

**CHARLIE COMPANY
1ST BATTALION (MECHANIZED), 50TH INFANTRY REGIMENT**

"I put out the flag today. Not something most people do on Halloween, but October 31st will always mean something different to me". (Halloween, 2006)

*Written by James Howard (Jim) Sheppard – Specialist Four
Charlie Company - Third Platoon – 1st Squad - Fire Team Leader - October 31st, 1967
"As I remember it"*

Charlie Company men who "gave all" on Halloween, 1967:



SFC DOUGLAS BROWN
PANEL 28E - ROW 106



PFC ROGER LEE HUBBARD
PANEL 28E - ROW 104



PFC SCOTT LOUIS THIRY
PANEL 28E - ROW 106

Men of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), unload from a CH-47 helicopter at Landing Zone Quick atop Cay Giep Mountain south of Bong Son in Binh Dinh Province to begin a search and destroy mission on October 29th, 1967 (Official US Army Photo at right).



The photo below is of Charlie Company, 2nd of the 5th Cavalry (Courtesy of their "Comanche" website) taken at the same location, just 3 months before in the summer of 1967. It gives you an idea of the commanding view from the top of what many referred to as "Tiger Mountain" or "Old Baldy".



This prominent geologic landmark could be seen from most of our area of operations along Highway 1 and the South China Sea in Coastal Central South Vietnam. The top was, for the most part, cleared of vegetation due to the frequent bombardments of "Prep fires" that preceded troop insertions.



(Photo courtesy of Dick Guthrie, former "B" Company Commander)

For my story, I will call it "Tiger Mountain", as this was what I recall the men of Charlie Company calling this place. The mountain had a very distinct volcanic appearance. The prominent "dome top" sat upon a star shaped base of mountain ridges that ran off in a descending fashion in 4 or 5 different directions. A vast myriad of smaller ridges and valleys completed a terrain suited well to concealing the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong units who were our adversaries in this general locale.

To place the time frame correctly, I will base my dates on the caption that accompanied the U.S. Army Photo of the Chinook Helicopter Combat Assault Landing on the top of Tiger Mountain. The Official Photo stated "October 29-30" as the dates of the operation, so I will assume from this that our actual landing was on the 29th of October.

My only "Official" reference to the fire fight is a small comment found in the 1st Cavalry Division's "Operation Pershing" After Action Report. Verbatim (Word for Word), the report read:

SUBJECT: Operation Pershing After Action Report

TAB 6: Significant Contacts (Cont)

17. On 31 Oct, an estimated VC company attacked 1 company of the 2d Bde in SW Gay Giap mountains. Sporadic contact continued throughout the night resulting in 15 NVA killed.

Knowing that we spent the night at the precise same location on Sunday/Monday (29th/30th) and Monday/Tuesday (30th/31st) and not currently possessing a Daily Staff Journal (Daily Log) which would accurately indicate exact times...the actual reporting and time of the firefight events will appear hereafter as general "overnight" events...with the assumption that Halloween struck at Midnight on the night of the contact.

I recall the Combat Assault or "Charlie Alpha" to LZ Quick vividly. Not only was the Chinook in the U.S. Army photo employed, but a flight of Huey "slicks" also carried our unit to the crest. (Bell UH-1 Huey Helicopter Series...the "workhorse" of air operations in South Vietnam during the conflict) My Fire Team was on one of these Hueys and I recall the swift "in and out"...with the landing skids never touching ground...and you had best jump quickly as the distance between the chopper and the ground would increase rapidly for anyone who tarried in exiting the aircraft!



(Photo Source and Site unknown)

The landing zone had been prepped by Helicopter Gunships as well as Artillery fires. Mike Canavan recalled being one of two Radio Telephone Operators (RTOs) for the Company Commander, Captain Herb Randall, that night. Mike gave me this account recently:

"The place was still smoldering after our 'Charlie Alpha' and the smoke created an eerie atmosphere as we began our descent".

I remember the Company moving down the trail in those mountain jungle forests. Several events come to mind, but the entire trip was, for the most part, scary. We were so susceptible to ambush on those trails. I remember distinctly looking up at the rising wooded terrain to our Right. One could only see about 20 meters into the trees at best. In most places, it was shaded and fairly dark...even in broad daylight.



