

Hill 310

9-13 August 1968



"We few, we happy few, we band of brothers,
For he today that sheds his blood with me
shall be my brother."

—William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

Jack Wells

Hill 310 is one of the prominent hill tops that overlooked Marine positions on Hills 10 and 41 in the Hieu Duc District of Quang Nam Province. Throughout 1967 and 1968 there had been many battles against North Vietnamese soldiers on this hill and the adjoining hill tops 270 and 502 during operations Pursuit, Worth, and during the final days of Operation Mameluke Thrust. The ghosts and cries of many fallen Marines and North Vietnamese infantry haunted this high ground.

To the south of Hill 310 lay Charlie Ridge which was a huge mountainous area which overlooked the area called the "Rocket Belt." This was the area that units like the 368B NVA Rocket Artillery Regiment would set up their Soviet manufactured 122mm and 140mm rockets to fire at the Marine Air Base, the city of Da Nang and Hill 55 where the 7th Marine Regiment headquarters was located.

Since the final months of 1967, infantry units from the 31st, 36th, and 141st North Vietnamese Army Regiments had been steadily pouring into Hieu Duc District after their journey down the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos, entering South Vietnam through the A Shau Valley, before turning south towards the approaches to Da Nang and other coastal cities.

Operation Allen Brook commenced late Spring 1968 involving both the 5th and 7th Marines and was designed as a spoiling offensive against the anticipated NVA summer offensive against Da Nang and the outlying Marine camps. In May, 7th Marines turned over its involvement in Allen Brook to 27th Marines and commenced the first of five phases of Mameluke Thrust.

The prelude to this battle was that First Marine Air Wing pilots were reporting that they were receiving 12.7mm anti-aircraft fire from the vicinity of Hill 310. The morning of 8 August a F-4B Phantom from VMFA-122 was shot down by NVA ground fire in the vicinity of Hill 310. The pilot, Capt C.R. Cusack and his RIO, Capt S.M. Creal ejected successfully and were rescued.



Hill 310 ridgeline & Hill 270 looking west from Hill 10

7th Marines had been planning a operation to take out the gun position and clear the area once again of the NVA troops that had been digging numerous trenches and fighting positions. This battalion size operation was controlled by 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines under command of LtCol R.A. Seymour and involved Lima and Mike companies from 3/5 and Bravo and Delta companies from 1/7.

Bravo company was to depart Hill 10 late in the afternoon on 9 August with the objective being Hill 310. The day before on 8 August, Lima and Mike companies went by trucks and amtracs to Hill 41 to join up with Delta 1/7. The three companies, along with the battalion command group departed that night at 2000 heading west along the road from Hill 41 towards what was called Mortar Valley. Delta was the point company and Lima under the command of Capt Bob Snowden was the rear guard.

Just after midnight, about half way to objective "A", Delta found two 140mm rockets and launchers. The rockets and launchers were moved to a different position and hidden for extraction later. It was a long and tiring 8000 meter march before a halt for some sleep around 0345. Delta brought along a section of 81mm mortars and each of the men in the company had to carry a mortar round in addition to their own equipment. There were also scout dogs with Delta that ended up being evacuated the next day because of the extreme heat.

Shortly after daybreak on 9 August, Delta and Lima companies were in position on a hill top about 600 meters west of Hill 310. Delta took the first objective with no resistance from the NVA. Mike company then moved through Delta's position moving east towards objective "B" which was Hill 310.

Around noon, Mike's 2d platoon took a break to eat C rations. Platoon Sergeant Sgt Jim Quinn decided to scout the area and moved cautiously down a trail which led up to large boulders. Sensing danger, Quinn quickly went back and brought the rest of his men along the trail. As the point man, PFC George Autobee, went around the boulders he was shot in the arm by an NVA with a AK47 who was guarding a 12.7mm anti-aircraft position. Immediately heavy fire and grenades erupted from the gun position as Autobee made his way back to his squad. As Quinn's squad moved up to the boulders, it became a grenade battle as grenades and chicombs were being thrown back and forth over the cluster of boulders.

Quinn decided to split the squad into three groups to assault the position, from the left, right and over the top of the boulders.

