



# CAP 2-4-2 Destroyed

By Sandy Wardlaw

It was late afternoon on June 1, 1970. That time of the day when everyone begins to gather his thoughts on that night's ambush site. The level of the voices gets lower and lower until even whispers are barely audible. Each man is surrounded by comrades, yet alone. Usually it is the night that brings the terror but not in this instance.

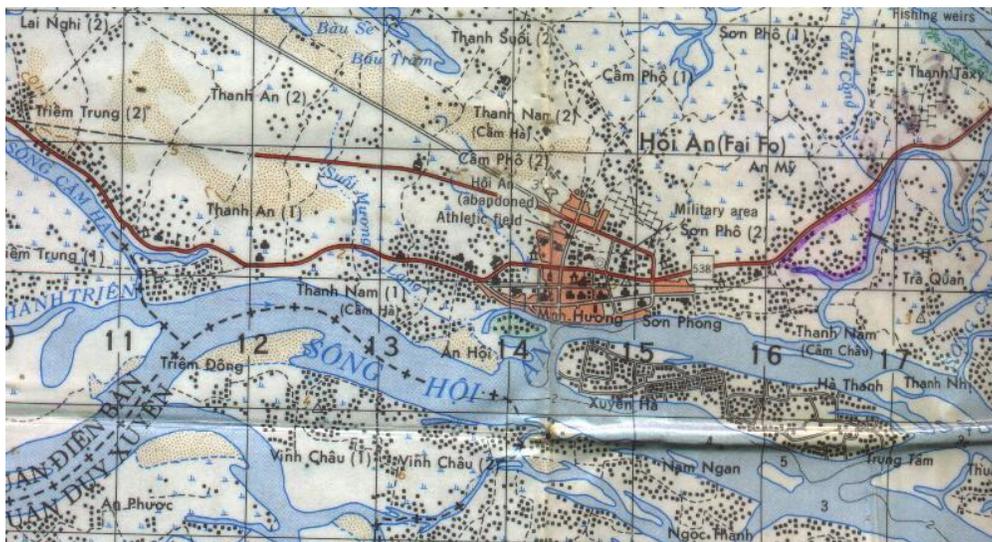
CAP 2-4-2 was on Vinh Chau Island just across the river from Hoi An. I was in 2-4-5 at the time. The only marine I knew in 2-4-2 was Rick Jergenson. We had gone through boot camp and all our training together. He was my best friend. A fellow Texan from a town of only about 375. Just a country boy. But a great, great guy.

On the north end of the island was a mine field left over from the days of the French. Everyone knew about it. Why it had never been cleared is anyone's guess. The men used it as a bathroom. Yes, I know that what they all did was stupid, but who among us did not do foolish things over there when we were 18, 19, 20 years old? I stood over a command detonated RPG round one day just laughing my head off. How foolish was that? So I'm reluctant to pass judgement on these men.

On June 1 the odds caught up with them. One of the men (no one knows who, and it doesn't really matter I guess) went into the mine field and set one off. The other guys acted instinctively and went in the field to help. Mines started going off everywhere. One of the men was blown into the air by one of the mines and landed on top of another device. Within a matter of minutes at least four men were dead and four wounded. CAP 2-4-2 ceased to exist as a functional unit. There were only three or four men left alive that night. Rushing into the mine field was another foolish act, but most of us probably would have done the same thing.

We were about a mile away on the other side of the river when all this happened.

## CAP 2-4-2 TAOR



We could tell it was bad from all the radio traffic. Lots of medi-vacs being called in and such. It was such a hopeless and helpless feeling not being able to go to them, and not knowing who was hurt and how bad. The next day we found out. The dead that I know of were Pfc. Rick Jergenson, 19, Pfc. Rick Persely, 19, L/Cpl Glenn Willis, 20, and HM3 Doug Daane, 21. I never knew the names of the wounded or their conditions. Perhaps someone else will read this and fill in more details.

When 2-4-2 was rebuilt I was one of the replacements. One of our day sites was right beside the mine field. It was always strange staying there knowing what had happened just a few feet away. Needless to say no one else ever went in that mine field. It's probably still sowed with death to this day.

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## Responses

Subject: RE: CAP 2-42 Destroyed

Aloha Tim,

I have additional information of the 2-4-2 incident. I was the Comm Chief that called the medevacs that night. "Sgt. Gary L. Sharp". I can't remember names, but there were two sets of medevacs. The second set was for the guys that tried to rescue the first group of casualties. This included the Sgt. who called me for the first set of KIA / WIA.

I believe there were only two Marines left in the CAP that were not extracted. The pilot asked me if they should also be extracted. ( I don't remember why I was the senior man in the HQ. that night. The CO must have been temporarily gone ) I chose to leave them with the PF plt. so they they wouldn't panic at being left alone. I was sick with worry all night after that until morning when members of other CAPS re-built the unit.

Semper Fi,  
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Subject: CAP 2-4-2

Cc: timd@one.net

Hi Gary:

We've talked once before a long time ago. I had forgotten you were in the Comm Center. I suppose you would remember some of the details. I appreciate your comments. The sergeant you mentioned must have been a man named Roe Hopson. The records indicate he was killed the same day as the other four but I was never sure if he was there that day.

I'm sending this to Tim also. If it can be confirmed he was killed with Rick and the others he needs to be included on our list. Thanks for jogging my memory!!!

You take care.

Sandy

(Tim:

*If you get this I know your computer is going to be down for a while. When you get back up and running, and you have time, maybe there will be some way to verify Sgt. Hopson as being there that day.*

Thanks!!

