

# Sixteen Days

August 19 - September 5, 1969



Some say, "War Is Hell On Earth". I would call this 16 days about the worst of my life. I cannot remember all that happened, but a few things kept coming back to me as I wrote this. Maybe some of you others who were there can help fill in some details.

On August 19, 1969 a helicopter was shot down with our Colonel, Sgt. Major, and AP reporter Ollie Noonon on it. "A" Company was being hit bad to the South of Center. On the 20<sup>th</sup> they were going to send us off the West end of Center on a Search and Destroy Mission (S & D). Just before we left they said get

your entrenching tool, you will be out one night. That one night turned into 16. We were loaded down with ammunition but no ruck sacks. "D" Company was coming to Center.

We finally set up on a hill due south of Center, probably Nui Hoac. We were to hold this so "A" Company would have a place to pull back to. The next day we left one platoon behind to hold the hill and the other 2 went out on S & D missions. After we got back, I was sitting in a bomb crater in the shade of elephant grass on a c-ration box when mortars started to fall on us. The first round fell just to the right of my crater. Three were killed. William Miranda, Robert Arthur Jones, and Luis Quintana-Sota. Rudolph Parrish also died that day. I didn't write in my letter about him but it could have happen at the same time. Quintana was a medic from headquarters company attached to us. This was on August 21<sup>st</sup>.



I ran and jumped in my fox hole. They dropped 20 to 30 rounds on us that afternoon. When it was over I checked out my bomb crater, All that was left was dust and small pieces of grass. That c-ration box I was sitting on was small bits of cardboard. I was glad I went to that foxhole.

We left Mortar Hill, my name for it, to hook up with units from LZ West and "B" Company from our outfit. One of our platoons was left on this hill. We dropped



several bombs on Hill 102. After this we went to the hill. It was rough going. All this took place in Hiep Duc Valley. The NVA had scattered by this time. There were several bomb craters and lot of dust from artillery. We stayed about 2 nights on this hill. There were bunkers and tunnels all over and around the hill. They even had wire there for communications. Marvin Timperly found  $\frac{1}{2}$  a poncho. It came in handy at night because even though it was 115 to 120 degrees in the daytime it would drop about 30 degrees at night, and that would make you feel cold. Marvin had left his regular fatigue shirt on Center and only had on a green t-shirt. All our equipment was left on LZ Center except our entrenching tools. They would drop us 2 meals a day usually with ammunition.

From this location we left late and set up after night. Including those from LZ West there were about 4 companies of us. They had spooky fly around us all night for protection. It fired rounds every 4 inches. After midnight I heard a round hit Donald Hull who was next to me. I knew I was a goner. It happen to have glanced off a tree or rock maybe. He was hit in the shoulder if I remember right. He had to walk a long ways the next day because we couldn't get a chopper in to get him. We carried his equipment.

We found the body of the Colonel and others who had crashed. He was a long ways off from others but some on Center saw him fall out of the chopper. By them seeing him fall this helped find him. The others were buried under brush near the chopper which was near a hooch area.

Our other platoon was still on Mortar Hill. "A" Company had pulled back and refused to leave. Our platoon wanted to leave because the enemy had it zeroed in with their mortars. The "A" Company CO had been there only a short time and they had lost many men. He probably did not have their respect. Defending an area and attacking are two different situation. I'm not sure some of the high ranking officers understood the difference and I know some of the lower ranking officers didn't.

In a few days, "A" Company finally left and we moved back to Mortar Hill. That night we got hit by a ground attack. The next day we found several hand grenades made out of



beer and soda cans. They had bamboo strips tied to them to make them easy to throw. On the inside they would have an explosive and pieces of metal or glass. The next night we were mortared again. I happened to be looking in the right direction and saw the first flash. I got my compass out and called LZ Center and told them approximately location. They saw the next flash and marked with their compass. They then fired a barrage on this location. We did not get mortared again while there. This was about the 28<sup>th</sup> of August.

On August 29<sup>th</sup> General Abrams and the Secretary of the Army visited LZ Center.

We would do S&D Missions from Mortar Hill every day. Some nights and almost every day there would be sniper fire. On these missions we would destroy everything because people were not supposed to be living here. We would burn their houses and move some out to different locations but they would soon come back. Below is a picture of a group we were sending to Tam Ky. The South Vietnamese Army were also in this area. They brought out a chopper to take them out. We found more bunkers on that day.



Sept 3<sup>rd</sup> we were on Hill 100. The enemy was set up on the slope of Hill 352. We were still receiving some sniper fire and hitting an occasional booby trap.

On Sept 5<sup>th</sup> we made it back to LZ Center. I had 39 men in my platoon (1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Rebel) when we first left. (Most I ever had while there.) We came back 16 days later with only 19. We had 4 or 5 KIA's and several wounded in our company. I got clean clothes and a shave. Could use a bath but clean clothes make you feel like you had a bath. Didn't get many of those. Never noticed a stink, I guess we all smelled alike.