

Theodore Crisp in the U.S.M.C.

On February 8, 1968 I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps for a three year enlistment. I entered the Marines with a 90 day delay program which allowed me to get all of my personal obligations at home taken care of.

I departed Saginaw, Michigan on May 16, 1968 by jet and arrived at Los Angeles airport California. I was then bused to San Diego, to the Marine Corp Recruit Depot and assigned to the Third Battalion, Platoon 395 where I endured three months of the required recruit training from May 27, to July 23. This included a one month stay at Edson Rifle Range for snapping in training and live firing.

After basic graduation on July 30, I was sent to the 2nd Infantry Training Regiment, 1st Battalion, Charlie Company at Camp San Onofre one of the many smaller camps on the larger Camp Pendleton, in California. I completed the training in four weeks. On September 24, I was sent to Head Quarters Company, 2nd Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Horno to a place called Tent City for four more weeks of infantry training. I was promoted to the rank of E2, Private First Class, shortly after I received orders to report to Viet Nam.

All Marines going to Viet Nam receive another two weeks of Infantry training at a place called Staging Battalion at Camp Las Pulgas on Camp Pendleton. I completed this but was then ordered to proceed to Camp Margarita on November 2 to join Mike Company, 3rd Battalion, 27th Marines, 5th Marine Division for more Infantry training.

On December 22, I received a ten day Christmas leave which I took in Saginaw, Michigan. After I returned to Pendleton, I was then cut new orders for Viet Nam. On January 12, 1969 I flew by jet from El Toro Airbase and arrived at the Da Nang airbase in the Northern part of South Viet Nam.

I was then helicoptered to a Marine Corp Fire Support Base called Ann Hoa in the Quang Nam Providence in the I corps just south of the De Militarized Zone I was assigned to Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division.

After one week of orientation classes I was then helicoptered to the mountains to join Lima Company, third platoon, second squad as a rifleman to join in search and destroy missions. The mountainous region we were in was called triple canopy because the trees were tall and blocked out the sunlight from reaching the ground.

After leaving that area we located a high hill and established fire support base Tomahawk with three 105 mm howitzers. We gave the big guns security and ran patrols for one month.

In March my platoon was selected to be transported to an abandoned Army fire support base named Landing Zone Dagger which kind of reminded me of a lost plateau with its sheer cliffs on all four sides. After three weeks of patrols and working parties we were attacked by a force of North Vietnamese Army sappers and during the attack they threw 34 Chinese communist hand grenades at our position which destroyed our security bunker and caused me to lose my hearing for three days.

Soon after we were all evacuated back to our fire support base at Ann Hoa for rest and resupply. I was sent to the Navy Da Nang Evacuation Hospital where I was diagnosed as having Tinnitus, a constant ringing in my ears caused by loud explosions.

On my return to Ann Hoa I was assigned to strong point Alpha, a small bunkered complex on the outskirts of our base and given a light duty classification and worked in a small mess hall for two weeks.

I ended up catching a touch of malaria and on April 29. I was then medevac'd by helicopter to the Da Nang Evacuation Hospital for treatment. After two weeks of treatment and one week of getting my strength back I was released back to active duty. That was on May 13, Mother's Day. An interesting event happened that same day. On my return to the Lima Company area I was instructed to proceed down to the Company supply clerk and to draw equipment to return out to the field that day as our Company had been ambushed by the NVA and our company needed reinforcements badly. They took a lot of casualties that day and it came to be known as the Mother's Day Massacre. Instead of returning to the field they decided to withdraw our company back to Ann Hoa for rebuilding and reequipping.

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On July I was promoted to E3, Lance Corporal and again we were sent up to the mountains for a large search and destroy operation.

I was then made a Team Leader of a four man unit in our squad of sixteen.

After more experience in the mountains, I was given a Squad Leaders job in charge of my own sixteen men in September. The size of our squads ranged from nine to twenty men depending on the combat situation.

In November during the Monsoon season we were on an operation on Football Island in the Thu Bon River. It rained so hard that we could not get food and water supply in for three days. We were so hungry we were digging for plant roots to cook up to eat.

On November 27, Thanksgiving Day, we were withdrawn from the field to do security at Liberty Bridge on the Bon River to protect it from enemy sapper demolition and help keep the supply convoys heading to Ann Hoa. At the mess hall they had ran out of turkey so they feed us each one piece of chicken to supplement our combat rations.

On December 20, I was pulled back to the Company rear area being released from field operations for an end of tour wind down.

January 3, 1970 I was helicoptered from Ann Hoa to Da Nang for processing out of Viet Nam. On the 6th I left Nam to fly on a jet to a California airport for release to a 30 day leave. I then flew to Saginaw, Michigan to a happy reunion with family.

After my leave I was assigned to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina to Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division for a gathering together of non-essential Marines who were eligible for an early out.

They had decided to give me an early release of fourteen months off my three year enlistment.

Upon release on April 21, 1970, I returned to Saginaw, Michigan to a surprised and pleased family.

HAPPY HAPPY

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According to Military Records I participated in these Operations.

Operation Taylor Common	01-12-69	----	03-08-69
Operation Muskogee Meadow	04-04-69	----	04-21-69
Operation Pipestone Canyon	05-26-69	----	06-15-69
Operation Forsyth Grove	07-01-69	----	07-03-69
Operation Durham Peak	07-20-69	----	08-07-69

According to Military records I am permitted to wear the awards.

- National Defense Service Medal
- Vietnamese Service Medal w/3*
- Vietnamese Campaign Medal w/device
- Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry
- Combat Action Ribbon
- Good Conduct Medal
- Marksmanship Badge Rifle (m-14)
- Navy Unit Commendation

Interesting Stories

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Yellow FootPrints

One of the very memorable events in my time in the USMC is the yellow footprints. Our busload of new guys arrived at the Marine Recruit Depot at San Diego, California where we were met by three Drill Instructors. They commenced to scream at us and proceeded to herd us over to a staging area that has over 60 sets of yellow footprints painted on the concrete ground. The yellow footprints were at a 45 degree angle, evenly spaced in a proper order. Each recruit was to put his feet over the yellow footprints, simulating the proper position your feet would be in whenever you stood at attention. I remember saying to myself. “What in the world have I got myself into now?” And I have to believe many other Marines thought the same thing.

Only Marines can relate to this

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Chocolate Pudding

Once in a while I would receive care packages from my Mother at home in Saginaw, Michigan. A care package usually consisted of treats that were hard to get over in Viet Nam. For example there would be presweetened Kool-Aid to add to our canteens of water. Homemade cookies were really great, Slim Jim meat sticks, white socks, candy that wouldn't melt, maybe a watch, fork and spoon jackknife combinations, canned meats, beans, fruits and pudding.

I really enjoyed the canned puddings. I remember opening up a chocolate pudding, they had come out with pull top lids. The top of the lid read in big letters "DO NOT LICK LID", so I didn't lick the lid!

A month later I opened another canned pudding of another brand but it did not read on the lid "DO NOT LICK LID", so I licked the lid! I cut my tongue.

Duh! Stupid!

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Apollo 11 Moon Landing

In July, we were on a search and destroy mission up in the mountains. They sent us out on a nighttime ambush. Nothing eventful happened and in the morning we returned to our Company position for rest and breakfast. I was warming up a can of eggs over a heating tablet listening to my transistor radio. Then I heard this: THE EAGLE HAS LANDED! Apollo 11 has just landed on the moon. It was really exciting, yet ironic; I thought. We have the technology to put someone on the Moon but not the ability to have peace in the world. Strange.

Well back to work!

Da Nang Hospital Booby-Trap

I always took the Malaria pills that the corpsman gave me, but in April I ended up with a case of high temperature Malaria. I was medevac'd to the Danang evacuation hospital run by the navy.

They brought me in and put me in a warm water shower.

It felt like I was being scalded to death. They lowered the temperature every 5 minutes till I could stand full cold water and not go into shock. This helped bring my temperature down. They gave me a regimen of medication and in three weeks I was discharged.

During my healing, in the evening they would show movies in the open air seated assembly area. I had a can of coke and a blanket warming me when the corpsman who worked the movie projector came out and he opened the little shed where the projector is kept under lock and key and pulled out the machine, put on the film and turned on the start switch. The machine electrically stalled out stopping the film. He shut it off and rechecked his connections and then turned it on again. It stalled out again. He shut it off again and was trying to figure out the problem.