*You take care also.)*

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To: Tim Duffie  
Cc: sharp@maui.com, swardlaw@arn.net, dick\_clark@earthlink.net  
Subject: Cap Hai (2)

Tim:

I was over there during that period and remember the incident. I was with Cap Ba (3) at the time. One of the survivors told me what had happened that night. I wish I could remember his name. Pfc Ricky Persely and one other Marine went into the mine field to take a shit. Some of them did do that. Hell, we were all a little crazy at the time. Ricky decided he was going to burn some of the high grass, that's what started it.

It was an old French mine field filled with "Bouncing Betty's". I recall it was marked on the map; some Marines didn't really believe it though. Why, I can't recall.

I first met Rick when I came down from 3rd CAG and went to Cap 2-4-3. He was one of the gun men. He broke me in to what was going on in the Cap. I took an immediate liking to him, why I don't know. He was kind of a shit bird when he was back at CACO, but he was bush wise. He knew his shit. He taught me the gun (M-60), how to break it down, interchange barrels, don't be behind the spring when you release it, and how to make the gun "talk", especially when two gun men were on line. I ended up being his asst. gunner and spotter.

I carried an M-14 at the time so I loaded my weapon up with 2 and 1 per magazine. One tracer for every two ball rounds. In Cap Ba we used to rotate our weapons from time to time, including me. Sometimes I would carry the gun to our night ambush sites and sometimes the "bloop". When I carried the bloop it was usually Bell's bloop. It was in better condition.

Persely and I went through many a gunfight together along with Willis, Bell, Tex, Mex, Stever and Dick Clark. Persely saved my life one night when we were on a KT going through a Ville. (Dick: that was the night that Brown got hit in the leg.) When Skipper Johnson found out that I was out there on the KT the shit hit the fan. (Gary, I don't know if you remember that.)

Persely eventually went to Cap 2-4-2. I think it had alot do to with our Actual at the time. They clashed too much. Our Actual had one tour before in Nam but it was with the 1st Marine Division Band, from my understanding talking with Dick. So he was real new to Cap Combat and tactics. Hell, he was new to combat but tried to act like he knew what he was doing. Almost as bad as a 2nd. Lt.

Persely was a LCpl but ended up a Pfc when he went to Cap 2-4-2. I think it had something to do with being caught in a skivvy house or in Hoi An without authorization. Persely started the chain of events that led to the destruction along with, I believe, Willis. Willis was also from Cap 2-4-3. He was sent to Cap 2-4-2 for he only had about a month and a half left on his tour and the skipper wanted him to go to a Cap that wasn't having that much contact with Charlie. Persely and Willis pretty much hung out together in Cap 2-4-2 after having gone through the Cap Ba experiences together.

Doc Daane first came to Cap 2-4-3 for me to break in before the Skipper sent him to Cap 2-4-2. He had been there a week before he had to take over for me when I got hit and Paul Handerhan was killed at the orchard. Doc Daane was a very good with the kids and was a good corpsman. He did have a little problem trying to walk the rice paddy dikes at night. A couple of Marines complained he was too noisey. I came back after about 3 weeks and on he went to Cap 2-4-2.

What I remember from that night listening on the 25 and from what I can remember from what was told to me by one of the survivors is that when Persely or the other Marine tripped the betty, Doc Daane immediately tried to get to them and tripped one which blew his legs off and on to another one. The Actual was calling into Gary at CACO. They tried to use det cord to blow a path through it to get to Persely and the other Marine. It didn't work, they got wasted in there along with 3 PF's. I do remember that before they went in there they were taking RPG, bloop and AK fire from one of the treelines which they and the PF's were able to suppress after a while. The Actual, I believe, lived. He had lost his leg. I had thought his name was Hudson. But it might have been Hopson. He could have succumbed to his wounds later in CONUS or Japan.

I remember something about the first DUST OFF. I believe they had spotted Persely and the other Marine but couldn't land (for obvious reasons) and were taking fire which the rest of the Cap was trying to suppress. They had to abort. The second DUST OFF call they were able to get the others. I do remember that you, Gary, were very calm and were able to calm down one of the survivors that was on the radio. Also, all of us who have been in the CAPs awhile knew you stay with your PF's. We don't abandon them. One of the Marines, I believe it was Persely, lived most of the night. The survivors said they heard him moaning. Nobody was left to try to get to him.

When the next day arrived and we were able to get to the bodies, Persely was in a sitting position and had bled to death. The other Marine had been killed instantly. If we could have got to him that night, I believe he would have lived. Sandy, I knew you guys were only a click or so away. We at CAP Ba, as I recall, were broken into two night ambush teams and I believe we combined the two expecting to react for them. I know your actual, Sgt Joe Valdez, was expecting the same. That river was too damn big to swim. They probably could have sent PBR's down from 2nd CAG to insert us, but the elements of the Q-80 sappers off of bad guys island would have torn us apart.

Remember what happened to the 2nd CAG 1Sgt and the PBR's one night? Dick, you ought to remember very well. I think about Persely, Daane and the others from CAP Ba and other CAPs from time to time. The way Persely died hit me real hard when I was there. As bush wise as he was, I keep asking myself why, why did it happen? After the first explosion that got the two, Doc Daane started to go into the mine field after them; I learned later is that the Actual tried to stop him, but he wouldn't listen. His Marines needed him. So that is what I remember about the "Destruction of CAP Hai". Believe me when I say, this was very hard for me to write.

Semper Fi Marines  
Doc Lutes