The photo on the left is a National Archives photo of Charlie Company beginning its descent from the peak. It was used in the VFW Magazine article on the Battle of Tam Quan!...which was fraught with error. The battle of Tam Quan did not take place until a month and a half later! I am not positive, but the above-right photo appears to be SGT. Norm Poage on the trail on Cay Giep.

I recall seeing an Anteater at one point...long snout intent on its labor at an ant hill! The animal was hardly fazed by us walking past. I also remember how...try as we might to be "stealthy"...I believe all of Binh Dinh Province could hear us traipsing down that mountain!

I particularly remember one man from the Third Platoon who had a terrible case of Diarrhea! Although his name has been lost in time, we had to stop every half hour while he went off behind a tree to relieve himself! Odd how men can laugh at someone else's plight...but I have long held that one of the keys to maintaining sanity in combat was a vivid sense of humor! I believe that man was Med-e-vac'd out later that day from our first night at the site of the battle the next evening. The source of his discomfort and embarrassment (and our laughter) had spared him from the horror the rest of us were to endure!

The descent took all day. It was mostly slow going and a much longer trip than most of us could have anticipated. Constantly on edge...I distinctly remembered one man in my squad who always walked the trail with the safety OFF on his M-16! Everyone tried to be sure they were not near this man as we "beat the bushes"! I cannot be sure of the name, since it was long ago. He was Hispanic and stocky...and possibly was KIA later in our tour...so I do not want to, in any way, be disrespectful.

Talking today with Wally Wroblewski of the Mortar Platoon, we remembered how extremely tired we were as we settled in for the night.

There were previously dug foxhole positions in a circular perimeter, but erosion had mostly filled them in...and they were only a foot or so deep. We were too tired to dig them out...and spent the night without very good preparation for any attack...if it were to come. Fortunately, it did not.

I do not recall what duty we were involved in that next day. What I do remember is that we returned to the exact same location for the 2nd night. Something we learned not to do again! The enemy was always keyed in on anything we would do in repetition. Never take the same trail...the same day...more than once. (Never take the trail if possible) NEVER camp in the same location in the field two nights in a row!

We returned to that site well before dark. Not nearly as tired, we settled in and dug out those foxholes. The digging was tough in the beginning...as it was the dry season, and the top layer of dirt was rock hard. We then turned our attention to setting up Claymore Anti-Personnel mines and trip flares all around our positions....a fact that later would save lives. I particularly remember that...with all the extra daylight, we outdid ourselves being very "creative" in setting out the trip wires...also putting flares underneath the Claymore Mines...pins pulled...so that if the crafty Viet Cong were able to sneak in and find the mines...and attempt to turn them towards our defensive positions...the trip flare would be released. I cannot be sure, but believe it was a flare such as this that was tripped by the attacking force and saved us from a more severe surprise attack. I remember seeing the bodies of the dead in the morning...black pajama pant legs rolled up so they would feel any trip wire on their bare skin as they ever so slowly advanced to our perimeter.

I also remember the 1st Cavalry Division Chopper coming in with hot chow at dinner time!...AND the 2 trash cans full of beer! I believe we were limited to two apiece...and it was always a welcome treat. Being OPCON to the 1st Cav. did have it's advantages! As General Westmoreland stated when we arrived in Vietnam: *"You are a triple threat! You are with the 1st Cavalry Airmobile Division...and can Combat Assault in choppers...you are mechanized and can destroy the enemy in your Armored Personnel Carriers...AND you are Infantry, and can walk into places the Choppers and APCs cannot reach!"*

Spirits actually ran rather high that evening. We had hot chow...a couple beers, time to dig in...and even time for some letter writing before darkness set in.

I need to mention something...but without indicating names. The lessons learned that night were to be hard ones...and the results were a common agreement along certain lines in regard to "substances" and their acceptable use.

It would be terribly naïve of me to try to tell you no one ever smoked pot...or worse in Vietnam. You must know that in the strangest places...some Baby-son or Mama-son Vietnamese peasant could magically produce just about anything your heart might desire in the way of sexual pleasure and/or "substances"...everything from cold Coca-Cola to Marijuana...for a price. This was more prevalent in base camp areas...not so much out in the "boonies"...but we all had access to whatever our intoxicating "pleasure of choice" might be. I was a "Juice Freak" and preferred my alcohol...but others preferred their "reefer"...and, up until this night, that distinct aroma could occasionally be smelled of a night position. Not to point fingers, but some were slightly "under the influence" this night. Although the attack came much later, and those in question had rather "sobered" up, enough fear had been instilled that we all vowed not to "use" anything beyond the allotted two beers in the future when in the "field" away from Base Camp. It was a wise choice I think.