All of a sudden the Corpsman took off running out of the assembly area. We all sat there confused. In three minutes he returned with a half dozen military policemen that proceeded to direct us quickly back to our beds in our individual Quonset huts. We found out next morning that a Viet Cong had snuck an artillery round into the assembly area and planted it in the seats. He wired it to the projector, set to go off when it was turned on. The corpsman saw some extra wires coming out of the rear of the projector going into the sand leading to our seats and realized what it was. The VC evidentially wired it incorrectly which just stalled out the projector rather than detonating the booby-trap. We never did see the movie.

Darn!

The Red Iguana

We were up on a high plateau on an abandoned army fire support base to give security to a recoilless 106 gun unit that aided Marine Corps Units operations down in the valley. There were forty Marines with us set up in a 360 degree defensive perimeter which consisted of 12 bunkers around the top with concertina barbed wire out front. We had one outhouse toilet in a small wooded area that had two holes for doing our daily functions. Every once in a while the rear of the outhouse access doors had to be opened, the twenty-five gallon barrels then had to be withdrawn. Fuel oil was then added to the waste and lit on fire. It was then stirred by a long pole to assist in decomposition until all the wastes was burnt up. This was called burning the poopers. It was my turn to burn them, so I completed that nasty stinky job, partially refilled the barrels with oil, and placed them back into the outhouses. I then started walking the foot trail back to my bunker. All of a sudden a large red lizard jumped out in front of me, and stuck out his tongue and hissed at me. It really scared me and I jumped back and gave it a lot of space. It eventually sprang away. I also hurriedly sprang away

Yikes!

The General And The Flak Jacket

I was assigned to road security on outpost #3 along with three other Marines. It was horribly hot out wearing the thick body personal protection flak jacket. So we all took them off keeping them close in case of an emergency. The rumor out was that a General was expected to be driving by on an inspection tour. If you were found not wearing your armor you would receive office hours and a fine. During a nap, I was awakened to a noisy commotion in a sleepy stupor. I thought the General is here. My next thought was stand up and quickly put on my flak jacket which I proceeded to do. While attempting to wrestle on my protective jacket, I noticed that the other three Marines were on the ground firing their M16 rifles out into a rice paddy. A Viet Cong sniper had shot at us and my fellow Marines were returning fire. Here I was standing up giving the VC a full body target while the rifle rounds were hitting the ground around me. With a wakeup call and an embarrassed feeling, I quickly hit the ground for protection. The action was soon ended and things returned to normal.

O boy!

The Giant Spider

While on an operation up in the mountains, we were sent on a platoon sized patrol for a search and destroy mission. We encountered a large grove of banana trees. It was interesting' we could take a machete and with one whack, could cut through a banana tree having a four inch diameter trunk because it was mostly water. Continuing on the patrol the vegetation became thicker. We ran across a ditch eight feet deep and fifteen feet wide. There was no vegetation in the washed out ditch so we took the easier route following the ditch. Soon we came across a spider web the whole height and width of the ditch. In the middle of the web was the largest spider I have ever encountered. Its body span was about fourteen inches wide, black with a yellow spot in the middle of its back.

Our patrol went up the side of the ditch bypassing the spider completely for our safety.

Do you blame us?

After spending a month out in the field, the commanders would bring us back to our Company basecamp area for resupply, clean clothes, hot showers and hot food. Even though this was a nice change of routine for a while, we would still be sent on working parties during the day, filling sand bags, garbage convoy security etc. At night we would have to stand bunker watch where four men spent the night of a designated bunker around the base to defend it in case of an enemy attack.

One time at night I and three other Marines were sent to do watchtower duty. Our job was to look for mortar flashes out in the distance and, if we spotted one, then to point a directional indicator toward the flash, plot the direction and then call headquarters so they could call in a preplotted artillery strike on the flash. While I was on my first watch, which would be an hour long, I opened up a box of Nabisco Lorna Doone cookies I had received in a care package from my mother.

Pretty tasty! During my second watch of the night I again got out my box of cookies and began to munch. For some reason I remembered there being more cookies in the box. Strange! All of a sudden as I reached deeper into the box, I felt something cold in my fingers. A lizard had crawled into my cookie box and I had a hold of it. I dropped it back into the box with a chill in my bones. As I thought about what to do about the lizard and now grubby cookies a thought came to my mind. One of the other Marines was evidently pilfering my cookies and this gave me an excellent opportunity to expose the cookie thief. So I resealed the lid on the box so the lizard could not get out. After my watch was done and the next Marine was awakened and given the communications radio. I laid down for a snooze thinking that this was going to lead to an interesting situation! Yes!

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About twenty minutes after I fell asleep, I was awakened by a horrifying scream. Bingo! I had caught the thief red-handed or was it lizard-handed? He had grabbed the lizard instead of the cookie and it had scared him so much that he dropped the box on the floor and spilt the cookies everywhere. What a mess. Everyone on the watchtower woke up at the commotion and after an explanation we all had a good laugh.

Very memorable event

The Ambush

In the middle of October, my squad was assigned to cover road security on outposts #1, #2, and #3. Four men from my squad were assigned to each outpost. I was on #3 helping guard the road to stop the enemy from ambushing convoys.

A jeep and trailer carrying American soldiers and orange mail bags passed us heading up the road towards the other higher number outposts. As soon as they drove by #4, they were ambushed. I heard the shooting and saw explosions near the jeep. The jeep drove off the road into an open field and stopped. I called the command center and informed them what had happened. It seems that outpost #4 had not been covered by security so the Viet Cong took advantage to set up an ambush. One enemy Cong jumped out in front of the jeep and shot a full clip of AK 47 rounds through the windshield. Another was shooting an M79 grenade launcher at the jeep. All four soldiers were wounded. I was instructed by our platoon leader to take my squad up the road, investigate and help. It was hard to get my full squad together at once because of the distance between the outposts as we only had one radio, so I sent up alert red flares to rally the men further out to come in and join us. It took 10 minutes to rally my squad. I sensed an urgency to get to the jeep as fast as possible. My troops were coming but it seemed too slow, so I made a decision to take the four men from my outpost and immediately proceed to the jeep site. I actually led point to show by example and motivate my team members to get out to the site quickly. I ended up a good 75 feet in front of them and the closer I got to the jeep I could see the wounded Marines on the ground in need of medical help. Our platoon leader radioed me that another squad was proceeding towards our position to assist us and to be on the lookout for them.

As I reached the ambush site the other squad must have thought I was an enemy and opened up on me with their M60 machine gun. The rounds were hitting all around me. It was pretty scary but in order to get them to stop shooting at me I ran up to the top of a 6 foot hill and proceeded to

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wave my M16 rifle like a flag to get their attention to have them stop. There were other Marines in my squad that were coming to help and I didn't want my boys to get shot. It worked as they ceased fire.

We immediately applied first aid to the wounded Marines and then had them medevac'd to the Da Nang Evacuation Hospital. The good news is they all lived. Upon a detailed investigation of the incident, it was noted that the Viet Cong had stolen one large bag of mail, two M16s, a briefcase of important papers being sent out to the field to one of our sister companies, two large cans of M60 ammunition and one M60 machine gun. When discussing the events with the other squad's leader as to why they opened fire on us, it was explained to me that they **did not fire upon us** as their squad did not have a M60 machine gun. I put all the information of the event together and came to the realization that it was the Viet Cong that had shot at me with the M60 machine gun and ammo that they had stolen from the jeep. It must have been a strange sight for them to see me waving my weapon on that little hill while the rounds were blasting up the area I was in. I am glad they missed!

Dumb and Dumber?

God Is What?

Our company came back to the rear area for three days of resupply, rest and hot food. I remember standing in line at the mess hall. The line was moving along slowly so I begin to read the graffiti written on the walls. The one that stands out the most was the statement:

“GOD IS DEAD – SIGNED SMITH”

“SMITH IS DEAD” – SIGNED GOD”

Gave me the chills.

Chow Hall Salutation

Our Company was again in the rear area for rest and supplies. We had just gotten in from the field after being on search and destroy missions in the rice paddies for a month.

I remember I was heading down to the chow hall looking forward to some hot food. As I passed another lance corporal heading toward me, He saluted me. I thought this strange as according to proper military etiquette you were only to salute officers. I returned the salute and continued on my way.

As I passed another Marine he also saluted me. I again returned the salute. Almost to the mess hall another soldier saluted me. I immediately stopped and assessed the situation and then realized that I was wearing a set of gold and orange Harley Davidson wings on my flak jacket. We sometimes wore pins or medallions from home that we cared about to set us apart from all the rest of the other marines. They evidently thought I was a U.S.M.C. air wing pilot and were using military etiquette saluting me. I quickly removed the wings to avoid any more confusion.

But thinking back it was kind of fun.