Hearing the firing and explosions, Cpl Dan Hignight, a 6'5" Marine S-2 Scout attached to Mike company, moved up to assist the squad and was initially wounded from one of the chicombs. Joining Hignight was Sgt Mike Brown, the Chief Scout with 3/5 and Capt Frank Pacello, Mike's Company Commander. The three Marines maneuvered to the rear of the gun to throw grenades into the position.

Sgt Brown's Silver Star citation states: "realizing the seriousness of the situation, he left the relative safety of the battalion command post . . . and arriving at Company M's position, he boldly volunteered to lead a squad in an attack on the enemy's defenses."

Hignight's Silver Star citation states: "After the Marines had reached the machine gun position and silenced it," Hignight then jumped into the gun pit as one NVA tried to escape back into a tunnel. Hignight grabbed him by the

shoulder and dragged him out and in "close combat quickly subdued and captured him." Other NVA soldiers had earlier fled out the back of the gun position and headed up to Hill 310 evading the Marines from second platoon.

The 12.7mm gun had been captured intact with 500 rounds of belted ammunition and was fully equipped with AA sights and shoulder mounts. This was probably the gun which had shot down the F4B the morning before.

Capt Frank Pacello moved the rest of the company up to the gun position and set up a defensive perimeter before further assaults against Hill 310. The Marines from Mike company attempted several more assaults over the next several hours that afternoon. The Platoon Commander of second platoon, 2d Lt Joseph Walters would receive a Silver Star for his heroic efforts that afternoon.

After one of the assaults, HM3 Eugene Whitbeck spotted a wounded Marine in an exposed position. Whitbeck maneuvered to the Marine's side and after treating the wound, started carrying him back to a sheltered position. As Whitbeck pulled back with the Marine, enemy grenades began landing near the two



NVA 12.7 AA gun captured by Cpl Dan Hignight, Sgt Mike Brown, Capt Frank Pacello, M 3/5 on 9 Aug. 1968

men. Whitbeck moved between the Marine and the exploding grenades and with the fallen Marine's M-16 and grenades, returned fire toward the NVA positions, silencing them, which enabled Whitbeck to carry the Marine down the hill for evacuation. For his heroic actions that afternoon, Whitbeck would later be awarded a Silver Star from Admiral John McCain, when the CINPAC was visiting the An Hoa combat base of 3/5.

Later that afternoon Mike company received incoming mortar rounds from the vicinity of Hill 310 which wounded three Marines and one Corpsman. A medevac helicopter was approaching to pick up PFC Tony Ayala who had been wounded in the first assault. Due to the incoming mortar rounds, the helicopter could not land and Ayala had to be taken out by a jungle penetrator. As Ayala was being extracted, he was hit again by enemy fire and died later from his wounds.

One of Mike company's sergeants spotted the NVA mortar position and swung the captured 12.7 machine gun around and took the position under fire which stopped the incoming mortars.

Air support was now on station and the hill was bombed extensively. Cpl Jim Blakenheim was a FAC attached to Mike and recalls the many air sorties that were brought in against the hill, "we had as many as 7 flights stacked up above us during the next two days and they dropped some pretty heavy stuff. When we were done we joked that Hill 310 should now be called hill 292, . . . there may have been two blades of grass still standing."

That night NVA soldiers made their way down the hill towards Mike company's position and threw about 10 chicoms into the lines. Mike company returned fire and found two enemy dead with their weapons after a search at first light.

On 10 August, Cpl Hignight and LCpl Bob Bryja volunteered to try and get close to Hill 310 to recon the NVA positions. The two scouts were able to get within twenty meters of the top

and could see the extensive trench and fighting positions below the crest on the west side of the hill. Maneuvering back down the hill Hignight and Bryja were spotted by the NVA and a fusillade of fire erupted from the top directed towards the two scouts and Mike Company. Cpl Rock Giambrocco recalls it was an "awful, awful shoot out and the NVA must have fired several thousand rounds from their positions on top. Every attempt at taking the hill from any side was met with intense opposition." Fire from Chicom RPD machine guns, B40 rockets, 82mm mortars and AK47's was unbelievably heavy. The NVA did not seem too concerned with conserving ammunition and obviously had an ample supply.