I do not mention this here in a context that would imply rampant drug abuse. This was NOT the case. I simply state that those very few who were in a habit of "overindulging" their pot habit learned to save it for the rear this night....Army Regulations notwithstanding! ~grin~

The beer and full stomach led me to a very sound sleep that night. Three of us were sharing the foxhole and the position's rotating guard duty that night...me, Rodriguez, and our SGT E-5 Squad Leader...whose name had escaped me until I received help from Harry Wilson, who took

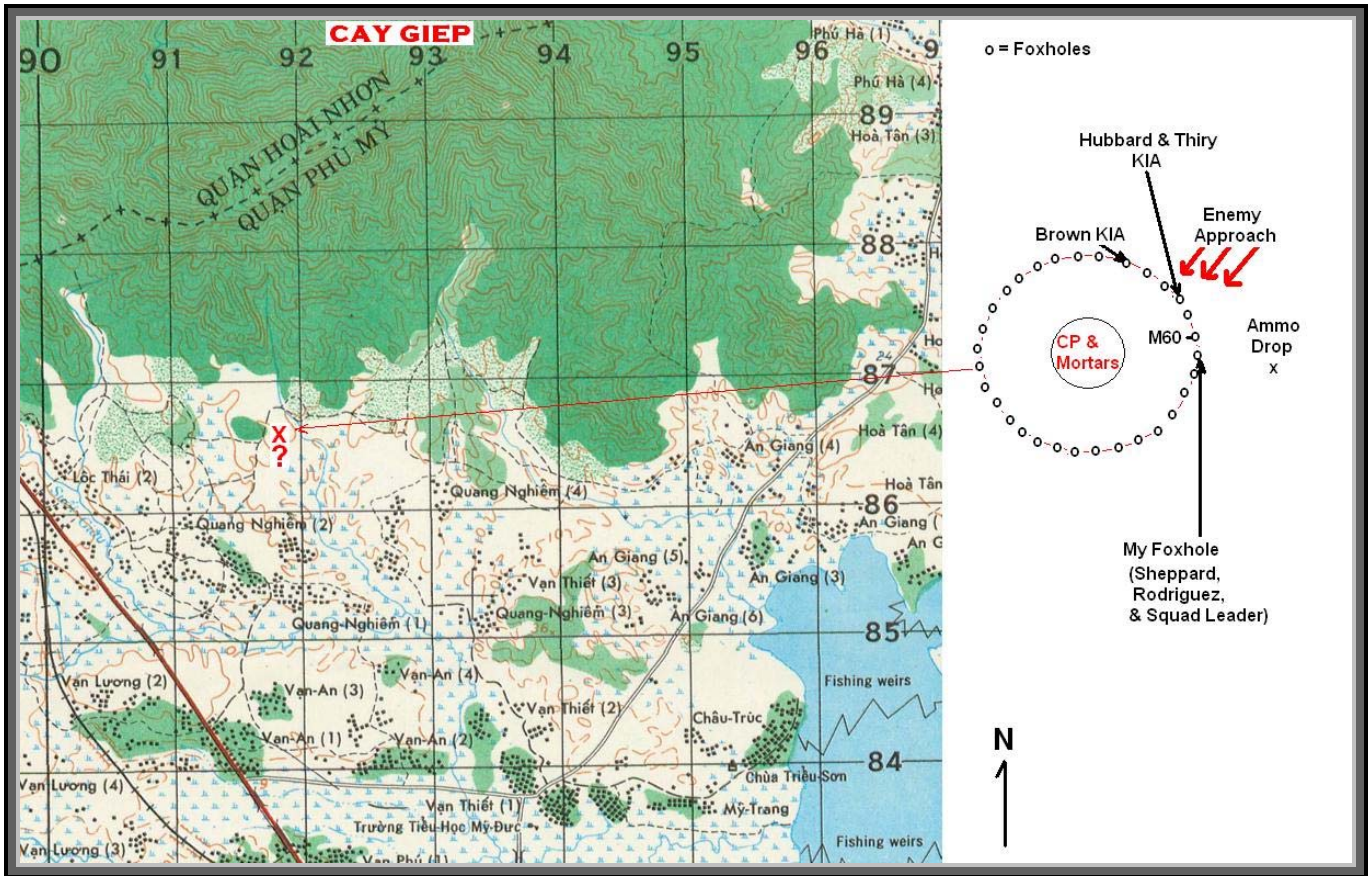
over as Platoon Leader of the 3rd Platoon in January of 1968. I have been perplexed by the knowledge that Norm Poage was my Squad Leader...but that night; this new man was in the Squad Leader role. It turns out (we strongly believe) that Norm Poage was filling in for the Platoon Leader (LT Bob Driscoll, absent for wounds received from an exploding booby trap recently I believe). James Tilley, a Forward Observer & as such assigned to the 1st Squad, was filling in as Squad Leader while Norm acted as the Platoon Leader! My thanks to Harry Wilson for clearing up this enigma! I had developed a "positioning" habit while sleeping in the field at night. I would use my steel pot (helmet) as a pillow, lay my M-16 by my side, and tuck my Bayonet, sans scabbard, into my waist belt. I was in a very deep sleep...and although I had pulled one guard shift, was back to sleep "like a rock", when the attack began.

