



Alpha CAPs Hue/Phu Bai Area

Submitted by: Fred Neilen

Duff:

I was the first Marine Vietnamese interpreter for the first experimental Combined Action Platoon. At the time, a buck Sergeant on TAD from 3dMAW where I was teaching Vietnamese Language to chopper pilots. I requested to go to Nam and received probably the most weird set of orders ever. They simply said go to Nam, take your own weapons, stay in touch, and do not exceed six months. I went across on the Princeton with the first amphibious landing at Chu Lai in July '65. About a week later, some Captain from 4th Marines, "B" Company I believe, showed up and asked if I would "help out". Now to fully appreciate the circumstances, understand my main MOS was that of Aviation Electronics. I agreed to go to Phu Bai, be attached to this experimental CAP, and live in the village of Loc Son some nine plus "clicks" south of Phu Bai. For the first two months we only saw sporadic night probes/gunfire. During the day we either helped the villagers, worked with the PFs, or went on some stupid sweep with 3rd MarDiv.

This all changed on September 18, 1965 at about 0200. The afternoon of the 17th, we were preparing a "search & destroy" on a hamlet about 3 clicks to the northwest of town. I had been trying to convince Cpl. Ed (Edwin) Falloon who had ten days left in country to go home and take his Doctor Father up on the offer to finish college and go to medical school. That afternoon he said he was going to write his Father the next day and take him up on the offer. He did not get the chance.

As we approached the village, I heard a dog barking. I told the Sgt/Squad Leader we were walking into something. He, from New York, disagreed with this old WVa country boy. I told him that country dogs do not bark in the middle of the night for nothing. We proceeded into the hamlet. At the entrance, we had a river on one side of the path and thick brambles on the other. One could not see their hand in front of their face. Cpl Fallon was on point and took the first round between the eyes. He did not suffer. Our corpsmen took a round in the foot. We attacked and returned fire calling in flare rounds the first of which illuminated us not THEM. When it was over, we took turns carrying Ed and helping Doc out. The next morning at first light we recovered the bodies of several VC all of whom were under 18 years of age.

I thought your members might like to know how all of this got started and hopefully put Ed's name on your roster. I stayed in the Corps until 1968 serving in Nam again from 12/67-8/68. I had just been picked up for Gunney but figured with my language skills I would be going right back and did not want to tempt fate. A few years ago thanks to the internet, I was able to make contact with Ed's family. Fortunately his Father, then 80, was still alive and never knew his son had decided to take him up on his offer. He has now passed away but I stay in touch with Ed's Brother who lives in CO. I stay close to many Marine friends and was asked to provide some in field training to the 1st Intel Bn at Camp Pendleton in early 2002. While it was fun and the old man did it for free, the memories were strange particularly watching all these very young Marines. Speaking of which, my nephew was one of the 10 WIA along with 5 KIA a few months back near the Syrian Border. After weeks at Bethesda he is now back at Pendleton on light duty. No one knows if he will ever fully recover complete use of his left hand.

Should you care for any additional information I will provide what memory allows. I now reside in Newport, Oregon where I am engaged in real estate.

Semper Fi!
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