Hignight and Bryja made their way back to Capt Pacello and advised him of the extensive fortifications they had seen on the hill. LtCol Seymour concurred with Pacello's recommendation that it was best to call in more air strikes instead of any more attempts to assault the hill. The FAC's brought in numerous sorties using everything from 500 lb. bombs, napalm and CS gas as the three companies on the west side of Hill 310 dug in deeper for protection from the air strikes. There was a knoll next to the saddle below 310 which provided great protection and allowed the air strikes to be brought in close to the Marines.

Meantime, while the fighting and air strikes had been taking place over the previous twenty four hours, Bravo Company was still several hours away on their approach march to Hill 310 from the east on the morning of 10 August.

I had just reported to Golf Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines, earlier in August and was assigned to Alpha company as their forward observer. On 8 August, I went out on my first combat operation with Alpha which turned out to be uneventful other than Alpha finding some small caches of NVA equipment and grenades and my experiencing for the first time the brutal heat that all of us endured on combat patrols.

The following day on 9 August, the artillery liaison officer for 1/7, Lt Ed Kliever came rush-

ing into the Alpha company area to tell me I had 30 minutes to report to Bravo company as they were leaving on a five day operation that afternoon. 2dLt Dan McMurray's second platoon had been called back earlier that day from a three day patrol to rejoin the company for this operation. Most of the Marines in McMurray's platoon were new to Bravo and some had been in Vietnam less than one week.

I quickly gathered my gear and reported to the Bravo company office. First Sergeant Gagne looked at me and said "have enough ammo lieutenant?" When I naively pointed to my two .45 magazines, he reached into his field desk and tossed me a box of .45 cartridges saying "take these, lieutenant, where you're going there's going to be some shooting."

The Bravo Company Commander, 1stLt J.W. Huffman, was a Chosin Reservoir veteran and had just reported to Bravo company around noon that day. Huffman recalls he met with the Battalion Commander LtCol W.S. Fagan early in the afternoon and Fagan had taken him outside to a raised platform that overlooked the operational area around the hill and said, "over there is Sherwood Forest and up there is Hill 310 and we have to go up there pretty soon". Two hours later Lt Huffman was receiving a "frag" order from Fagan to take Bravo Company up to Hill 310. Huffman had served with 1/7 during his tour in 1966 at Chu Lai. Bravo company was his first command and he barely had time to get issued a .45 pistol, let alone time to prepare to lead Bravo into an unfamiliar area with men and platoon commanders he did not know.

The Executive Officer for Bravo, 1stLt Carlos Ramsey offered to go along to help offset Huffman's unfamiliarity with the objective area and the capabilities of Bravo company. Ramsey couldn't understand why LtCol Fagan assigned Bravo to the operation just hours after Huffman took over command of the company. Ramsey was a Basic School classmate of mine that I had not seen since graduation from TBS in November 1967. Lt McMurray was also at Basic School during that time but grad-

uated one month after Ramsey and I. Now, McMurray was already a combat veteran with two purple heart awards.

Lt McMurray had been on Hill 310 in March when his platoon had taken heavy casualties. Dan thought about the NVA B40 rocket that hit and downed a medevac CH-46 on 17 March killing all but one Marine. This was Dan's third trip to Hill 310 in the past five months, and that afternoon he commented to one of his men that he had a bad feeling about this unexpected commitment of Bravo to the 3/5 operation.

Bravo company initially was to support the efforts by Mike and Lima 3/5 and Delta 1/7 that had already run into heavy fire from the NVA on the hill. Bravo was about 50% strength with only three officers and 102 men.

Around 1700 that afternoon Bravo boarded amtracs which were to take them to the base of the ridge line. Less than three thousand meters



Bravo 1/7 Staff & Officers: (front l-r) 1stSgt James Gagne, 1stLt J.W. Huffman, GySgt Robert Ynacay; (back l-r) unk, 1stLt Carlos Ramsey, unk



Hill 310, March 1968, 2dLt Dan McMurray (l), Sgt "Mac" (r)

after departure from Hill 10, one of the amtracs became stuck in a ditch and Bravo dismounted and moved out towards the ridge in the 100 degree temperatures and oppressive humidity that were to take its toll the next day.