To this day I find it incredible that Tilley had to shake me awake with the calamity of noise that reigned in that attack! I am guessing he may have feared I was hit...since no man in a normal state would sleep through such as I beheld when my eyes opened! TRACERS!!...and intense! (Ammunition loaded into rifle magazines and in Machinegun ammo belts had one "tracer" round every 5 rounds or so with a Phosphorous bullet head that burned as it flew...revealing your automatic weapon's fire trajectory) The first thing I remember was those tracers...not a yard over my head as I lay on my back. The noise was nearly deafening as exploding mortars, Claymore Mines, Hand Grenades and Rifle Fire (AK-47, M-16 and otherwise) permeated the night...A night now centerpieced by a burning trip flare and blurred enemy soldiers firing and scurrying in the brush just outside our perimeter and to my position's left, facing outward. In a panic...I rolled over and, in an instant was in the foxhole....cowering down so low Rodriguez thought the position empty and jumped in right on my back! I remember seeing stars...and in the brief seconds before I realized what had actually happened, thought I had been "hit"! Rodriguez was in as deep a panic as was I...and we were quickly joined by the Squad Leader...who promptly pointed out that I was crouched in this foxhole with no rifle...and only my Steel Pot and a bayonet held at the ready! My first glance back to where I reckoned I had been sleeping revealed a spot blasted most likely by an incoming grenade.

I responded aloud in horror that my rifle had been blown away! This all happened in a matter of minutes. Rodriguez and Sergeant Tilley began to direct return rifle fire to our front...and immediately drew incoming rifle rounds and grenades, kicking up the dirt in front of our position. The enemy was zeroing in on our muzzle flashes! (Flash from the firing discharge which accompanied the bullet as it exited the weapon's barrel) So we turned to grenades....tossing them near and far in front of our position...as well as into the area of the burning trip flare to our left. The fire directed at us eased as a result. It was at this point that I found myself a bit calmer, and I peered again towards where I thought my weapon had been destroyed. I realized I had looked in the wrong spot. Adjusting my gaze to where I had *actually* been sleeping revealed my rifle lying exactly where I had left it! The initial terror now gone, I left the relatively safe confines of the foxhole position and crawled back and retrieved my weapon. Toby Hamon, 2nd Squad Leader, remembered my friend Bruce Backes crawling around asking if anyone had found his rifle!...so I was not the only one who was disoriented at the outset. Sadly, Toby passed away before I could get more information from him on the events of this night. Flares lit up the skies like daylight for most of the night.



Below is a map of the area involved, with the site pinpointed as best as I can recall. Others have not disputed the location, and another “suspect” location would be approximately 1.5 clicks to the East. I hope to eventually find documentation with the precise coordinates. Also shown is a rough graphic of our night defensive position with key locations noted.



The long night had begun.

I can not say with accuracy how long the intense portion of the firefight lasted. It may have been as little as 20 minutes... but maybe much longer. Our 3rd Platoon Leader, absent that night by chance, aptly described combat in Vietnam as “Long periods of tedious boredom followed by intense battle where chaos and disorder reigned”. I recall that although the grenades seemed to work better than our rifles, there was an M-60 machine-gunner between my position and the Thiry/Hubbard position that laid down withering fire on the enemy. My personal opinion is that this gunner turned the tide of the battle. Toby Hamon informed me at the 2005 Reunion that the man had been recommended for a Silver Star for his role in the fight, but the recommendation had been reduced and he was awarded a Bronze Star.