Star Light Star Bright

It was my first week in Viet Nam and I was assigned to a night time perimeter bunker watch to help protect our base. Another Marine who was assigned to the same bunker had with him a Starlight Scope, a night vision device. This is a special optical instrument that uses light from the stars, amplifies it. When you look through it, it shows the terrain almost like daylight. After a while He handed me the scope and told me to take a turn at it. It is an awkward tool to use as this was in the early stages of Star light technology, not refined like todays night vision. He said to me. "Look towards the village to the right and down low, what do you see?" I replied. "It's all hazy green and black everywhere." He said look one more time and focus. I then informed him that in the midst of the green I could see a small red light dot. He stated that the red light was a Viet Cong looking back at us with an infrared scope.

I tucked all my body parts in close inside the bunker.

What knucklehead Is Shooting The Tracers?

One night while on bunker watch we took incoming fire from some Viet Cong in the local village. The procedure was to leave the protection of the bunker and spread out among the freshly dug trenches connecting the bunkers. The enemy generally targeted the bunker with rocket propelled grenades. This we did and continued to receive incoming rifle fire. We returned fire at what seemed to be the source of the shooting. Then I noticed that someone in our position was shooting red tracers back at the Cong. This is not what you would want to do as you immediately give away your position and make it easier for them to spot you and return fire. So I yelled loudly to the person who was shooting to knock it off and quit firing the tracers. I continued to fire my M16. More tracers were fired. I yelled again louder to stop firing the tracers. I then fired my rifle toward the enemy and come to a shocking realization. It was me who was firing the tracers. I had grabbed a magazine full of tracers I had specifically set aside in my magazine bandolier for entertainment shooting. All of a sudden a large explosion went off in front of me. The enemy had fired a mortar round at me as they now had my direction and range because of the tracers I shot. I quickly moved along the trench further down the line to get out of range.

Boy did I feel stupid.

The Lost Plateau Departure

A decision was made to pull our platoon off the top of what I call the Lost Plateau Security for a recoilless rifle 106mm gun was no longer needed for supporting operations down in the valley. We tore down all our supporting bunkers ringing the top of the plateau, packed up our equipment, and moved to its north side and set up a small defensive perimeter while waiting for helicopters to fly us out back to our base camp. While leisurely waiting for the choppers we had a chance to talk to our platoon commander. He seemed pretty worried as he kept looking at his watch and the skies. Sweat was pouring out of his brow yet we had a nice breeze blowing on us. Upon further inquiry, we learned that a Bronco Spotter Plane had spotted 80 North Vietnamese Soldiers climbing the cliffs on the opposite side of the plateau coming up to attack us. Now that also started to worry us. To further add to our concern the lieutenant also told us that in ten minutes, exactly at 12:00 noon a B-52 Arc Light was scheduled to take place on the exact spot we were occupying. Arc Light is when a pack of Boeing B-52 Bombers each carrying over 30, 2000 pound bombs drop them on our position in hopes of destroying a large 6 foot tall pile of dud artillery rounds the army left abandoned and deemed too dangerous for us to personally blow up. The choppers were late. We started sweating. It sure was glorious to see those choppers fly in, quickly load us and then fly us away from the plateau. Later information we received from the Bronco pilot was that at the exact moment the NVA overran our hill the Arc Light hit it. Afterwards he said there wasn't much left on top of it. I remember looking back at the plateau while in flight and seeing nothing but explosions and smoke.

Scary big time.

Daisy Chain

After a long day of patrolling we were directed to set up a defensive perimeter for the night on a small hill in the midst of some rice patties.

After about 10 minutes in our new position and in the midst of digging our fighting holes, word came down from the company command post for everybody to freeze, in other words don't move. A Marine had tripped on a wire on the hill that turned out to be connected to a Daisy Chain; a complicated Booby Trap that was laid out in a circle containing eight 105 howitzer rounds all connected together. They were set to blow up all at once if the connecting wire was tripped. It didn't go off. We had to wait for our engineers to come and disable each artillery round and remove them before we could continue digging our fighting holes and set in for the night.

Thank you for not going off.

Deer License

I remember when deer hunting back in the states we were required to display a deer license permit in middle of our back to hunt deer legally? My brother Butch sent me a care package and in it was a deer hunting license that I could display on my back. The only difference is that the license said it was a two legged hunting permit. I wore it for a couple weeks, our fellow Marines got a kick out of it until I finally lost it. When I left Viet Nam I never hunted deer again. It seems that when you have hunted the two legged deer that hunt you back, there was just no thrill in it hunting the four legged critters.

What can I say?

Rainey Weather Gear

During the Monsoons, (rainy weather for three months), It was hard to stay dry because it rained so much. Our issued rain coats and pants helped but it was still miserable. One of my team leaders asked his mother to send him a special heavy duty green rain coat. She sent one to him in his next care package, he was very pleased until he found out the reversible side of the raincoat was blaze florescent orange. If his coat flapped in the breeze the enemy could spot him a mile way. He threw it into a trash pit with a few choice words.

Don't blame Momma, she didn't know.

Canteen Of Water

It was blazing hot while we were on patrol; I guess around 106 degrees Fahrenheit. I was really thirsty. I usually carried eight canteens of water to help hydrate me through the day. I grabbed one of my canteens which was handy and twisted off the top and took a large gulp. After a shocking surprise, I remembered that three days earlier when we were in the rear, at breakfast that morning at the mess hall, I had filled up that canteen with cool milk in hopes of having a refreshing drink of hard to get milk later. After three days of hot weather all I received was a large mouth full of curdled milk. Throw up, barf, purge. It takes quite a while for that nasty taste to go away. After several cleanings of the canteen, the nasty taste was still there so I trashed the canteen.

Yuk!

Step And A Half

We were on patrol in the low land rice paddies and we crossed a ditch separating some of the paddies. It was about four feet wide and knee deep in murky water. I was about to step in the water, when in front of me swimming past was a green slimy snake. We had been warned about this snake as he possibly was a step-and-a-half. He was poisonous and if he bit you then you took a step-and-a-half, and then you died immediately. Another possible name was the Bamboo Pit Viper. I jumped the four foot ditch, full pack, weapons, ammo and all.

I guess I did a jump and a half.

Ammo Turn In Program

In our area of operation we were instructed to try a new program the top brass thought up: Ammunition for cash. If one of the villagers found a booby trap or lost ammunition they could turn it in to us for money.

They did turn in quite a bit of ordinance and our Company Captain would come out to the gate and pay them. One small kid tried to turn in a large bag of shell shrapnel but the officers would not pay him for that. It had to be live ammo. I was doing guard duty at the strongpoint main gate when a boy approached me with a note from a Marine out in the field. It stated that this kid had turned in to the Marine, eight hand grenades, 500 rounds of M60 ammunition, 15 light anti-tank weapons and one thermal nuclear warhead. He sure was mad when we didn't pay him. It turns out the boy gave a Marine 6 cokes to write the note.

Always a con game going on.

They Got Caught

In the rear company supply area some of the boys were into illegally sending military ordinance home. We were out in the field and heard how they did this until they got caught. When a Marine got killed in action the supply clerk would send a letter to his buddy back in the states and give him the dead Marine's address. His buddy would send the killed in action marine a large care package. After it arrived at the Company supply it would be marked return to sender. But not till after the clerk would gently open the package, remove the contents and pack in a disassembled M16 automatic rifle, reseal it. Then it was on its way back to the United States.

Bored Marines get in trouble. Stupid!

Air Conditioning

Whenever we returned to our Company rear area for resupply and hot food we would be housed in large tents with cots to sleep on. Hot during the day, but bearable during the night. On the other hand the officers in our Company would stay in a wood style building complete with electricity and air conditioning, stereo and a television. They would not allow any of us lower ranking Marines to spend time in their air conditioned area unless we were there on business which was hardly ever. One day one of our privates was walking past a large USMC generator that ran to supply our company's electrical needs. He noticed the generator had on it a switch that said 110 volt, 220 volt or 440 volt. He moved the switch to the 440 volt position which caused a massive surge in electricity too all the 110 volt designed lines thus causing the officers air conditioning, stereo and television and wiring to burn up. I believe it took a week for maintenance to repair all of it. The officers had to go a week without air conditioning sweltering in the summer heat just like the rest of us grunts.

Life is sometimes hard.

Lots Of Room in The Milk Machine?

I was at noon time chow in our regiment mess hall enjoying some hot food which was a rarity for us as we spent most of our time out in the jungle and rice paddies. I was up at the milk machine getting a large canteen cup full of cold milk. Just at that moment we had our base hit with enemy NVA 122 mm rockets that exploded close to our mess hall. They were loud and close caused me to jump with tremendous energy into the milk machine as a place for protection from the shells. I quickly came to the realization that physically I was too large to get into the milk machine and removed myself to the nearest safety bunker outside of the chow hall.

