

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

We Can smile Now...

For any grunt who served in our battalion, every moment of the day was not one of constant tribulation. There were many times, events, or situations that brought a laugh. It's of interest that as we collect pictures from our Red Warrior members, many of them show the men clowning or goofing around. Perhaps it was a way of expressing that we were, for the most part, still fun-loving youth, and also a way of letting off underlying tension. Knowing this, we've begun to collect stories that, when we look back, brings a smile to our face. If you have a story to share, please send it to us. We would love to hear the lighter side of Nam! Send to: **STORIES** Jim Daniels :
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GETTING EVEN

As told by Sfa Jav Allen 1966/67 HHC Scout



I was in one of the smaller Units of the Red Warriors; I was a Scout in the Recon Platoon, HHC. A few of us in Recon got our military drivers license because we were also mobile mounted on 3/4 tons, jeeps with a 106 RR, and jeeps mounted with M60's and .50 cal's. I was one of the drivers. We all shipped over on the Walker, and after going to 4th ID Base Camp in Pleiku we had to get our Jeeps from Qui Nhon back to our Red Warrior area. I was tasked to drive one of our Jeeps back, so, with another Brother riding Shotgun I drove out of Qui Nhon in Convoy and made it about 1/2 way when I completely lost all my brakes !!! My choices were to abandon the Jeep or to chance driving the rest of the way. My Shotgun said he would stay with me, so I chose to drive, staying back a considerable distance in the convoy.

FINALLY I made it to the 4th ID Base Camp and inside the security fence was DEEP RED PLEIKU mud and an APC completely buried to the top in that mud."Oh man; I gotta boot it past this" I thought, and floored it.... and "Yea, I made it. All that way; no brakes; no accident. Success !"

Now to get to the Red Warrior motor pool. Thru the mud I went....and just ONE FINAL obstacle; a mud-covered large mound, almost impossible to get over. I FLOORED IT! Over the mound I flew; Success.

"SOLDIER! "I heard a loud bellow. I stopped and it was our Colonel, James Lay coming out of his tent. And he was MAD!!!!

"Soldier, get out of that Jeep and NEVER drive again" I had no way to explain, he was too angry!!

About 4 months later at Lay LZ I was on the Helo pad just after coming in from a Recon Mission and going back to Base Camp. Colonel Lay came to the Pad. **CONTINUED NEXT PAGE - payback**

payback

My thoughts went back to when he hollered at me and forbade me to ever drive. "Do I Salute, and put a Target on his back?" I thought to myself. No! Never. Colonel Lay asked me why I was going back to Base Camp and I answered that I had to have a tooth extracted; "Good, Soldier; too many go back with Malaria" he said]...and back to Base Camp I went.

Months later Recon heard a rumor that if we got a Deer, Colonel Lay would bring us back in from Mission, and also get us some Ice. Well, no deer was to be had that Mission; a long Mission, .and finally back into the LZ empty handed. But we Scouts were good at sneaking over to the Command Bunker where we liberated a container of Ice from Red Warrior Six. Ya got me driving Colonel; I got your Ice! Photo above

FNG LT INITIATION

As told by LT Jim Swet 1969/70 Charlie and Bravo Companies



I was a young 2nd lieutenant and on my way to my first assignment in Vietnam in a chopper. When we reached the LZ the pilot decided to give me a "joy ride" banking so far to the left that I saw the ground staring up at me. I thought I was going to die before I even got into combat. I later learned that he liked to do this to all new LTs. Thank goodness for centrifugal force!

Here's another one

We had a mission to cordon off a suspected NVA village and choppered in and hiked the rest of the way. I deployed the guys around the village and we decided to wait a while. As we lay on the ground we heard a noise that seemed like it was coming up a path from the village. We got ready for action, only to realize it was nothing but a rooster... no doubt, a Communist rooster. The village, thank goodness, turned out to be empty.

BAD MISTAKE

As told by Sgt Eddie Guillory 1966/67 Bravo Company



I don't remember where or when in Vietnam this happened. We were in choppers flying into a Hot Zone and it was my first time. The choppers were moving forward about 15 to 20 feet above the ground over elephant grass. We were loaded down with all our gear and were told to jump out of the choppers. They had to keep moving. Some of the men broke their arms, legs, etc. I was going to be Mr. Smart Guy, so I threw out my gear and M-16 while this chopper was moving forward, then jumped. My plan was to back track and get my gear and weapon. From the chopper the grass doesn't look that tall, but it was just about over my head. I couldn't find my weapon, etc. And shots were

being fired and we had to move out of the area fast.

I got them back the next morning when they looked up my weapon number. From that day on I slept with my gear, weapon and kept my boots on day and night. I can smile now, but wasn't smiling then!