I have gleaned the following information from men involved during this intense portion of the fighting:

Neil Miller wrote:

“The only thing I remember from that night is that I was by SFC Brown in a foxhole. I remember him yelling behind me for everyone to keep firing...and then he got quiet. I also remember the enemy blowing whistles at one point”. (Most likely a call to retreat) Miller and Brown were to the left of the attack (looking out). Most of the men with whom I’ve talked believe SFC Brown was *standing up* as he directed his Platoon’s fires upon the enemy!

Wally Wroblewski (Mortar Platoon) recounted:

“I recall that our Mortar section was short-staffed that night...most remaining back at Uplift & we only had one Mortar Tube with us. I recall that about two hours before the action started, Sergeant Brown stopped by our Mortar pit. Three of us (Tinko, Murphy and I) were on watch at the time and brewing up some C-Ration Coffee. We asked him to join us for a cup and he did. The Korean Veteran SFC Brown was well respected by all of us...hardly a man from Charlie Company does not recall this man’s presence as a leader. He asked about our preparedness and we told him we had rounds “at the ready” the charges set for pre-determined locations. It was a pleasant conversation with the old grizzled Drill Instructor...and he left us after a short time. It was the last time we saw him alive, as he was one of our three men lost that night.”

“Just before the action started, the three of us detected a strange odor...similar to a pungent type of cigarette smoke. I recanted to Tinko and Murphy that this was eerily reminiscent of a scenario an old training cadre has related. The Man’s name escapes me, but he had been a Vietnam Vet from the “Big Red One” (U.S. Army’s 1st Infantry Division). This veteran of the war had warned us that if we were ever in a night position and began to smell strange but uncharacteristic smells to get ready...for you were about to be attacked. Not one minute after I mentioned this, the first trip flare popped and the action began! At the outset, we fired a few mortar rounds...which immediately drew the concentration of enemy fire upon the command position. (We shared the center command position with the Company Commander in the center of the circular night position. Captain Herbert Randall immediately directed us to cease firing.”

I remember Al Smith going to the aid of Scott Thiry, whose position with Hubbard was at the point of attack. I remember seeing a man running for our position at the outset...and watching in horror as his head snapped back and he fell limp to the ground. To my amazement, he rose and continued into our Command position, a three inch dent in his steel pot helmet! It had saved his life! Thiry had been hit in the hand, loosing a finger I believe, and Smith helped him back to the Command Position for first aid. When the battle eased, I was moved into Thiry and Hubbard’s foxhole. Hubbard’s body remained in the foxhole with me for the remainder of the night. I also recall Ron Heinecke and Howard Flippin being moved into a foxhole position to my left and Neil Miller’s right. Men in that position presumably having been wounded. Finally, I recall SSG Chaney moving back and forth to re-supply the men near the point of attack with Ammunition”.

Sergeant Chaney was the “old-timer” who at approximately 40 years of age put many of us 21-year-olds to shame physically!



On the left, Captain Herbert Randall is awarded the Silver Star for the action on October 31, 1967.

On the right, Captain Randall with a captured NVA Weapon

(Photos are from the original Association Website and their source is unknown)

After being treated, Thiry had insisted on returning to his foxhole and was subsequently killed, along with Hubbard. The enemy took an M-79grenade launcher from the position.

Mike Canavan commented:

“Joe Ewing and I were Radio Telephone Operators (RTOs) for the Command Position. I recall one man had brought along an Air Mattress to sleep on...and when the firing started, the mattress was hit by a bullet and deflated. (Walter Podraza added: The man with the Air Mattress was Glen Brashears). Had Brashears been sleeping on the ground...he would have been hit. I recall whoever was to my left that night was KIA with a bullet that went through his helmet. (Must have been either Thiry or Brown)

Joe Ewing gave this account:

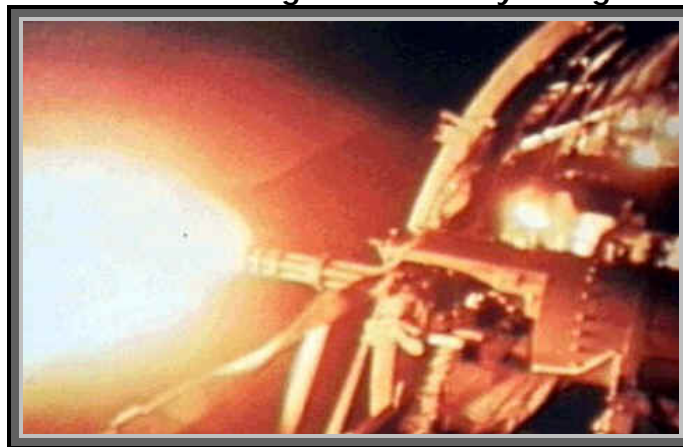
“I was the RTO for Captain Randall and was in the center of the night position that night. I remember being awakened by the incoming fires and calling for Artillery and everything the supporting units in the rear could send. I remember the Gatling Guns...our first experience with their support.”

“Spooky” Squadron Lockheed AC-130 Spectre GunShip

(Photo courtesy of <http://www.fas.org>)



The Lockheed AC-130 Spectre Gunships used, among other armament, a side mounted 25mm GAU-12 Gatling gun with a firing rate of 1800 rounds per minute. (That's 30 rounds every second!). These same aircraft are still being utilized today in Afghanistan. (2006)



Gatling “mini-guns” in action

(Photo courtesy of <http://www.diggerhistory.com>)

Joe Ewing further recanted: *“I dragged the radio around for the “Black Hat” or “Path Finder” as he tried to direct in Med-e-Vac and Re-supply Helicopters.*

(Pathfinder's were usually assigned to their parent organization's aviation unit. Normally operating as four man teams they secured, marked, cleared, and established Demilitarized Zones and/or Landing Zones; Provided initial aircraft guidance at remote locations; and provided some limited air traffic control capabilities.)

I was crawling and he was standing up with his flashlights! The Med-e-Vac helicopter tried to land several times, but could not because of the intense gunfire. The Mortar Platoon took quite a few wounded as the enemy was zeroing in on their aiming stakes. I don't remember that Black Hat's name, but do recall that he was awarded the Bronze Star for the action. Much later...and just before light, I remember the Ammo Re-supply dropped a pallet of crated ammunition about 30 yards OUTSIDE the perimeter! I remember the medic crawling over to us in the Command Post and handing us some morphine. He instructed us to 'do the best we could' but Thiry and Brown were motionless and cold. I also remember the whistles. They came after the firing had toned down almost completely. Someone wondered out loud what that meant and I believe Captain Randall replied it usually meant to either 'Charge' or 'Retreat'. I also remember that the First Sergeant, Sammy C. Blount, was with Captain Randall in the CP that night".

(During the "Battle of An Bao on May 5th, 1968, Medic Jim Fitzgerald recounted how the North Vietnamese units signaled to cease firing upon the pinned down "A" Company men by blowing whistles as the "C" Company reinforcements approached)

Support began to arrive in many forms. Artillery support began firing flares and pounding the retreat lanes toward Tiger Mountain...the "Spooky" Gunship also came, firing its Gatling gun and dropped flares for hours. I recall the flares lit up the battlefield...bright as day!

Firing trickled down to only an occasional incoming rifle shot here and there...but there was moaning from the severely wounded enemy soldiers all night long. The low brush concealed the fallen enemy and try as we might with grenades and all sorts of ordinance, we could not silence the suffering. We could not be completely sure the enemy fighting presence was gone...since we were still taking occasional fire. The moaning could very well be a "trick" to draw us into a humanitarian effort that would only result in our medical personnel being wounded or worse! Most dramatic of the support firings was from "C" Battery of the 4th/60th Artillery. Mike Canavan recalled he monitored the communication from one of their M-42 twin-40 mm "Dusters". They were "in range" as they had been out that night with a Retriever picking up a disabled Tank. I will never forget those rounds coming in at treetop level...or even lower, to pepper the retreating enemy forces.



"Twin-40 Night Fire" photo courtesy of Dave Hornbarger of "B" Battery and the National Dusters, Quads and Searchlights Association website.