As we left the flat lands and mud of the rice paddies we crossed a small stream before starting the single file trek up the mountain. There were many Marines, including myself, who neglected to refill their canteens as we moved out of the stream. By the time we reached the intermediate objective of Hill 162, it was late at night and the heat and struggle through the brush and elephant grass going up the mountain had left me with only about a cup of water in my second canteen. I debated whether to drink the water before trying to sleep or save it until morning. The more bush experienced Marines carried more canteens or had refilled their canteens. However there were many men like PFC Don Sneller and I who just arrived in Vietnam, and we hadn't learned how to better survive in the heat. LCpl Bob Kitchen who was Lt Huffman's radio operator was completely out of water and Huffman shared what little water he had with Kitchen.

The company was up at daybreak and the day brought the promise of even higher temperatures and the deadly surprises that can occur when an infantry company like Bravo is sent out under strength with a new company commander and under operational control of

another battalion. Huffman had already received his orders encrypted over the radio, but due to a missing crypto sheet the orders had to be transmitted again from the battalion operations officer, Maj Mike Ritch in the clear. The orders were to attack Hill 310 from the east with Mike company's support by fire from the west. This was a change from the original concept of Bravo supporting the attacks by the other three rifle companies.

Progress was slow going up the mountain and Lt McMurray's point squad moved cautiously as they approached areas where NVA had waited in ambush before. McMurray had volunteered his platoon to be point because this was the third time his men had gone up to Hill 310 to fight and he knew the area well. There were only eighteen men in second platoon and many were new to Bravo.

By late morning men were starting to collapse from the heat that would reach 107 degrees as Bravo's Marines moved up the mountain to get into position for the attack. Word was radioed to Lt Huffman that Delta and Lima were waiting in their blocking positions, and Mike company was ready to provide fire support. Huffman was told that the badly needed water resupply would be made once Bravo was on top of 310. Somehow there was a miscommunication from 3/5 about the extensive NVA positions and weapons defending Hill 310 and the ability of the NVA to repel all the assaults that had been attempted the day before.

Huffman told me that artillery would not be used because of the other three companies on the west side of Hill 310. That meant for me it was to be a "walk in the sun." I moved ahead of the command group up the trail and came across a Marine with heat exhaustion that was being attended to by a corpsman and another Marine. This Marine could no longer carry his pack or M-16, and I picked up his rifle and ammunition. Altogether that day there were fourteen heat casualties which further reduced Bravo's fighting ability.

By then Sneller had become one of the heat

casualties. The heat was unbearable and many men were completely out of water. Huffman said that by mid morning he was only seeing in "black and white" because of heat exhaustion. The heat casualties were later grouped near the protective cover of large boulders near a saddle below Hill 310.

Lt McMurray's platoon had stopped just short of this saddle and McMurray surveyed the hill. He was amazed that the whole forward slope and top were stripped of almost all trees and vegetation from the many bombing strikes since they were there in March. McMurray's men took off their packs and flak jackets and a few men broke out C rations before the start of the attack.

McMurray advised Lt Huffman that they were in sight of the top, and sent a squad up to probe the hill. All of a sudden a NVA machine gun opened up and rounds impacted just in front of McMurray and his radio operator. McMurray radioed back to Huffman that they were taking fire from the top.

McMurray yelled to the squad on the slope to try and take out the machine gun and determine the NVA positions. Cpl Dallas Holder, LCpl Jerry Scates and PFC Tom Omniewski maneuvered up the hill. As they approached the top, NVA hurled grenades down the slope wounding the squad leader Scates.

Huffman called on the radio and told McMurray to get his platoon on line and assault the hill. More grenades rained down and one hit Holder in the face, bouncing off and then detonating. Wounded and dazed from the concussion, Holder ran past Omniewski as Holder had spotted the machine gun flashes at the base of one of the remaining trees. Cpl Holder approached the position and threw a grenade. Holder remembers seeing pieces of cloth being blown into the air from the blast. McMurray recalls not hearing that particular machine gun firing again.