SLEEPLESS NIGHT*As told by Dennis Heap 1967/68 Recon and 4.2 mortars*

One night in early November 1967, after we had been working the area around Cheo Reo, where we had experienced some recent contact. I was in the fire base and it was my watch at around midnight. It had been quiet and this was a change as the fire base had recently taken many 82 mm mortars and machine gun fire, so we were alert. Suddenly I heard a yell and a short burst from a M16 three or four foxholes to my right. Of course everyone woke up and I flipped the latches on the claymores and LPs were yelling "coming in". There was no more shots but maybe some English cussing from where the shots came from but nothing the rest of the night.

After dawn I walked down to where the shots were fired and there was a boa constrictor about 14 feet long with a machete stuck in his head. I asked what the story was and was told that one of the guys sleeping of the two, with one person on watch for that hole, had felt something nudging him and he had already had his watch. He pushed back and it was the boa which started backing out and the person on watch shot it as it went between or close to his feet. I didn't have a camera but some guys who did were taking pictures and laughing at the story of how the boa met his demise and the sleepless night after his coming into the perimeter and disturbing a group of grunts that weren't appreciative of his intrusion. It lightened the day after a sleepless night ... all because of a snake....

ENEMY IN THE TREES*As told by Mike Cresap , 1968/69 Delta Company*

One day a long time ago, I was on a four day SRP with Virgin, Paulsen and our buddy Price. About day two we were sitting in a nice area listening for sounds. All of a sudden we hear a faint trashing of the bush and trees and it gets louder as each second goes by. We thought the NVA was charging us and there were many of them based on the sound of things. On one hand you thought a catastrophic ending was at hand, but on the other you say to yourself, the NVA don't run through the bush and there are trails all around so why would they do that?

As the heart races and pounds, we look up and about 20 yards away up in the trees, we see a colony of baboons going through the trees at a fairly good pace. I don't believe they saw us. Now I am not saying this event compares with actual combat experience, but for about 5 minutes one is as afraid as one can be

ENEMY LIGHTS*As told by Jim Irving, 1969/70 Charlie Company*

It was my first night in the bush with C Co. I had LP with Mike Manganaro. Around midnight I saw lights in the trees, and I woke Mike and fearfully said, "There's the enemy." He laughed and explained to me what a firefly was.

TO CLOSE FOR COMFORT *As told by LT Rusty Armstrong, 1969/70 Delta Company*



We were in the Chu Pa (sic) Mountains for several days during the monsoon season and patrolling the area. We were thoroughly wet and muddy as usual. When we were finally alerted to be pulled out, the cloud and fog cover kept the helicopters away for two more days.

Since we were already compromised we started some small fires from ammo resupply boxes to attempt to dry out some and stay warm. Watching one of my soldiers holding his shirt out over a small fire I noticed it was somehow unusual - it seemed weighed down. I asked him what was in one of his pockets. We were fortunate to retrieve the grenade from his shirt before it got too 'warm.'

HIGH FLUNG THANKSGIVING *As told by LT Jim Swet, 1969/70 Bravo and Charlie Company*



Since Thanksgiving was coming soon I decided to save, from my C's, a couple of cans of turkey in my back pack. Several days before I had to go back to base camp but was scheduled to return to my unit on t-day. As Thanksgiving Day arrived I found myself sitting sitting in the Air Force base terminal when our flight members were called to the desk. We were told that the plane would be grounded for several hours and that if we would like to, we could join the Air Force for dinner. I dusted and scraped off as much mud and dirt as possible and walked into a huge tent where we saw huge mounds of turkey, stuffing and all the fixin's. we sat at a table with tablecloth, crystal goblets, shiny silverware, and linen napkins.

What a meal! I think of it every thanksgiving and retell the story to my very tolerant family!

Leaving the mess tent, and on my way back to the terminal, I could do only one thing. I took my 2 cans of turkey loaf and flung them as far as I could into the trees.

ONE STEP AWAY FROM SMITHEREENS *As told by Sgt Mike Conley, 1967/68 Alpha Company*



On or about the first of June 1967 we were working with 3 Tanks doing a sweep. I was walking in front of the lead Tank when I tripped over something, I looked and realized that it was a Mine! I yell to the TC to stop! Turns out to be a 175 Round with a pressure switch. As close as we were to it, it would have been curtains for all of us.

The tank was saved and I was rewarded with 2 Gallons of Ice Cream!