Former Specialist 5th class Craig Reed (Medic) remembered:

"I set up our Medical Station near the center of our F.O.B. I was within 20-feet of our command center and about the same distance to our perimeter. No one told me to dig a foxhole so I laid on my back on the ground with rifle between my legs and muzzle a few inches from my chin. The inside of my helmet was my pillow. I remember thinking that it would be white sheets for me forever when/if I returned. I could not sleep. My eyes were wide open. It was my first night, sleep was not an option. I smoked several cigarettes as the next few hours passed by slowly. Then boom-boom and the rat-tat-tat sound that we all had become acutely familiar with! I could hear the sound of AK-47 firing and just as sudden, the sky was illuminated by our trip flares. Then I immediately heard Sergeant Brown's deep, strong voice yelling "fire, fire, fire" over and over again. I saw that he was standing straight up in his foxhole in command mode. I also heard the call "Medic". I assembled my gear and headed for where I had heard the call. My first casualty was just outside of Sergeant Brown's foxhole. I took one look and went for my morphine. The first shot seemed to leak out on my hands. I gave a second shot. The rest of the night was busy for me. I crawled around our perimeter in search of our wounded. I drug the more seriously wounded back to the medical area. I found that I could dog crawl with a man on my back faster than any base-training exercise ever experienced. The abrasions on my elbows and knees did not hurt until the next day. I attended to wounded men who returned to the fight after being treated. One man was wounded again while I was bandaging his initial wounds. I recall that two men were wounded again after returning to post. They both went back for a third time. I heard high-pitched whistles from outside our perimeter. In coming fire would almost seize until the whistle sounded again. I cannot tell you about time. Twenty-minutes, no, I think more like at least an hour of intense fire. The lull was just different not any less scary. The incoming fire resumed each time with diminished capacity. I met Sergeant Reynolds on one of my trips. He was the charismatic man I had noticed earlier. He was severally wounded. I carried him back to the aid station. I did not have a big enough bandage. I used C-Ration boxes with bandages between to cover his wounds. I used my belt to hold it all together. We rested with the other wounded for the balance of the night. He sang the Lord's Prayer quietly as I encouraged him to hang on. The rest of the night was a blur for me. I saw the sky filled with helicopters. Someone said we were getting more ammo. In the morning I saw jets and "Spooky" firing Gatling 50's from all doors. God it was great to be an American soldier with all of the support and firepower. Not so good to be a VC or NVA. They will remember 'C' Company."

The fighting pretty much over, we maintained full readiness for the rest of the night. I know it seemed to me that the night dragged on forever! Flares were a constant...thankfully, and we finally heard the whoomp-whoomp-whoomp of the re-supply chopper...trying to find us in the dark. He came close, but dropped the pallet of ammo OUTSIDE the perimeter, directly in front of my position. I Remember that Pathfinder, or someone, cursing loudly as he tried to get the chopper pilot's attention before the drop...to no avail. Our ammo had been effectively delivered to the enemy!...had he still been in place!

I remember the very first hints of daylight were breaking over the eastern horizon as the word filtered over that each foxhole that could do so needed to send out one man to help bring in the ammo. I distinctly remember being in the middle of our foxhole facing out...Rodriguez on my left, and Tilley on my right. Sergeant Tilley looked at me and ordered: "*Sheppard, go out and help bring in the ammo...I'll cover you.*" to which I responded: "*How about if you go out and I'll cover you?!*" The Sergeant was not amused...and I dashed out to help bring in the ammo....heart pounding with fear! Years later I learned that Ken Riley, our Association Chairman Emeritus and co-founder had also been given the same task and we ran back and forth side by side that night. At the conclusion of the battle, I found a dead Viet Cong about 20 meters to my front. I picked up three empty shell casings from near his AK-47 Assault Rifle as souvenirs of the night. I presented one to Ken at the Kansas City Reunion. The rounds had been fired at us. I still have the other two & one day plan to have one of them buried with me, forever accompanying my remains.

The fight was over. It had been for some time, but we were still not completely sure until after the ammo had been successfully brought within the perimeter without drawing any fire.