By then McMurray had formed elements of two squads on line to try and reach the top. Each time they neared the top, grenades would

rain down, and NVA fire would hit them from hidden positions on both sides of the hill. Scates was wounded a second time, shot in his right arm by NVA fire from the north side of the hill. Scates was to lose the use of his right arm permanently from the severe wound.

I had started up the hill with my FO team and ended up sprawled on the slope when a B40 rocket grenade impacted 10 meters in front of us. McMurray and Scates recall seeing the somewhat slow RPG projectile going over their heads and impacting on the lower part of the hill.

As I looked to the top I could see HN Gaughan to my left front kneeling next to LCpl David Thomas pounding on the fallen Marine's chest trying to revive him. I could see the remnants of 2nd platoon just below the crest throwing grenades and firing towards the trench line. McMurray was running from side to side physically trying to push his men beyond the grenade bursts to get them to the top. Each effort to reach the top was stopped as McMurray's men were forced down by the heavy rifle fire and chicom grenades thrown by the NVA troops. McMurray and Holder heard the chugging sound of a heavy machine gun that was now being used against the Marines.

Lt McMurray was attempting to recover one of his men that had been killed and was laying entangled in brush near the top. A grenade detonated near McMurray's radio operator blowing off the radio from his back and all he had left was the handset. The Marine next to McMurray was hit by rifle fire that went through his leg and into Lt McMurray's left calf, taking out part of the muscle and tendon. His Silver Star citation states "McMurray ignored his painful wound and again led his men against one of the fortified positions, firing directly into the emplacement, killing several of the North Vietnamese soldiers."

Lt Huffman and his radio operator LCpl Kitchen were now about thirty meters below and to the left of McMurray's platoon. Kitchen remembers Huffman being "relentless" in his commands to keep pushing the assault. An



LCpl John Robinson II, B 1/7 KIA 10 Aug.

NVA machine gun was tearing up the brush near Huffman and Kitchen, and Huffman says "I saw one of our Marines severely wounded nearby. Most of the KIA's had been hit in the head by accurate NVA fire coming from the left and right of the hill, not the top."

This Marine was LCpl John Robinson a squad leader from 3d platoon who had been shot while carrying back one of his wounded Marines. Robinson's Silver Star citation states: "ignoring the enemy rounds that impacted near him, he calmly placed his injured comrade across his shoulders, and while returning was mortally wounded."

Lt Ramsey figured that in the initial assault, the NVA returned light fire to let the Marines get closer to the top before all their positions opened up. Ramsey also fired upon the enemy positions using several M-16's from fallen Marines.

SSgt Norman Pacholke's platoon was now engaged in the fight. Pacholke's heroic actions that afternoon earned him a Silver Star before he was shot in the hip. This was his third combat wound, and he was medevaced to Okinawa.

As with all of us, there are many things we would do differently in our lives and Lt Huffman says that in hindsight he would have used dif-

ferent tactics, but when your world is exploding and Marines are dying he made the best decision that he could that hot afternoon on Hill 310.

When the third attempt to reach the top failed, Kitchen heard Huffman saying to him "lets get the hell out of here" and yelled out "retreat" to those Bravo Marines still on the assault line. Kitchen still remembers the chicom flying in the air coming from the left side of the hill and couldn't understand why no one was firing into that area. The deafening sound of explosions and gunfire continued as Marines ran or crawled down the hill. Kitchen was wounded by shrapnel in the back and knocked unconscious by a exploding chicom. PFC Jim Wendling, the FO Scout picked up Kitchen and helped him to safety back down the hill.

During the pull back from the hill PFC Daniel Edward's squad came under intense fire. Edwards assaulted the position and his Silver Star citation states: "he provided devastating covering fire at point blank range into the enemy's fortified emplacements until he was mortally wounded."

Lt McMurray brought one of his wounded men down the hill past me and I looked up at two other Marines helping the leg shot Marine down the hill. At about the same time GySgt Bob Ynacay was asking for volunteers from 1st platoon to try and recover the KIA from the top. Cpl Bill McCord, LCpl Ridder and PFC



LCpl James Randolph (l) KIA 10 Aug.; Cpl Bill McCord (r)

Randolph volunteered to go up the hill. Within minutes Randolph was shot in the chest and LCpl Ridder was able to drag him part way down the hill to my position.