HOT GRENADE - BUZZ PROBLEM - DEAR JOHN

Three stories As told by SP4 Dennis Lewallen, 1967/68 Charlie and Delta Company

HOT GRENADE



Early one overcast morning, as we were breaking camp in the mountainous central highlands, we were all a little spooked, because of earlier contact with Charlie. Guys were tearing down their overnight bunkers, emptying sandbags, gathering up all their trash, tossing it in the bunkers, and burning it. All of a sudden there was much commotion and havoc, and all of the men from the opposite side of the perimeter came running over from their side to ours. I thought we were being overrun, and I grabbed my rifle, and ran with them out into the jungle and took a position behind a tree, and readied for combat. After the commotion had settled down I discovered that someone from the other side had accidentally dropped a live grenade canister into one of the burning bunker fires. The grenade never exploded, but it created quite a stir for a while anyway.

BUZZ PROBLEM

One day, while we were moving in the jungle, the point man must have come in contact with a giant bee hive, because all of a sudden everyone was scrambling and waving their neck towels around and screaming and running around like wild men. The entire company dispersed into the jungle, until the bee attack finally subsided. As we all re-gathered and began taking a head count, the platoon leader noticed our machine gunner didn't have his machine gun anymore. He asked where his M-60 was, and machine gunner pointed back to where the bees were. Our platoon leader ordered him to go back and get his machine gun, but machine gunner refused.

I can't exactly remember the final outcome, but somehow we got our machine gun back.

DEER JOHN

I remember we were moving (this time in tall elephant grass) and suddenly there was a disturbance in the column directly in front of me. The man in front of me had literally stepped on a large deer. The deer and the man in front of me collided, and everyone's fingers immediately went to their triggers as the deer galloped away into the tall grass. Eventually we all recognized it to be a deer, and no one fired. It was another scare that turned out to be something to laugh about later.

SLITHERY HOOTCHMATE*As told by LT Lewis Easterly, 1967/68 Charlie and HHC*

Once when I was spending the night at the FSB an unusual incident happened. The FSB was on very flat ground but several very large, deserted termite mounds were scattered inside the perimeter. These termite mounds were about eight or nine feet tall and 15 to 20 feet in diameter. Close to the helicopter pad the company commander guarding the FSB had placed a .50 cal machine gun on top of one of these mounds. It was about 30 to 40 feet to the left of where I was sleeping. Around 1:00 AM there was a horrible shriek from the direction of the ant mound and this was immediately followed by a burst of fire from a M-16.

Everybody was awake. Everybody was scared. The word finally came down "Go back to sleep. It was just a snake." About a hour later the same thing happened again. This time everyone was more disgusted than scared.

The next morning we found a Boa Constrictor about 16 to 20 feet long and about as thick as my thigh stretched out next to the machine gun position.

This was during the dry season and in the Central Highlands it would get quite chilly at night. The machine gun team had built a bunker for the gun and then built their hooch just behind the bunker. One man was on duty and the other two were sleeping in the hooch. One of the men felt something moving and when he reached over to push his hooch mate away, he felt the snake slithering between them trying to keep warm. He screamed and grabbed his rifle.

If it had been me I probably would have died of fright on the spot.

TRANSISTOR RADIO*As told by Mike Willenbecher, 1968/69 Alpha Company*

In late May and early June 1968, Alpha Co was on LZ/FSB Alamo as the battalion HQ and Charlie Companies were coming under heavy fire at nearby LZ Brillo Pad. Buddy Al Yokley had a little transistor radio and he and his buddies, including me, decided to set up our bunker near the charred remains of a tree. We then, thinking we were smart, strung a wire up the tree to improve the little transistor radio reception.

Later, a patrol found an enemy map of our LZ . To our shock and amazement, our bunker had been identified as the "communications center," probably because of the visible wire we had strung up for our little transistor radio antenna! It was a high target location for the NVA! Needless to say, the antenna came down "di di mao!"

It's funny now...not then!



JOHN WAYNE MOVIE

As told by Richard Bernier, 1969/70 Charlie Company



One day we surrounded a Montagnard village. As I'm sure you know, some villages were really nice and well cared for. This village was deplorable, a lot of sickness and bad conditions. We set up a perimeter and then S4 and S3 came in. They cared for the children and older people. I think we were there for about a week. One day they set up a movie screen. They brought in a generator and intended to show us a cowboy movie starring John Wayne, and the plot involved the Calvary fighting Indians. (Only the army could think of this)

The movie was to be shown in shifts and I was on the first shift. So here's the situation; A bunch of us, along with a lot of children, were sitting in front row of the screen. All of the Montagnard men were standing just behind us with their spears, bows and arrows ready. It was just dusk and the movie started. I personally thought this was nuts. Can you imagine a movie screen shining in the middle of the jungle and speakers blaring?