**Where was the chocolate milk
when you need it?**

Water Or Cold Beer?

I never did like the taste of beer. My relatives thought I was strange because I wouldn't drink it. I just didn't like the bitter taste. Our Company was patrolling in the lowland and rice paddies on an operation. We had not been resupplied with water and food for days and we were rationed till resupply could arrive.

It finally came in, food first then water. What was amazing is that before the water was dropped to us the rear supply had sent us out a supply of cold beer and soda pop. Can you believe that? We each were given three cold beers. I remember thinking that because I didn't like beer, and if there was ever a time in my life that I was going to enjoy beer this might be it. Thirsty, sweaty, and hot seemed like a good jump start to enjoy beer. I opened it up and took a large swig of the cold beer while standing in the blazing sun. I about choked on it and spit it up fast. It was still the nastiest tasting bitter cold stuff I had ever tasted! I was able to trade off the other two full cans and partial can for over twelve cold soda pops.

I enjoyed those.

Feeding The Enemy

We were on that high plateau giving security to the 106 mm gun crew. We were attacked one morning by the NVA. They had penetrated our defensive barb wire and threw chi coms (Chinese communists hand grenades) at our position. We were able to fight them off with us only receiving only light causality's. After the action me and three other Marines were sent outside the wire to look for any enemy wounded or gear that might have been left. I personally found a fully loaded AK 47 automatic rifle which I turned in. Our team leader found some papers with Vietnamese writing on them. I also noticed that along a little ledge was sitting about twelve empty combat ration cans all in a neat roll. Combat rations are the food us Marines are given to eat while we are out on operations. Where did the enemy get this food? As we looked around we also saw other full cans of food lying on the ground spread about. Then we put it together and realized that this was canned food that the prior Army fire base security personal had disposed of before they were withdrawn from the plateau before we took over. It was ironic that the enemy used discarded American soldier food to energize themselves to be able to attack us

Hope they enjoyed it!

Bone Handled Knife

During many months of patrols and combat missions we ate a large selection of canned food called combat rations or c-rats. There was usually a large can of beans or spaghetti along with crackers and cheese or peanut butter and a can of peaches or other fruit. They enclosed heat tablets that you could light on fire to help heat up your food. They also enclosed coffee and cigarettes along with a plastic spoon and fork and TP. I remembered that when I graduated from high school, one of the cooks at the hospital that I worked at gave me a graduation gift of a combination knife, fork and spoon. She was quite proud to point out that the handle was made of carved animal bone. It was a nice looking and a convenient size utensil to carry around instead of using the plastic forks and spoons. I wrote my Mother and asked her to send it to me so she mailed it to me along with a care package of other goodies. One hot day we went on patrol. We left our backpacks and extra gear in our 360 degree protection perimeter guarded by Marines. No use in carrying a lot of weight on a long hot patrol. Later in the day when we returned I found out that I had left my bone handled knife on a large rock in our position and it had gotten so hot that the bone on the handle had melted.

I discarded the melted bone decorative sides of the knife and continued to use it the rest of my tour in Viet Nam. What? Melted bone? Bone doesn't melt! It was plastic!

I still appreciated her intentions anyways.

Near Death Experience

In the early morning we were attacked by the NVA on the high plateau. I was off my turn on watch and sleeping in a bunker that we had constructed of 106 mm round boxes filled with dirt and a tin roof with sand bags on it for nighttime sleeping protection. We had been warned that some NVA were spotted climbing the high hill that we were on so keep an eye out for them. When I was sleeping I heard distant explosions that I sensed was getting closer. All of a sudden my body went numb. I could not move as my body was frozen and I felt fuzzy all over. But it was not painful but a warm soothing comfortable sensation and I came to my senses and realized that we had been attacked, mortared shelled or something and that I was dying. I thought so this is what it is like to die but it seemed ok as it was still a warm relaxing feeling. A couple minutes later I started to smell cordite (explosive used in bombs). I was coming around and my physical senses were returning. Our bunker had collapsed upon us as we had been attacked by two NVA that had penetrated our defensive perimeter and thrown thirty six chi-coms (Chinese Communist hand grenades) at us, but only sixteen of them went off as the rest were duds. We were able to repel the enemy.

I did not die!

I was alive.

HURAY!

Marine Corps Green Jell-O

It was back in 1968 at Infantry Training Regiment on Camp Pendleton. We had just returned from a training exercise up in the hills. It was late and our platoon was the last group to go through the chow hall. After I filled my plate up with food, I went to the condiment table where they also had Jell-O deserts. The only Jell-O left was their popular marine green color. But there was something strange about the small amount of Jell-O left. There was only a single one half inch diameter column three inches tall left. I noticed why no one ate that last column. At the top was a large cockroach solidified into the Jell-O. I also passed on the Jell-O.

**There is always room for Jell-O.
But not today**

The Hill Of The Bouncing Light

We were on a search and destroy operation in the mountains. It was night and we were set up in a company 360 degree defensive perimeter. Some troops noticed a strange light on the hill next to us. Strange, because it was an enemy occupied hill. The light looked like it was bouncing up and down. We finally figured out that it was an enemy soldier walking down the hill on a path with a flashlight and every step he took down the hill made it look like his light was bouncing. The Forward Observer (Officer in charge of calling in artillery on the enemy) said he was going to call in an artillery fire mission on the bouncing light. He called for a Phosphorus marking round to be fired and then he would adjust the coordinates depending on where the round landed. It landed way to high so he called for a 100 meter down adjustment. Still too high. At this time the light started to bounce faster. The soldier was descending the hill at a faster rate. After the next Phosphorus round landed closer, the light really started to bounce faster. He was now running down the hill. One more adjustment from the F.O. and he said "fire for effect" and then six to eight 155 millimeter cannons let loose their deadly salvo of explosive rounds. At that moment the bouncing light then turned to the left went a few yards and then shut off his light (he finally got smart) but just then the position he was in erupted into a tremendous fireball of explosions. We never did go over to the next hill to check it out as it was too dangerous on the enemy mountain.

**It is stupid to carry a flashlight on at night in enemy territory.
Friend or Enemy.**

Sanctuary In Hawaii

October 1969, I received a three day R&R (rest and relaxation) in the state of Hawaii. What I missed the most in Viet Nam is Kentucky fried chicken so I ate it every day on my leave.

On my second day there I spent some time at a penny arcade playing pin ball. While there a twelve year old boy asked me if I was on leave from Viet Nam. I responded with a yes. He stated that San Demitre's Roman Catholic Church four blocks away from us was offering to active military personal sanctuary (a safe place to live for those who did not want to participate in the war). The Federal Government could not touch those in sanctuary. I walked past the church and thought for a while about the proposition but in the end I decided to forsake sanctuary and return back to my unit to finish out my last two months. Two weeks later I was listening to my transistor radio and they announced on the news that San Demitre's Church had been raided by federal authorities and thirty soldiers were taken into custody. They did violate sanctuary of the church and put them in jail at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. I survived my tour in Viet Nam.
End of story.

Sanctuary? O Well!

Ouija Board

On a ten day leave for Christmas in 1968, I returned to my home in Saginaw, Michigan. I went over to visit my best friend's Mother and Father. She was playing with an Ouija Board (a game by Parker Brothers used by occultists to contact the spirit world). She asked me if I was interested in asking the spirit of the board a question. After one solid year of training in the military for the infantry and having received orders to report to Viet Nam, what question do you think I would want to ask it? Am I going to make it back alive from Viet Nam? The planchette (A heart shaped moveable indicator) moved to **no!**

**The proof is in the pudding.
What a lying spirit in the board!**

The Dropped Grenade

We were put on bridge security at a place called Liberty Bridge. We were instructed to shoot at anything floating in the water, logs, branches, weed clumps. Every few minutes we would also throw a hand grenade into the water to deter any Viet Cong from swimming under water to plant a bomb and try to destroy the bridge thus denying an avenue to resupply An Hoa Marine Corp Air Base. When a new soldier would join our unit he would sometimes get pranks pulled on him as sort of an initiation to the group. After throwing a live hand grenade into the water and letting it explode we would then take another grenade and play catch with it, of course the blasting cap was already removed so it couldn't explode but the new guy didn't know it. We could see he was a bit nervous about the catch game. Then someone would pull the safety pin and release safety spoon then pretend to accidently drop it to the ground thus the grenade would then be set to explode in five seconds. The new guy would then freak out and dive for cover on the ground. We would all be standing there laughing at him. At least that was the plan. One time when it happened the new guy instead of hitting the ground actually jumped over the bridge guardrail into the swift flowing river current. He was dragged down the river three hundred meters and grabbed onto a wood pole sticking out of the water left from an earlier bridge that had burnt down. This was actually a life or death situation as now we needed to rescue the soldier. Our guys found a long rope and we tied it to the prankster. He was going to swim to the stunned soldier and rescue him. He was able to swim to the stranded soldier, grab him, then we pulled them other end of the rope to retrieve the both. Saved, Hurray! The word came down that the brass was considering giving the prankster a medal for his heroism but in the end he didn't get it as the brass figured that because he was the cause of the problem and the fact that he rescued the soldier, both acts kind of canceled each other out.

