

## Capt. Ernie “Outlaw” Carrier – Leadership



When I was finally assigned to Charlie 3/21 was so elated had to set on both hands to keep from waving at everybody. Dunsbach was a nice guy and easy to get along with so the transition was not too difficult. I knew from my platoon leader days what a daunting task leading a combat unit can be. Just because you hold rank, in the bush it's how you act and how you live.

Everyone has rifles, pistols, handgrenades, all types of weapons, better make sure they are appreciated. And protected as much as you're able. I could tell from the start that unit had some combat experience and seemed to be cohesive.

My first task was to let those who wanted to, come talk with me. So the first three days after Dunsbach DEROSSED we stayed where he left us and went swimming. Would let one platoon rest and relax for one day while the other two would split into five man patrols and provide security for the others swimming. I rotated platoons and gave ones who wanted chance to write home, catch up on sleep or come to the CP and check me out. Every morning and evening would call into battalion and give them some fictitious grid square where we were located along with some report on what we accomplished that day. Think they were starting to catch on but I was the one that would catch the flak for it and I wanted to start out with fresh troops. Then an event happened that gave our true location and was one of the best that ever happened to me up to that point in my life. One of the five man patrols ran into some VC, about five, with lots of documents, weapons and two flags. Stupid move on my part when I called the contact in was to tell them about the flags. Thought about that until the TOC Major came out in his helicopter to pick up what was captured. Been around too

long for some higher ranking officer to take away war trophies that a man had captured and could legally take home, given up never to be seen again. We all knew whose wall they would end up on. When Major Waite stepped off the helicopter, was met by me, rto, and doc. After he looked at the documents asked where the flags were. Told him they were legal war trophies that brave men had captured and were their's to keep. What did he want with them anyway, I asked, and added that the only thing they could do was check the stitching and deduce where they were sewed. At that point he ordered me, only a 1st LT at the time, to give him the flags. I refused and told him that they were not going home with him or Brandenburg. Then gave me a direct order to give them up. When I looked behind me about 20 or so had approached and I looked him right in the eye and told him he had better get on that helicopter with what he had, was in the wrong place to be throwing out orders. Truly believe I would have fought him over the flags.



After the Major left, without the flags, things calmed down a bit and we were pretty close to turning in. I look up and recognize the men who had captured them walking towards me. Automatically told them I did not nor was I going to have anything to do with those flags. They are ya'lls and not mine. Finally, calmed down and listened to their logical wants for

the flags. Five of us and two flags, how we gonna split that? Tear pieces off until everyone has an equal amount and they would no longer be flags, so they wouldn't have them if it weren't for me standing up and they wanted me to have them. I told them I would take them on one condition, if they ever wanted them back, just let me know and they could have them. For forty years I have never been unlisted nor unavailable and I've still got them in the same anprc 25 battery bag they were put in that night. Best thing

that could have happened, troops, all of them knew if nothing else, I would stand up for them. That was important and got me off on the right foot with the company.