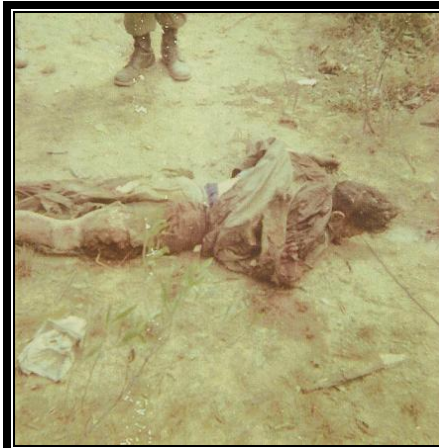
As soon as it was fully daylight, I remember First Sergeant Blount was the first to walk out among the dozen and a half or so dead enemy. "Pop" "Pop"... I can still see him biting that lower lip as he finished off the two or three that were near dead with his M-16. Sergeant Blount had been very close to SFC Brown as they had served together in Korea I believe. I do believe it was the last time the First Sergeant accompanied "C" Company to the field.



Mike Canavan supplied this image (Above Left), converted from a dim slide photo of 1st Sergeant Blount with a captured AK-47. Mike thinks this was the day of the night attack. A photo of 1SG Blount, taken by Charlie Company Executive Office Thomas Schroeder is above right

Inspecting the bodies of the enemy a few moments later, I realized they could never have survived. The constant pounding they took all night from our gunfire and grenades had them nearly completely dismembered. It was not a pretty sight. As the Company moved out to search for more enemy dead and follow their trail into the mountains, I asked another man to remove a pair of the Sandals one of the dead was wearing...too squeamish to do the task myself! I wore those sandals as a civilian on the beaches of New Jersey for years. They were the source of many a raised eyebrow when I was asked of...and explained... their origin! I wish I had kept them...but when they completely wore out sometime in the 70's, I threw them away!

Wally Wroblewski added these thoughts on "the morning after" and supplied me with a set of photos of taken during the mission. *"When we were ordered to sweep the perimeter in the morning I was struck by how close to our outer foxhole positions the bodies were! We only took a few steps into the sparse, low brush when we encountered the enemy casualties. Closest was a body laying face down on his SKS Rifle...with the bayonet fixed!"*



The photos above were taken by Wally Wroblewski of the Mortar section, Charlie Company, the morning after the firefight. All are NVA regulars in uniform, although a few of the bodies (not pictured here) wore the common black pajamas. In the center photo is Murphy, of the Mortar section. The sandals I spoke of are visible on the body beneath Murphy.

I have no official documentation, but recall hearing that a captured NVA Soldier revealed the battle plan for the attack. Local VC Forces attacked our position. The plan had been for a much larger NVA unit to move into position on the opposite side of our night perimeter and attack after the smaller Viet Cong force drew all attention to their attack. I believe the results might have been devastating, but fortunately, the NVA unit never made it to our position...getting lost en-route on this dark night!

About a month after this Fire Fight, I volunteered to return to Uplift and serve as the forward area Charlie Company Clerk. I will never forget that night and, every Halloween, I will fly the American Flag in remembrance.

AWARDS LIST *

SILVER STAR

CPT Herbert E Randall
PSG Douglas Brown (Posthumously)
SFC James C. Chaney
PFC Roger Hubbard (Posthumously)
PFC Norman Poage
PFC Scott L. Thiry (Posthumously)



BRONZE STAR FOR VALOR

SSG Victor Willoughby
SSG Allan VanKeuren
SGT Carl T. Myatt
SP5 Craig L. Reed
SP4 Ronald M. Heinecke
SP4 James D. Kelliher
SP4 Donald R. Parton
SP4 Robert E. Rogers
SP4 Larry Rosebrook
PFC David L. Reed



ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL FOR VALOR

PFC Todd A. Handy
PFC Miles R. Hatch
PFC John T. Nealy
PFC Henry A. Presley
PFC John W. Ricker
PFC Kenneth G. Riley
PFC Jose T. Rodriguez
PFC Samuel A. Seifer, Jr.
PFC Walter R. Sutton
PFC Bruce M. VanderVlies



PURPLE HEART

SFC James C. Chaney
SP4 Thomas M. Pecorilli
PFC Richard D. Edwards
PFC Norman C. Poage
PFC Albert C. Smith



* List is NOT complete. These are only confirmed via General Orders found "to date"



3rd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1/50th Infantry, taken in December of 1967

Author's note: I consider this and any other account I write as "works in progress" and open to addition and deletion as new information becomes known. Edit for grammar and tactical correctness graciously received from: Dick Guthrie (1/50th Assoc.), John Boyle (19th Engineers Assoc. Historian), Harry Wilson (1/50th Assoc.), and Ruth Leone, (My Better Half!)