Cpl McCord continued to make his way towards PFC James Marshall, and McCord's Silver Star citation reads: "realizing that he could not extract the dead Marine, Cpl McCord seized the man's rifle and stood boldly erect holding a rifle in each hand, killing two North Vietnamese soldiers," which enabled first and second platoons to move their wounded and dead off the hill. PFC Omniewski was ordered to be rear guard for the withdrawal off the hill even though he had already been wounded during the fighting.

GySgt Ynacay shouted up to the four of us remaining on the hill that air was on the way and to get off the hill. Prior to joining the Marines I had led a somewhat sheltered life and had not even been to a funeral. Now here next to me was this young KIA Marine, his pale blue eyes wide open. I have often wished I would have gently shut them for him. Ynacay's voice jump started us into action as Ridder and I carried Randolph off the hill while McCord and Omniewski pulled back, still maintaining covering fire.

About a dozen Marines remained back by the large boulders at the base of the hill and watched the F-4's drop 250 lb. bombs and then napalm. We could see the stabilizing fins from the bombs deploy before putting our heads down prior to detonation. After the napalm was dropped, a NVA soldier was driven from his fighting hole and another Marine and I took him under fire with our M-16's.

There were many acts of bravery that afternoon, some witnessed and remembered, but many instances unseen and forgotten in the scorching heat and confusion of battle and the recovery efforts for the Marines killed and wounded. It was all over in less than an hour.

Bravo company regrouped to a position four hundred meters down the hill that had been set up and cleared earlier by some of the



LCpl Don Sneller B 1/7 on Hill 10

heat casualties and men from first platoon so the medevac helicopters could come in. Much needed five gallon water cans and ammunition finally arrived.

After PFC Sneller and the other heat casualties became somewhat revived from the water, Lt Ramsey told Sneller and several others to go back up to where the command group was, in order to bring water and carry back gear from the casualties.

As night fall approached the seven KIA's had been moved behind some large rocks within the position and could not be taken out because of darkness and the worsening weather. They were a grim reminder of the carnage that afternoon and stayed there until taken out the next day. The other KIA was still at the top of 310.

There had been so many casualties that HM3 Jim Kirkpatrick and the other corpsman had run out of morphine to give the wounded who could not be medevaced until the next morning. Doc Kirkpatrick did not find out until later that his friend Jim Randolph was one of the dead Marines.

Eight Marines were killed and thirty four wounded in the attempt to take hill 310, and Capt Snowden's Lima company was ordered to move to Bravo's position. Lima had to make their way through heavy brush and ravines and progress was slow because of the critical water situation, plus they had to carry one of their

wounded. Capt Snowden remembers when Lima finally reached Bravo, "Bravo was in bad shape and had not been able to get out all their dead and wounded. Many of the men were totally exhausted and some in shock."

Both Lima and Bravo set in for the night which brought a downpour of rain. Being new in country I did not have a poncho and tried to get under the corner of the poncho of a Marine next to me to try and sleep in the rain and the mud. PFC Sneller recalls "seems like it started raining about 6 PM and rained all night. There was a Marine with a bad leg wound next to the fighting hole I was in that night." The water from the rain was up to Sneller's waist in his fighting hole. Sneller's third platoon squad leader, LCpl John Robinson had been killed earlier that afternoon. Tom Omniewski was another of the wounded marines who spent the miserable night in the rain before the medevac helicopter arrived in the morning.

The next morning, on 11 August, it was Lima's turn to try and take the hill. Capt Snowden had jets on station in the morning to drop even more ordnance to soften up the resistance from the top. CS gas was also dropped prior to the assault. Bravo company was placed in reserve to be available if Snowden needed support for Lima's attack.

Lt Mike Ryan's 1st platoon started to maneuver up the hill. Within minutes Ryan's platoon came under heavy fire and took six casualties quickly. One of the wounded was corpsman HN William Joy. Joy was critically wounded by machine gun fire while attempting to reach a wounded Marine. Ryan was hit in the helmet, but escaped injury this time. There were two more corpsman that were also wounded in trying to recover Doc Joy from the hill.