Bored Marines are dangerous

Arm Over Eyes

One of the biggest fears I had over in Viet Nam was not getting any part of my body wounded but losing my eyesight. If I could not see, the enemy might attack me and cut and slice me with one of the big knives they carry. That would be more horrid than anything I can think of. So I slept on my back with my right arm over my eyes. If an explosion occurred close and I was hit by shrapnel, it would take my arm and not my eyes and at least I could then see to escape to safety. This might be an irrational fear but it took me six months to rethink the protective arm routine and start sleeping with my arm on my side after I got out of the United States Marine Corps.

Do what you can to survive

Hot Fire

After a field operation, our company set in for the night in a 360 degree perimeter with fighting holes. We received incoming AK 47 rifle fire from a sniper in a close tree line. The M60 machine gun operator assigned to my squad returned fire. The machine gun bullets with every fifth round a tracer were all over the tree line. After his ammunition belt ended he would put in another belt of ammo. This he did several times. Then a scary thing happened; He developed what is called a **hot fire**. The machine gun barrel would get so hot that its heat would cause the next inserted round to cook off (shoot).

The machine gun then would continue to shoot without the soldier pulling the trigger. He yelled for assistance to help stop his uncontrolled firing. I quickly got next to him, and with a twisting action broke the ammunition belt to stop the rounds from feeding the gun. This succeeded and the gun stopped firing. The weapons barrel was then red hot and warped rendering it useless. A replacement barrel was ordered.

I know a lot because I have seen a lot

We All Scream For Ice Cream

When our squad was stationed on top of an abandoned Army fire support base, we received a pleasant surprise. One of the Marine units we supported with our 105 mm guns was rained in at a lower elevation and could not be resupplied by chopper because of the intense wind and rain. In fact, the resupply was detoured to us on the mountain top. It was a large insulated wood box full of ice cream. 100 boxes of 32 individual paper cups of vanilla. So for our 30 Marines we each received 100 ice cream filled cups. I ate 16 cups and was so full I was ready to burst. I didn't want to see any ice cream ever again. We just left all the extra cups on the ground and next morning they were all melted slop.

We all screamed! No more ice cream!

Propaganda And Tricks

One day we were sent out to man security watch positions along the road that went to our home fire base. When we arrived at our number 3 designated outpost, we found that the Viet Cong had been there before us. They left propaganda literature and signs along the road saying Yankee Go Home and other interesting phrases. The leaflets said don't fight in Johnson's war against the innocent Vietnamese people. I sent 6 of these leaflets home to my family as souvenirs, but they never reached home as they must have been intercepted by the mail inspectors. The last thought I had about the propaganda was Johnson's war?? I thought it must have been made by an ignorant Viet Cong that did not know that Richard Nixon was now president. We noticed that an empty combat ration box cover was left in the middle of our position and I did not remember it being there yesterday. On closer inspection I noticed a shiny silver button sticking out of the ground. Turns out it was a pressure detonator button connected to an 81mm mortar round booby trap. We marked the area around the booby-trap and called for Marine engineers to blow it up with C4 plastic explosives.

Keeping my eyes open – Yes

Egg Salad Sandwich

I received orders to go to Viet Nam. The last day before I left, I was given a 6 hour leave to go Oceanside, California to do the town. Movies, Kentucky fried chicken and pizza were great. With two hours left before I had to return to base, I ran out of money. Broke! So what to do? My Marine friend, who was with me, spotted a sign on a building that said free sandwiches and coffee. Just the thing for broke Marines. We went in and sat at the counter and received our free coffee and egg salad sandwiches (yum yum). As it turned out, this happened to be a Rescue Mission Ministry catering to those who were heading to Viet Nam. The attendant was a retired Marine, Viet Nam veteran so we had something in common.

He said if we were shipping out to go to Nam and putting our self in harm's way that we might want to consider entering into their counselor booth in the rear of the store and they will pray for our safe return. I politely turned down the request; Marines do not need any of that praying stuff. We were hard, tough Marines. Macho. Now here is the truth!

I wanted to go back there so bad; my heart was pounding from fear at the possible prospect of dying. But to show my fellow Marines how tough I was I didn't go and pray. Pride goes before the fall. Now that I have has a chance to think about the past, I admit that I was too prideful to express my fear. A year later I returned to the USA weathered and wiser and claimed it was LUCK that got me through instead of God's grace. One and a half years later I did what the Bible said to do. I repented and put my personal trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. I trusted that when his blood was shed on the cross that it was done for me, the tough Marine. Now according to the Bibles promises my name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

I still like egg salad sandwiches

Training My Senses

As I look back and think on my time overseas, I see that I have learned certain disciplines. When I was sleeping and a gunshot sounded, I would become instantly awake and grab my M16 and be in a fighting position at 100 % functioning alertness. No yawning or rubbing the sleepy sand out of my eyes. Ready now! Five minutes after the firing had stopped; I would drop instantly to the ground falling asleep quickly.

We relied upon our nose as we could actually smell the Viet Cong. They had the odor of burnt firewood. That was their main means of heating their food. I spent a year out in the field eating Combat Rations out of cans. The habit kind of stays with you. I still enjoy eating a meal out of a can once in a while.

Having walked point man in leading squads on patrols, we had to be super aware of where we were going. We had to watch where we stepped (booby traps). We had to be on the lookout for ambushes but still continue to walk lively to get to our map designation in a timely manner. To this very day when I am parking or walking in a grocery store lot I am very vigilant of my surroundings and people around me.

Routes of escape or attack

Bomb Craters

When I arrived in Viet Nam, it was at the Da Nang Air Base. I was then helicoptered to Ann Hoa Marine Air base seventeen miles to the southwest, home of the Fifth Marines. The flight was very pleasant as the countryside was green, beautiful, lush vegetation, a very delightful sight to view. Blue sky, flowing rivers. One year later after my tour ended, I was helicoptered back to the Da Nang Air Base. The scenery was quite different. All the way back in the midst of the beautiful scenery, there were bomb holes everywhere. Craters, burnt areas all over the terrain. Didn't I see them on my flight to Ann Hoa? Can't remember that I did.

**Seeing things from another perspective
with eyes of understanding**

Time On Target

Our Company was on a search and destroy operation in the flatland rice patties. It was reported that a group of Viet Cong had gathered on Foot Ball Island by the Thu Bon River. The Island was about 1 mile long and 1/4 mile wide and we were sent to flush out the enemy.

Before we attacked the brass decided to have an artillery mission on the island to clear out any bunkers or enemy personal. It was called a T.O.T. (Time on target.) This is where five or six artillery bases in our area of operation would coordinate the firing of their cannons, depending on the distance from the target, to allow all the artillery rounds to land in the targeted area all at once.

We were withdrawn to one mile away while this happened so we would not be hit by any possible short rounds. It was an amazing demonstration of coordinated firepower.

Glad I wasn't on the island at that time!

Booby Trapping The Claymores

When it became dark, we would set our Company up in a 360 degree defensive position which consisted of 30 hand dug fighting holes big enough for four Marines to take cover in each one.

We would then set up defensive deterrents to block an enemy's assault on our positions. A claymore mine (a shaped plastic explosives charge with 600 ball bearings) was put in the front of our position facing towards the enemy and was hand detonated from the fighting hole if we were attacked. We also placed a trip flare 20 feet in front of the claymore, an illumination device that when tripped would light up the area like a spotlight to expose the enemy.

Word come to us that some Viet Cong were sneaking up to our Claymores at night and turning them 180 degrees to face us and then they would make noise a distance away to get us to detonate the Claymore thus sending 600 ball bearings toward us.

We were issued reflective tape to put on the rear of the Claymore and instructed not to detonate it until we could see the reflective tape in the moonlight. This worked well for a while but then the Viet Cong started to sneak up to and then remove the tape and transfer it to the front of the Claymore then point it at us and then use the noise routine to get us to blow the Claymore back at us. As a defensive measure we started booby trapping the Claymores by putting a live hand grenade with the safety pin pulled under it so if they lifted it off the ground to do their trickery, the grenade would detonate. They became wise to this trick and started to remove the hand grenade and continue the relocation of the Claymore. So the next defensive step we attempted was to put a live hand grenade under the Claymore along with a trip flare both with the pins pulled.

