

Good things seem to happen at our reunions and this one was no exception. On Friday night June 24, 2005, Mike Maynard walked into our Hard Charger hospitality suite. In May of 1968 Mike was the Executive Officer of A/1/77th FA. By early May 1968 the siege of Khe Sahn had been lifted, all was relative quite, and most of the 1st Cav had moved out. Two artillery batteries, A/1/77th FA and A/1/30th FA were left in place to cover any skirmishes that might take place until the evacuation was complete. On the night of 4 May 1968 LZ Peanuts, occupied by A/1/77th FA was hit with a ground attack that started so close to the perimeter that A/1/30th FA at LZ Snapper could not fire HE rounds in support of the defense. The men of A/1/77th FA were fighting for their lives and they need illumination. The Air Force "Snoopy" was called but it would be awhile before they could arrive on-station. It was up to A/1/30th FA to provide the illumination. Mike Maynard tells us in his own words about the action on LZ Peanuts, "The ground attack on LZ Peanuts began just before 2300 hrs. on 4 May. LZ Peanuts was the smallest LZ that I was ever on in Vietnam. Our 105mm tubes were only about 15-20 meters apart and were virtually on line as the depth was only 25-30 meters. In spite of this small size, the enemy was able to land close to 30 rounds of artillery, recoilless rifle and mortar fire on the LZ during the day. At about 1500 hrs, one of them landed in our #2 gun pit starting a fire in the ammo pit. This quickly spread to the some 3000 rounds of ammo we had on the LZ that had been delivered en masse by the Cav as we were all concerned about the marine assets being overtaxed and us not being able to get sufficient ammo re-supply. The resulting fire and detonation of ammo trapped the FDC personnel (including myself who was XO and acting FDO) in the FDC. Their situation was serious as the only exit was facing the raging fire and exploding ammo. I was desperate enough to request that a blivet of water be dropped on the fire in an attempt to extinguish it. If I'm not mistaken, the blivet that was dropped came from A/1/30th FA. This extinguished the fire enough to allow the personnel to escape to the 1/5th Cav position on the North end of the LZ. Little did I know how much more we were to owe A/1/30th FA by the next morning. My battery commander was medevaced around 1730 leaving me as the only officer in the battery. I was fat dumb and happy though thinking since all six of our tubes were out of action, I couldn't screw anything up too bad. This was before approximately 500 NVA showed up just before 2300 hours to dispute the ownership of LZ Peanuts with less than 50 troops of A/1/77th FA and the 45 troopers of A/1/5th CAV that were on base defense. Following their doctrine to the letter the NVA strategy was to close as quickly as possible with US troops so as to minimize their firepower advantage. Since our tubes were all out of action, it was to be strictly a classic hand-to-hand infantry defense in which illumination was to be of paramount importance. They breached our perimeter quickly and we needed illumination immediately and constantly. Never have my prayers been answered so quickly and so well. The battle raged on until daylight the morning of 5 May. Although we lost nine KIA in the battery alone that night, the toll would have been higher had it not been for the outstanding fire support from A/1/30th FA. I am so grateful I have finally gotten a chance to personally thank some of the members of that battery that performed so magnificently that night. Well done and thank you from Birth Control Two Five." Jim Harris writes "Two of our Hard Charger guns were used to fire alternately from LZ Snapper to provide constant illumination. Unfortunately the illumination rounds were old and approximately half of the rounds fired were duds. When one gun fired, the other watched and if the round failed to ignite, the other gun immediately fired so as to keep constant illumination over LZ Peanuts. The mission was easy to call because A/1/30th FA was located on LZ Snapper, just across the valley from LZ Peanuts; so close that the men could watch the battle take place. The guns continued firing throughout the night while everyone searched the sky for Snoopy. As the two firing guns ran low on illumination rounds the men of the other four guns carried their rounds to the firing guns and the mission continued. It became apparent that A/1/30th FA did not have enough illumination rounds to outlast the night. A/1/77th FA was advised that ammunition was running dangerously low. No Hollywood script could have been more dramatically written. We've all seen dozens of movies where the good guys show up just in time. A/1/77th FA was advised that the final illumination round was being fired. The men of A/1/30th FA watched in dismay as the final round floated towards the ground. At that instant the hum of the twin engines of a DC-3 Gooney Bird were heard in the distance and as the final illumination round flickered out Snoopy lit up the sky. The roar that erupted from LZ Snapper was like Lambeau Field on a Sunday afternoon in October. As Mike Maynard talked to Pete Henry, Jack Shoalmire, Phil Greiner, and me (Jim Harris) in our Hospitality Suite, he explained that it had been a life-long goal of his to find the men of A/1/30th FA and thank them. He said he had chill bumps just knowing that he had finally found some of us and could properly thank us. Birth Control Two Five it was our distinct pleasure. Hard Charger Two Three (Jim Harris) OUT.