Capt Snowden ordered 1st platoon off the hill and Snowden told LtCol Seymour to have the hill "split apart by bombs with delayed fuses." Even after all the air strikes, the hill was still honeycombed with tunnels, trenches and bunkers". 1st Marine Air ran sortie after sortie throughout the day against the hill. LtCol

Seymour had Lima and Bravo companies pull back 500 meters when 750 lb. bombs were used. Even with that distance from the air strikes, debris and rocks blown into the air injured two Marines, one with a broken leg and another with broken ribs. Later that day when I was cleaning my rifle, the Marine across from me was hit in the hand by a piece of shrapnel from the continuing air strikes.

In the confusion during the intense but brief battle on the hill by Lima's 1st platoon one Marine was missing. No one was sure if the man might have got on one of the medevac helicopters or not. Snowden told Lt Ryan to take four Marines up the hill the next morning to look for the MIA.

At 0745 the morning of 12 August, Lt Huffman and I watched Ryan's men move up the slope. They were able to spot the body of PFC John Tesauro behind a tree and attempted to recover his body. Tesauro had joined Lima company just three weeks earlier in July. The patrol was able to get Tesauro part way down the hill before sniper fire drove the patrol back. Once again air was called in and Lima pulled back to their attack position.

After the air strikes were completed, Capt Snowden sent up 2d platoon and they made it to the top without a shot fired. The surviving NVA had disappeared. At 1500 that afternoon Mike company moved up and onto the top of Hill 310.

Hill 310 had been completely torn apart. On top, all that was left was the remnants of the trench line that circled the entire hill top. The smell of death was every where. Just two enemy bodies were on the hill and parts of three others. A M-60 machine gun, several M-16 rifles, a B-40 rocket launcher, a 60mm base plate, a AK47, a AK44, and over 50 chicom grenades were found. Remnants of a woman's clothing was also found amid the debris.

On 13 August Bravo company finally moved up and reached the top by 0900. Lima had already moved off the hill to attack objective "C" which was 1000 meters to the north. Delta



Air strikes against Hill 270 on 12 Aug. 1968

had also moved past Hill 310 to support Lima's attack.

NVA snipers were still able to inflict casualties, and early in the afternoon, LCpl William Soule from the FAC team was shot in the neck. Soule was standing with several of us who were watching the excavation of one of the collapsed tunnels when a sniper zeroed in on him. He died two days later at the Naval Hospital in Da Nang.

Bravo company was helilifted off Hill 310 later that afternoon and returned back to Hill 10. The other three companies stayed several more days until the area to the north around Hill 270 was cleared. On 14 August an Army aerial observer spotted 15 NVA soldiers fleeing to the north of Hill 270, survivors of the enemy force from Hill 310.

Unfortunately for many of the Marines involved in the battle for Hill 310 this was just one of a series of battles that only ended when you were killed, wounded or rotated back to the United States. Capt Pacello was wounded on 26 August for the third time and was medevaced back to the States. He was awarded the Silver Star for heroic actions that day. Lt Huffman would go on to other battles and was awarded two Silver Stars for separate actions in April 1969. Lt Ryan was shot in the lower back just weeks later and was paralyzed.

Lt Walters was severely wounded a month later and would lose his leg. Sgt Quinn was wounded the same day as Capt Pacello. While in the Naval Hospital in Japan, recovering from his wounds, Quinn had a sudden vision of one of his men from the Hill 310 battle, Cpl Ricky Almanza who was dying at that time while under fire in another nameless engagement on 3 September 1968.