If they got the grenade maybe the trip flare would expose them. How well this worked I didn't find out as my tour of duty was up and I left Viet Nam. **Sure gets complicated sometimes**

Surfing In Hawaii

Towards the end of my 12 month tour in Viet Nam, I received a three day rest and relaxation break which I took in Hawaii. I stayed at a hotel on Waikiki Beach. I and a fellow Marine decided to try our hand at surfing. We each rented a large bulky surfboard and we were told to swim out to a group of surfers floating in the surf and to ask them to give us a surfing lesson. We did as instructed and after speaking to some surfers, they told us what and how to do it. I faced the beach, straddling the board, looking behind for a wave to catch. Along came a nice wave and I paddled off as the wave caught me. I then got the courage to get up on the board dog style, and then I found the courage to stand up. It was great as I was heading towards the beach at a good speed. I was surfing. Yeah!

I repeated this several times, along with my buddy. Talking to the experienced surfers, they said if you want the biggest thrill, paddle out further to the other group of surfer's way out there. So we did. It was quite a long way out but I was told this is where the larger waves are.

After arriving to the group they reinstructed us what to do. This we did and boy did I catch a big wave. Half way in to the beach my wave breakered and sent the surf board into the air and me to the bottom of the sea. Wipeout. I was probably in 15 foot deep water and I felt the current push my face along the bottom plowing the sand. Not being that good of a swimmer, I fought my way to the top, broke water and took a large gulp of air. Whew! My surf board was thirty feet away so I started swimming towards it. I reached it and was almost exhausted holding on to the board with two fingers. My friend's board flipped also but was on its way to the beach. I used all my energy left to swim my board over to pick him up, as he also was about done in. We both held on to my board and slowly paddled in. We turned in our boards and both vowed never to go surfing again.

Two tired whipped Marines

Battleship New Jersey

While on search and destroy operations, we would often be out in the field and we would hear a whooshing sound over our heads but we could never see anything in the air. We were instructed by an artillery officer that the whooshing sound we heard was actually a 16 inch 2,700 pound artillery round most likely fired from the Battleship New Jersey.

The whooshing sound was caused by the massive artillery round tumbling in the air on its way to the intended target. Its range was around 23 miles.

Glad not to be on the whooshing end of the shell

Spooky The Gunship

Another ground support tool was an aircraft that was called Spooky, an AC- 47 Douglas gunship that carried three 7.62mm Gatling guns, each which could shoot 6000 rounds a minute. They could cover the area of a football field and put one round in each square foot in 60 seconds. I have seen Puff the Magic Dagon (another name for the gunship) work out to the west of our home base many times at night.

I could see what looked like a long red tongue reach down from the sky and lick the ground back and forth every fifth round being a tracer, a bullet tipped with burning red phosphorus for visual tracking. Fifteen seconds after we seen the tracers we would then hear the burring of the guns.

Glad he was on our side

Chinook Helicopter Delivery

When we were on Fire Base Dagger we would receive resupply of food, water and ammunition by twin rotor cargo helicopters called Chinooks. One of my fellow Marines and I were talking about how these deliveries were made. I explained to him that the choppers would fly from our base camp with all our supplies loaded into large cargo nets attached to their belly, then hover over our secured perimeter's landing zone and release the cargo net. This was then unloaded by individual Marines for distribution. A Marine who worked on the landing zone, called a Landing Support Technician, would give specific hand and arm signals to direct the chopper to a drop zone and when to pick up or drop its cargo. I decided to demonstrate some of the hand signals I had seen the LST man use. I held both my arms up in the air and said this signal means ok to approach the landing zone drop off point so line up on me and come in. I did this a couple times and then went on to demonstrate the signal to drop the bundle of supplies which consisted of lowering both my arms down several times.

I was then startled by a loud whooping noise. I looked up in the air and saw that a Chinook helicopter was right above heading down towards me. I quickly jumped out of the way as the chopper released his load. Wow! Look out! He then flew away and we were informed that our squad was to transport all the resupply to the other side of the fire base to the intended drop off point.

My aching back.

The Big Question

After completing all my infantry training and being assigned to Lima Company in Viet Nam, I was helicoptered out to our Company already on an operation up in the mountains. I remember sitting on the ground with five other new guys awaiting our individual squad assignments. I had a sudden thought! I am now in a real combat zone, with real guns, real enemy and possible impending death. If I got killed and stood before God to give an account of my life and He asked me why He should let me into his Heaven what would I say? I had to do some thinking on this.

Here is what I came up with. I remembered a bible verse from my younger day's church upbringing. **John 15:13 Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.** Yes! That is what I would say to God for the reason to let me in his heaven. It was because I was so loving. Then I thought a little further about the verse and the part that bothered me was the dying part. What if I died not laying down my life for my friends?

Would he still let me in? Now I was beginning to think that maybe the verse doesn't justify letting me in and I surely didn't want to die. My justification reason melted away. I decided that I would just not think about it and hoped I would make it through ok. It would not be till two years later that I would make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. I repented and trusted Jesus's sacrifice on the cross for me. Thinking back about this incident I realized how foolish my self-righteousness was trying to justify why I should be let in Heaven on my own merit.

Praise God that I am saved now

Rock Apes

On an operation up in the mountains, we were set up in a company sized defensive perimeter with fighting holes. That night while on watch I heard a commotion, then a grenade explosion. The next morning I was told that one of our positions heard movement and followed the defensive procedure by tossing a hand grenade out toward the disturbance. It seems that there were some Rock Apes causing the commotion. One of them picked up the grenade and tossed it back toward the defensive position. No one was hurt. But it sure was strange.

Several days later at night there was a lot of movement again in front of another position. It looked like some Viet Cong were massing for a night attack. A decision was made to shoot some rounds from a 106 mm recoilless rifle using a beehive or flechette round. Flechettes are a one inch long steel dart fired at high velocity, which is an anti-personal defense, used against enemy infantry attacks. Each round contains 8,000 flechettes. They fired several rounds. The enemy movement ceased as it seemed to stop the intended assault. The next morning a squad was sent out to recover and dispose of the enemy bodies. Surprisingly all they found was three dead Rock Apes pinned to the trees by the flechettes.

No more monkeying around for them

Leaches

One of the worm like parasites we had to contend with was leaches. When on an operation up in the mountains under what was called triple canopy, the leaches that lived up in the top of the trees and would sense the vibrations made from our footsteps and drop down on you to get its supper. They would burly their head into your skin and commence to suck out a large amount of blood; they would gorge themselves so much that their bodies would literally burst apart leaving a large smear of blood on your arm or leg. It was not till you felt something wet on yourself that you would notice it. If you found it before it burst, you could remove it by burning its body with a lit cigarette or squirt on some bug repellent or salt which would cause it to withdraw its head, then you could kill it. If you tried to pull it off, the majority of the times its head would break off inside your body and cause an infected sore. One time I decided to fill my empty canteen with water from a creek. I put the canteen into the water and some leaches made a swimming run to get to my canteen. I lifted it up so they could not get in to the spout and they returned to the side of the creek. When I put it again into the water, they also tried to get access to it. After I filled it up, I put in an large amount of halazone water purification tablets to kill all the bloodsuckers. Boy did that water taste nasty, but it helped the thirst.

These Leaches Suck

The Barb Wire Incident

On one of our well-deserved three day rest and resupply events at our home basecamp, we might be assigned to working parties; filling sand bags to help reinforce existing bunkers, making a camp wide trash run or other maintenance defensive measures. We were able to receive hot food rather than combat rations in cans. Also clean clothes, showers and new equipment to replace worn out ones. At night we would usually stand bunker watch in one of the eighty defense bunkers around the base. Four men to a bunker with one hour watch then three hours of sleep two times a night. One evening while at our assigned bunker, we decided to play cards in the remaining daylight. A lone Marine approached our group and watched us play cards for about fifteen minutes. He looked kind of spaced out but we didn't think too much about it at the time. Then he left. We heard a commotion from the next position over which contained a M48 tank with a large spotlight mounted on it.

