been involved in some fierce fighting and his platoon had taken numerous casualties. Terry may very well feel that he could have made a difference and he may be fighting demons over his absence during those critical times. We call it survivor's guilt.

Early in December, I was promoted to Staff Sergeant E-6. In a war zone, the celebration and related festivities were minimal, but the sincere and genuine congratulations were abundant. The promotion came with words of wisdom from the Colonel and First Sergeant, along with suggestions related to making the army a career. I responded respectfully, indicating that I would consider the military as part of my future.

Every soldier in Vietnam was offered the opportunity for a week of R&R (Rest and Recuperation). There were many destinations available but I chose Australia in late December of 1969. I had a great time for one week in Sydney and aside from meeting a number of interesting characters, my R&R was uneventful. I rested emotionally and had a

chance to catch my breath. The most notable and memorable story came at the end of my week in Sydney, when I took a cab and arrived at the airport. I pulled out my wallet to pay for my ride and the driver held up his palm and said, "nope, this one's on me mate, where you're goin', you could use a break!" The sincerity in his voice and in his gesture was genuine. I did not expect that, and I will never forget it.

Working in the Tactical Operations Center held its own rewards; personal satisfaction came about when you felt that you had done something extra for the units in the boonies or at a firebase. The logging, reporting, and anticipating the activities of the Battalion Units did not ever become so routine that we became bored with it. Just when you thought you had seen it all, something new or unexpected would come about. In our free time, once mail had been read and letters had been written, we made attempts to fill our time productively. I became friends with a Light Observation Helicopter pilot who, like most of his counterparts, loved to fly! A Light Observation Helicopter (LOH) - often referred to as a "Loach," is a two or four seat helicopter and is very fast and agile. I often volunteered to go with him on special missions, mail delivery, and out to the fire bases. I would like to think that my presence provided some comfort - having an armed infantry NCO with you while flying over unsecured areas. Our flight path just outside of Camp Evans usually took us over a small farm where we noticed six or seven little kids running around. They would often run out, look up at us, and wave as we went over. I thought "nice kids - what can we do to make things a little better for them?" I began going to the supply depot before a mail run and retrieving a case or two of C-Rations (for one of our companies in the boonies, of course!). We would fly over to our adopted family and kick the C-Rations out for them. Somewhere in amongst my "stuff," I have a picture or a slide of them waving as we flew away.

US strategic policy changes

Vietnamization became a policy of the administration of President Richard M. Nixon after he was elected in the 1968 election. The intent was to "expand, equip, and train South Vietnam's forces and assign to them an ever-increasing combat role, at the same time steadily reducing the number of US combat troops." Vietnamization led to what we referred to as "early-outs" which would shorten our tour from one year to ten or eleven months. I was the beneficiary of this policy and my tour in Southeast Asia was reduced by approximately 49 days, returning me back to the US on 27 March, 1970. I must admit that I experienced troubling feelings about leaving, similar to the feelings I had when leaving my line company for the rear job. I got over it once I realized that I would be replaced by someone who would perform the job just as well or better than I did. I had served my time and I needed to let go. Out processing at Fort Lewis, Washington was very efficient and thorough. The army must have felt they could get along without me at that point, as they gave me an Honorable Discharge from active service and immediately placed me in the United States Army Reserve. I had spent 10 months and 17 days (less seven days R&R) in Vietnam and was glad to be home.

Upon returning from Vietnam, I did not necessarily get spit on or suffer any demeaning treatment. Because I understood the times and had observed the unpopularity of the war in Vietnam, I began growing my hair back out (it was 1970, after all) and made every effort to disappear back into society. I had the good fortune to reestablish the relationship with the love of my life, got married, raised two great kids and held several rewarding jobs. At the time of this writing, I am contemplating a new career traditionally called "retirement." Retirement holds many possibilities, and Jo Ann and I plan to explore many of them.

Some things stay with you for a long time. For me, confirmation of this occurred in 2007 at the Ruzyně Airport in Prague. I arrived early in the morning, had cleared the first security check, and my luggage had been checked in. I arrived early so that I would have time to resolve any problems encountered with luggage and flights. While walking around, observing the people, obviously from all around the world, something much unexpected happened. There were two men, with families in tow, waiting in line at a food court. My reaction is best described as somewhere between "going on alert" and being "drawn" to them! Something was, according to my subconscious, wrong and I wanted to understand what it was. I casually walked over near where they stood and immediately noticed that their carry-on luggage was tagged for "Hanoi." I just continued to walk and found the whole experience amusing as much as unsettling.

My military career, however short in duration, has had a huge factor in defining my character and personality. Consider entering the army post puberty, in the midst of your formal education, before choosing a career, during the dynamic and exciting times of the late '60s, and being dashed halfway around the world to fight a war that isn't very popular.

In retrospect, knowing how things have turned out, I do not think I would trade it in for anything different. My life with Jo Ann has been great and I love her and our two kids. What saddens me is that I waited over 35 years before openly talking about one of the most significant emotional events in my life that had occurred halfway around the world.



Epilogue:

Ted Tees was on active duty in the United States Army from 28 May, 1968 until 14 April, 1970, when he entered the inactive Reserves. After training, he served a tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam, serving initially as an infantry squad leader, sometimes platoon sergeant, and finishing the last six months of his tour of duty as a Staff Noncommissioned Officer at the Battalion Tactical Operations Center. During his time in Vietnam, Ted was awarded the Air Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, and was twice awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action. Ted is of the opinion that many of these awards may be a matter of opportunity; an assignment with the 101st Airborne Infantry, operating in the A Shau Valley in the summer of 1969 offered much opportunity for bold actions and valor. Of all the awards earned, Ted is most proud of the Combat Infantryman's Badge. He was an infantryman, a miserable, dirty, and underpaid job. But it was his job and it needed doing.

