

HISTORICAL OCCURRENCES

LOACH EXTRACTION

From Bill Walton
D Troop 229th Aviation

ED: the following is a story submitted through our webpage from a door gunner with D-229. He sent along four pictures that are on the webpage. I like his comment about us "flying good" because we knew to keep away from the rotors.

In late '71 we inserted an LRRP team with a Kit Carson scout out of Bear Cat. We put them in on a trail by a river. They were to collect intel on sampans running supplies down the river at night.

We had to come back that night because they blew a bush on what they thought was a single sampan but turned out to be a whole company. They had a running gunfight for a while before the holed up next to the river. We were only a single ship with no cover birds. The problem was the cover was too thick so we couldn't drop our ropes to McGuire them out and the cover extended too far over the river. I even tried shooting some of the limbs down with my 60, but no use.

We finally got a loach on scene. He dropped his gunner off up river in a clearing. We set down and picked the gunner up. The loach was small enough to get under the overhangs and picked up three of the LRRPs. The loach went back to the same clearing and dropped off the three LRRPs, we set down and picked them up. The loach went back to the PZ and went under the overhangs again and picked up the remaining 2 LRRPs. We then RTB'd.

Not one round was fired at us during the whole operation. Wild night.

All of these were done in III Corps area mid to late 71 and I was based out of Bear Cat. I'm sorry I can't give you more info but my memory, like my hair line, is somewhat faded.

I do remember the wooden nickles you guys had and I remember the flak about your sign because a picture of it made the Paris peace talks.

Comment from Tim Bebee

That sounds like a mission that Terry Wanish led. I was on leave at the time.

Comment from Mike Blymyer

Wasn't there for that one but Tim Greenly and I got extracted in a LOH that maneuvered between the trees 'till it got to a small river and was able to gain altitude. Must say I was really, really uncomfortable during that opportunity.

And Walton's reply

I'm sorry I didn't get any names of the team members, but these guys were not the name tag wearing types. We very seldom flew the same teams and most often, we would not be the ones to extract the same ones we inserted and visa verse.

I had a lot more respect for them than I had for the green beanies. They would most often carry AK's only and they would strap on Ho Chi Mien sandals on the bottom of their boots in order to make their trails blend in with the ones they were hunting. I did see a couple of them carrying Swedish K's once and one of them let me fire one once on the green line at Bear Cat. Once I saw one of them carrying a suppressed 22 semi-auto handgun. I guess he had something in mind with that. Don't ask, Don't tell.

They flew good, meaning I never had to tell them where or how to sit, or how to handle their weapons on my bird. They inserted well and extracted well, in other words I didn't have to tell them how to exit or enter without reminding them on loading or about either the main rotor or the tail rotor. I think they even told their Kit Carson scouts, when they were with them, not to approach the bird first in a hot PZ. That eliminated a possible serious accident, especially at night.

We flew them only for a couple of months, but with them, there was no such thing as a dry run. If we went to do an extraction, we could tell if there was going to be trouble because they always talked on the radio barely above a whisper. When they were yelling, we knew it was going to be interesting.

The four pictures I sent, I hope, were they only ones I took involving them, but I do have a lot of pictures concerning my unit and some of the places I was at: Dau Tieng, Song Be, Quan Loi, and the Bear Cat.

Bill Walton

D troop 229th AHB Smiling Tigers.

Glad you made it home.

Comment from Pete Dencker

I was the CO at the time - for a period of time the Company actually resided at Bear Cat rather than Bien Hoa with the rest of the Cav. This might have been one of Faulkner's missions - I remember they engaged about 50+ right on a river and wound up with about that many enemy KIA's, of course when we went back in the next day most of the bodies had been removed, but it was clear they took a huge hit - I just don't remember the extraction going this way - although it may have. I have a whole series of summaries of team missions/contacts from that time frame and see what I can dig up.

My plan over the next few years is to write a book using these summaries as a basis to provide an in depth picture of what H Company accomplished during my time there (I was with H Co from the end of 70 to about spring of 72.)

RLTW - Pete Dencker