We did not like having a tank position next to us as it was usually a large target of attacking enemy. They were shouting that someone was in the wire, a defensive area that surrounded the base with fences of concertina razor blade wire about fifty foot deep set up as a defensive measure against enemy infantry. There was a special trail zig zagging through the wire to gain access to the rice patties outside our defensive perimeter that a four man advanced listening post would use as an early warning system. It was the Marine that was watching us play cards. He was out there in no man's land which could lead to certain death especially if he was unarmed. He was following the path out. We all started to yell to him to return to our area of security, but he just continued walking through the wire. The tank crew turned on their large spotlight on him to get his attention. He continued on. We then took our rifles and shot a bunch of red luminous tipped tracers in front of him to jolt him back into reality. This also failed. We then decided to fire hand held illumination rockets in front of him to get him to turn around. He continued

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walking. We concluded that he must have been on some sort of narcotic, which was easy available over in Nam and he was probably high as a kite. We phoned the base security duty officer and informed him what was going on. He responded: go out here and retrieve him. We looked at each other and discussed the situation and what it came down to was go out there to certain death to save a rear echelon dooper. Thanks; but no thanks. We politely turned down the officer's request and said if you want him, you come out here yourself and lead our patrol **in the front** then we will go with him. He came out to our bunker mad as hell because we wouldn't go and retrieve the dooper. After we explained the situation to him he stared out into the darkness for a while and thought. He turned to us and said; maybe it would be better if nobody went out. Good call. The tankers reported that when the soldier reached the rice paddies, two Viet Cong stood up and escorted the guy away. They found his body three days later.

Dope and Combat don't mix

The Invisible Wall

As a squad leader I tried to help keep the guys I was in charge of alive. I had to oversee them like a mother hen. One of my rules for survival was when we were in the rear area for rest and resupply was that you could drink alcohol if you had some as long as it didn't interfere with your day or night time duties. I believe I did a good job in this area as I really don't remember any serious problems. One of my more severe unbreakable rules was that when we went out into the field on a mission the use of alcohol or narcotic stimulants would not be tolerated. Zero, nothing at all. All our life's depended on us functioning at one hundred percent efficiency. This worked out well. Another event we experienced

was racism. When our company was in the rear relaxed, prejudice would arise among the Marines. Blacks would hang with only blacks and whites with only whites. They stuck with their own. I would not allow this in my squad and kept them all together in one tent to build unity.

Interesting thing was that when our company went out to the field on an operation all the prejudice would disappear. It was like passing an invisible wall that made us realize that all we were was USMC Green. And if we got attacked or wounded it was another Green Marine who would come and help you. Your Green brother would save you, or give you water or first aid. We were truly family out in the dangerous no man lands.

Strangely as it is, the racism would return when we returned back to the rear safe area.

Fear destroys prejudice but not Forever

Hanoi Hannah

Our Company was back at our Marine Corp Firebase at Ann Hoa for three days of resupply and rest, clean clothes and hot food. Before our turn at the nightly bunker watch, a fellow Marine called me and others over to his tent to listen to a nightly broadcast by a girl called Hanoi Hannah, a propaganda radio host from North Vietnam. She said! The loyal patriotic people's army of Viet Nam are successfully waging a war against the unjust American imperialist aggressors. We encourage any American soldier who sees this war of oppression against the free Vietnamese people as being evil and wrong to surrender and come over to our side where you will be given hot food, safety and assistance to leave this area of death and destruction. Safety is offered to all American soldiers who request it. Come on over and live.

All are invited! Except you Marines! You Marines are Bast--ds and deserve to die the most painful death possible. We hate you.

Sincerely Hanoi Hannah

We like sincere people! At least I think we do

Chicken Man

If you had a transistor radio while you were out in the bush (jungle), we could take apart the cells that were discarded from our squads PRC 25 two way radios and make a workable battery to power that transistor radio. It would last for about two hours before the power left in it was exhausted. We did not listen to radios too much out in the jungle and rice paddies for safety reasons. But in the rest times it was ok. We listened to A.F.V.N. (Armed Forces Viet Nam Radio). They played rock music and a continuing comedy series titled **Chicken Man**, a super hero that wore a chicken costume to fight the bad guys in his crime infested Midland city. The episodes are about one or two minutes in duration. I enjoyed this program. Do you remember it?

Buck-buck-buck-buuuuuck
Chicken Mannn! He's everywhere! He's everywhere!

Reconnaissance By Fire

When on search and destroy patrols, we were introduced to the concept of **Recon by fire**. The procedure was that when we came to a tree line (a good place for the enemy to set up an ambush) the Marine leading the patrol (point man) then had the opportunity to fire his Colt M16 rifle on automatic into the dense foliage area to try to set off a possible ambush by them responding to your gunfire. I remember one patrol I was on where we came to a suspicious tree line about three hundred feet away. We called up a FO (Forward Observer is a officer trained in the proper use of artillery and air force for bombing missions). I requested that he use our companies supporting 60mm mortar team and direct the rounds to walk down the tree line to flush out any concealed enemy. The mortar team fired ten rounds. They did not set off a ambush but they did detonate two booby traps that were set for us.

Little tricks to help you stay alive

DOG TAGS

On our dog tags (stainless steel identification tags worn only by Military personal), was your name, service number, branch of service, religion and blood type. I personally wore my tags on my jungle boots, one on each for easy access in a medical emergency. I still have my tags and they still contain dark red colored Viet Nam dirt embedded in the stamped letters on it. My tag said my blood type was B. Ten years after my discharge from the USMC, I worked at General Motors and they had a blood drive. When they checked the pint of blood I gave, they tagged it as type A blood. I said my blood is type B, says the Marine Corp. Another nurse double checked my blood I gave. Yes! It came back as type A. Not type B! Fortunately for me they did not have to give me a blood transfusion.

You can never be sure of everything

Cool Clear Water

We left Liberty Bridge on a company sized movement of about one hundred fifty men being replaced by another company from the fifth marines for rest and resupply. Our platoon was second in order to leave as we headed in a North West direction of march to the low land and rice paddies. Once in a while our lead element would stop and give our spread out company time to catch up. We stopped in a small village consisting of four hooches (houses the civilians live in) and a French made stone well. Being an extremely hot day, I already drank one canteen of water of the six that I carry. It seemed like an excellent time to refill the empty canteen from the French well as good water is often difficult to find and limited when we get helicopter resupply. The well water was quite cold but had a slimy bubbly residue floating on top. We came to the realization that the residue was from soap. Some knucklehead Marine had washed himself in the stone well contaminating the water. We had the Marines lined up in front of us to pass the word along. Thanks to the knuckle head that wrecked our drinking water. After thinking about this story for a while, (it's been 50 years since). Some thoughts come back to me, that the contamination of the water by soap might had been ordered by our Company commander intentionally to deter any Marines from drinking the well water because of possible poisoning by any Viet Cong enemy who might of spotted us coming toward the village well.

Any volunteers thirsty for a cool drink? NO!

Boot Camp Information

My first week at San Diego, California United States Marine Corp boot camp was pretty much shots, clothes, medical checkups and paper work. During the paper work session, the corporal asked me for some personal information. One question was what religion I was. I told him that I was a **Pedestrian**. He said what? I repeated that I was a church going **Pedestrian**. He gave me a disgusted look and said. You mean that you're a **Presbyterian!** I said Oh yeh, that's what I am. He shook his head and gave me a stupid look as he wrote down the information. What could I say?

Well Presbyterians are pedestrians aren't they?

Coffee And Cigarettes

I never drank coffee or smoked cigarettes in my youth. But I did pick up the habit while I was in Viet Nam. In each combat ration meal, came a packet of coffee, cream, and sugar. During the long tedious hours of road security watch, it became very boring and time seemed to pass faster with a piping hot cup of coffee or hot chocolate. During the cold wet rainy Monsoon season, a warm cup of coffee chased the chills away. Each meal also came with a small pack of cigarettes. Four in each box. Marlboros, Winstons, Pall Malls, Camels, etc. We had watch each night while on search and destroy missions. Having a hard time staying awake during watch, I had to try to train my senses to stay alert. I would take a cigarette and match, get low in my fighting hole, cover myself with my poncho liner then light up. That way no light would be exposed to the enemy making you a target. I would then cup my cigarette in my hand with the fire end of the smoke covered then take a drag off the smoke. The smoke would send a burning sensation to my lungs and give me a rush helping me to stay awake. It took about three months before the rush sensation left. By then I had pretty well trained my senses to stay awake. I don't smoke anymore but still enjoy my coffee

Could I say coffee and cigarettes kept me alive?

Walking Point

It's the infantry mans worse and scariest job he can be assigned. All combat grunts have to do it sometime in their career. Walking point. He is the first man out front of his squad with his Colt M16 on the full automatic selection, being the way finder for our patrol. I did my share of walking point and it gets pretty scary sometimes. You would walk in a brisk manner following the directions of your team leader and he following the instructions of our squad leader where to go. Being on the lookout for the hiding enemy laying in wait to ambush you and your squad. You were the bait. First contact with the enemy to warn your fellow Marines of an impending firefight. Keeping a lookout for boobytraps and snakes and enemy soldiers till you were relieved by another man from your squad for his turn on point. also carrying your backpack with about eighty pounds of military gear in the blazing hot sun.