Anyway, the movie starts and it wasn't long before the Calvary was being attacked by the Indians. Now the camera view in this scene was such that the Indians, who were charging on horses, appeared to run right over top of the camera. Well, this caused such a stir that the Yard men became very excited. The next thing that happened was a barrage of spears and arrows flying towards and through the movie screen. They tore it to shreds.

Of course, with no screen, that was the end of the movie. We had fours and fives that day so the only thing we could do was drink and laugh our butts off. It was the funniest thing I ever saw in Nam.

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THE SNAKE BOOBY TRAP

As told by Sgt Jim Daniels, 1969/70 Charlie Company



My squad was on a 4 or 5 day "Ambush" patrol along a heavily used trail between Montagnard villages. It wasn't long before the Montagnard kids found us, and every day thereafter we would trade C's for what ever little trinket they would have. Soon they started mass producing bamboo pipes, carved and crudely decorated, and we gobbled up everything they made. It was only days later when the green bamboo pipes began to get really moldy that we ended up throwing them all away.

But of interest, however, was the one day that an adult Montagnard villager came to our location with a sack, and to our surprise pulled out a large 7 or 8 foot snake. We all watched as he carefully removed the snake, then pounded it to death with a large stick. Then we watched as he cut the head off and put it on top of a bamboo stake. He then put the stake right in the middle of the trail. Well, I was curious as to what this symbolized, and knowing that we had a RVN scout with us back in the company, I radioed back to the CO that we had "found" this stake in the middle of the trail with a snake head on it, and wanted to know if it meant anything. I didn't mention that the whole squad had watched the whole event unfold even taking pictures of the occasion.

Well, the Company commander talked to the scout. The scout didn't know, so the CO immediately said that it might be a booby trap, don't touch it..to wait and they would call around to see what they could find out. The request went from battalion, to division, and back again. It was about an hour later when we got the call to blow it all up, that indeed It was probably booby trapped. Well we went over and kicked the stake over, then threw a grenade into the woods so that the company, about a click a way, could hear the explosion, thus proving we had followed orders. Such a rigmarole for such a simple question. We never did find out if the Montagnard's actions meant anything. I still chuckle to this day of all the trouble I put the CO through.



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WELCOME TO COMBAT AIR ASSAULT *As told by LT Lewis Easterly, 1967/78 Charlie & HHC*

22 July 1967

On the afternoon of the 22nd the battalion commander flew out to brief us on a combat air assault we were to make the next morning into our old firebase position.

We had an officer's call and he gave us the word on what we were going to be doing. The plan was to go in and try to catch any N. V. A. who were lurking around seeing what they could pick up. He said that he wanted someone to go in on the

first ship with a radio to tell him if the LZ was hot and then he would decide whether to extract or continue with the assault. He said that he really needed someone who wasn't in command and since I was the XO and was available I was selected.

23 July 1967

About 6:30 o'clock the next morning we moved out into a clear area and waited for the helicopters to arrive. The grass was about knee high and wet and soon I was soaked up to my knees. But then I was soaked every day. The helicopters appeared about 7:00 and loaded up and lifted off flying toward the old firebase. I had an RTO, and four other men with me on my ship.

We flew at tree top level all the way in order to try and get some surprise in case there was anybody there. We would fly down valleys, pop-up and barely clear the top of a hill and go down to another valley changing directions all the way. I was sitting on the right side of the helicopter with my feet hanging out the door and I couldn't see anything because I was directly behind the co-pilot. Every few minutes I would take my helmet off and lean out to see where we were going. We kept flying along for what seemed like 30 or 40 minutes though, I am sure that it wasn't that long. And directly to the right of our helicopter was a gun ship that was there for protection. I was looking directly at it and suddenly it started firing rockets and then machine guns. I yanked my helmet off, looked out and looked toward the front of the helicopter out the door and I saw where we were going. It was covered with exploding rockets; machine gun fire going in and you could see artillery shells hitting all around. I looked back at the aircraft commander and he held up a finger for one minute. As we came into the LZ my ship, which was the lead ship, landed on the highest point within the firebase. I jumped out and as I did I lost my balance and started stumbling. Well, the helicopter was in a hurry to leave, so he pulled out of there and the down draft from the rotor blades caught me in the back and literally rolled me head over hills all the way down the side of the hill. I managed to hold on to my rifle. My pack was on my back but my helmet got off. I scrambled around and finally got my helmet back on and headed for the top of the hill. By the time I got back up to the top of the hill the second and third lift had already come in. Fortunately, it was not a hot LZ or we would have been in trouble.

CPT Moore looked at me and said 'Where the hell have you been'

GOT A STORY TO TELL.... SEND IT TO US