*"He that outlives the day, and comes
home safe . . . will yearly on the vigil,
feast his friends . . . he'll remember,
what feats they did that day."*

—William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

Semper Fidelis

~ In Memoriam ~



Memorial service for B 1/7 Marines KIA on Hill 310

Bravo Company 1/7

10 August 1968

PFC Michael Carl Brunner
Toledo, Ohio, age 19
Explosive Device, Tour: July 20, 1968

LCPL Luis Cruz
New York, New York, age 23
Gun fire, Tour: May 29, 1968

PFC Daniel Lynn Edwards
Ceredo, West Virginia, age 18
Gun fire, Tour: May 17, 1968

PFC James Edward Marshall
Lexington, Kentucky, age 19
Gun fire, Tour: May 18, 1968

LCPL James Timothy Randolph
Schenectady, New York, age 18
Gun fire, Tour: March 20, 1968

PFC Donald Merle Redmond
Chicago, Illinois, age 22
Gun fire, Tour: July 20, 1968

LCPL John Calvin Robinson II
Savannah, Georgia, age 21
Gun fire, Tour: March 20, 1968

LCPL David Roy Thomas
Conneaut, Ohio, age 19
Gun fire, Tour: March 25, 1968

Lima Company 3/5

11 August 1968

HN William Arthur Joy
Manchester, New Hampshire, age 20
Gun fire, Tour: March 23, 1968

PFC John Apollo Tesauro
Baltimore, Maryland, age 18
Gun fire, Tour: July 17, 1968

14 August 1968

PFC Leonard M. Parrish
Lillington, North Carolina, age 18
Gun fire, Tour: July 17, 1968

Mike Company 3/5

11 August 1968

PFC Tony John Ayala
Port Arthur, Texas, age 18
Gun fire, died of wounds

H & S Company 1/7

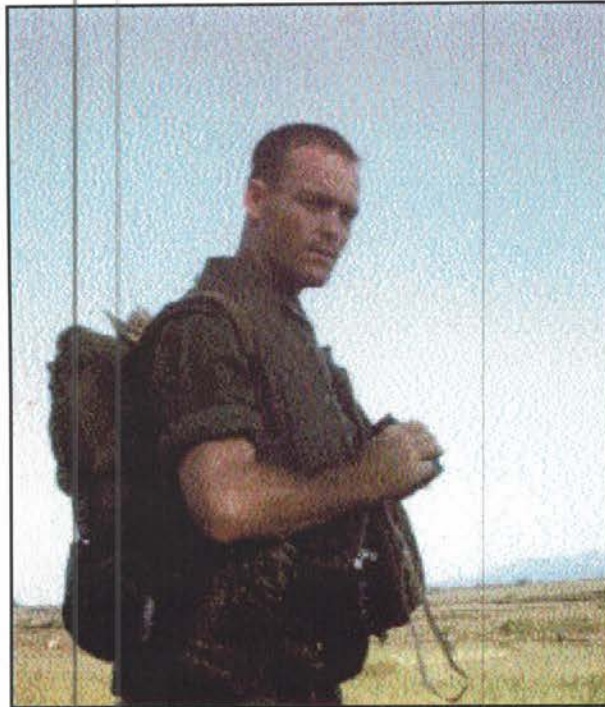
15 August 1968

LCPL William Fred Soule
Auburn Washington, age 19
Gun fire, died of wounds

THE VIET NAM VET

It's a very unique club
I see it everywhere
I see man embracing
man
A tear that says, "I
care."
There's a special look in
eyes
That words cannot
explain
I see joy for this life
Sometimes the living
pain.
There's a camaraderie
That's very rare these
days
They let it show
without shame
In so many different
ways.
I wasn't there, (thank
the Lord.)
So I can't really know
I can only sense and feel
Those things which I
see show.
The patience,
understanding
Which only they can
feel
There is something very
special
And something very
real.

Del Jones



Jack Wells

Photo taken December 1968 in the Arizona Territory while serving as an Artillery Advisor to the 39th ARVN Ranger Battalion. He served as the Forward Observer for Bravo Company, First Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment for five days during the Hill 310 battle. After Hill 310, Wells returned to Alpha Company as the FO until November 1968.

Service in Vietnam includes five months with Third Battalion, Eleventh Marines, Fire Direction Center on Hill 55 and as Executive Officer Hotel Battery 3/11 in the Dai Loc area. He was awarded the Bronze Star for action on 19 May 1969 during an attack by a North Vietnamese sapper company on the battery position.

He retired from the Marine Corps Reserve in July 1993 as a Lieutenant Colonel and lives with his wife Kanitta and six-year-old daughter Clarissa in Cupertino, California.