Not a happy job to get

Outgoing And Incoming

When I first arrived in Nam, I was sent to a large Marine fire base. They were constantly firing 105 mm howitzer and 155 mm guns for fire missions on enemy positions. At night they would also fire illumination supporting infantry companies out in the bush (jungle). Every time they shot their cannons, it would startle me as I would think we were getting incoming enemy fire on us. It took about two weeks for me to be able to recognize the difference between **Outgoing**, (us shooting at them), and **Incoming**, (them shooting at us). When you heard the distinct sound of the enemies rockets hitting your base, you ran like crazy to get into a bunker. If in five minutes if there were no other incoming rounds, we went back to work.

Back to work

Night Watch

Sometimes we were sent on a nighttime ambush or listening post. We would take our Colt M16s, twenty magazines of ammunition, four hand grenades, one plastic canteen of water. Metal canteens are too noisy as the plastic cap on a chain would fall and hit canteen side and ring like a bell. We want quiet. No snoring. We also took along our poncho liner, a long sleeved shirt and bug repellent. And don't forget your flack jacket to use as a pillow. A four man team would sit in a predetermined position at dark. One man was on watch for the first hour then would wake the second man for his hour of watch. Don't forget to pass him your watch and the PRC 25 radio for hourly radio checks to see if you're still awake or alive. Then the third and the fourth. We would do this cycle two or three times through the night till daylight came in the morning. You just sat in the deep grass, listening and looking for nighttime enemy movement. No personal radio. No obsessive movements. Stillness and observation only. If an enemy was spotted or heard, you would quietly wake the other team members and prepare for the ambush of enemy soldiers. I think the idea behind a four man listening post was that you ran interference between the bad guys and the rest of the company. The enemy came in contact with you first, which would give the rest of the company ample warning of their approach and allow our boys to prepare for defensive measures.

Now I know what fish bait feels like

New Technology

During my year tour in Nam, we had the opportunity to try out new experimental combat weapons. One time out in the rice paddies in a nighttime position, there was a three man crew to the right of us that had a portable radar unit they were trying out to see if it was practical for spotting enemy soldier movements at night. After three days they went to another unit for more research. Never heard any more about the portable radar. We used PRC 25 radios for two way communication. One radio for each squad with a dedicated radio man. An attempt was made to try a portable helmet version radio. It constantly broke down and had horrible static problems. Good riddance. Our squad would sometimes get extra support from a rocket team. They usually carried a 3.5 rocket launcher or some M72 (law) light antitank weapons in addition to the ones my squad carried. They tried out a new multiple four round law with a special carrier, but I guess it did not prove useful.

An attempt was made to replace the single shot M79 grenade launcher (nick named blooper) because of the bloop sound it made when fired with an automatic grenade launcher that carried twenty rounds. I thought it was pretty heavy. Don't know the results of that. Once on patrol we encountered an A.D.S.I.D. (air delivered seismic intrusion detector) A camouflaged antenna dropped from a helicopter to implant itself in the ground imitating a tree to sense and record vibrations and language of passing troops. It was at the discretion of the listening crew whether to call in an artillery strike or not.

We walked away very softly

Plastic Explosives

When we were getting ready for a field operation, each squad was given a certain amount of composition C-4 plastic explosive to carry and then return to the engineers when needed for blowing up enemy bunkers. We loved C4 because we could break off a small piece, put a match to it and it would burn with a great heat intensity. We could heat up a metal canteen cup of water in fortyfive seconds and it was great for heating canned food. One time the platoon leader called C4 up to the platoon command post. They only got eight sticks out of a possible thirty. He called again. All C4 to the platoon C.P. They got four more. We liked our coffee water heat source. We sometimes had another heat source called heat tabs, trioxane fuel that burnt a low heat blue flame which took a while to heat your coffee water and the fumes would burn your eyes and choke you. Ouch!

One new Marine in my squad dug a hole in the ground and put in a small piece of C4 then lit it intending to warm his food. We were at the top of a very high hill and it was getting dark. The ferocity of the burning C4 was so bright that it lit up the entire hilltop. Someone yelled **put out that fire!** concerned enemy troops would spot us. The new guy realizing his mistake, attempted to stomp out the burning plastic explosive. That's a no! no! C4 can only be detonated by a blasting cap or by heavy compression. No foot stomping when on fire! I quickly got up and grabbed my steel helmet top and put it over the burningC4 eliminating the light source and because of the lack of oxygen quenched the fire.

There is a learning curve everywhere

Changes In 1969 Viet Nam

I think it was around June that year that the United States Marine Corp made certain changes in its official policy's. One was on identification of their personnel. When we enlisted, we were each given our own personal service number. They discontinued use of the service number and switched you over to your social security number to be your own personal identification. **No big deal.** Another thing that changed was the length of your tour in Viet Nam. When I arrived in January 5, 1969, the length of our tour was to be for thirteen months. They reduced it down to twelve months which made a lot of us quite happy.

That is a great big deal

Weapons Cache

While on a search and destroy mission in the mountains, our boys entered a cave and found about ten SKS North Vietnamese semi-automatic rifles. Those in authority told us that fully automatic weapons like the AK47 could not be brought back to the USA as souvenirs. But the semi-automatic SKS weapons could be given a war souvenir status. The only catch is that if you wanted one of them, you would be required to carry that weapon yourself and still carry all your existing gear till we were sent to our rear basecamp for resupply. Maybe for a month or more. Several men took them up on this deal. So they did carry them for a month. When we did return to our basecamp, if I remember correctly, all the weapons were declared a weapons cache. Thus making them ineligible to be considered souvenirs.

That made a few teed off Marines

Blooper Message

We returned to our rear firebase camp for three days of rest. That night our platoon got bunker watch. Four men to each bunker watching and guarding the base perimeter which consisted of Forty bunkers. On my turn for watch, boredom tugged at me so I tried to do things to make time pass fast. One of the men assigned to our bunker was a grenadier. The man in our squad designated to carry a M79 grenade launcher. So this weapon was at our call to use in defense of our bunker. I decided to write a special message to our enemy the North Vietnamese army and the Viet Cong. I took one of the grenade launchers shotgun rounds, a projectile that contains 20 lethal metal pellets used for close in combat. I removed the front cone cover by unscrewing it from the shell casing exposing the cavity that held the metal pellets. I then proceeded to write the enemy a personal message which I then tucked into the shell casing. The note said! To my N.V.A. and V.C. friends I said!

“# \$ * ! - % o # \$”

I really did this! Now that I think on it, I was kind of thinking goofy!

I am thinking maybe the pen is mighty with the sword

Mid. Rats.

Back in our base camp during bunker watch, usually around midnight, the sergeant of the guard, (man in charge) would make his security check rounds of all the bunkers, checking to see if you were still alive and not sleeping. He would call out to your position to warn you of his approach as not to startle you and end up getting shot. Along with him would be a mess hall worker pushing a cart full of large sandwiches called Midnight Rations. Sometimes steak, or thick bologna, peanut butter and all were very tasty. They would give you one wax paper wrapped sandwich and leave three for the other sleeping men at your bunker. This snack they left us seemed to work really well for keeping us alert. I would eat one half of my sandwich then wrap it back up and then eat the other half on my next watch.

Just as good in the next three hours

Garage Sale Grenades

When I worked at Saginaw Steering Gear, General Motors, I had the opportunity to get to know several other Viet Nam Veterans. We would often have coffee and exchange experiences. One Infantry Army Veteran shared how he and his wife stopped at a local country garage sale. As he was looking at all the goodies, he spotted a dummy MARK 2 practice pineapple hand grenade. He was interested in purchasing it, so he handled it to check it out. There did not seem to be a hole in the bottom signifying a dummy grenade. He took it over to a vise. Clamped it down and took a crescent wrench and removed the spoon and handle. To his shock, it contained a live blasting fuse. He took it out into a field and laid it in a hole, then called the authorities for the bomb squad assistance. After talking to the elderly lady who's garage sale it was and explaining about the hand grenade. He asked where it came from. She it was her deceased husband's souvenir which he kept on the fireplace mantle. He asked her if there were any more like the one she tried to sell? No! Not like that one but similar to it. She went in and then came out carrying a green M26 hand grenade which also turned out to be a live hand grenade. My friend also put that one in the hole with the other grenade.

The bomb squad came out and blew both of the live hand grenades out in the open field hole. My friend said as an afterthought, I should just have called the bomb squad rather than defusing the really old pineapple grenade. Very dangerous he said as he thought more on it. And STUPID.

Can you imagine a 16 year old at that sale?