

I joined the 589th in September of 1966 @ Ft. Hood, Texas, fresh from the Engineer Officer Basic Course (EOBC) @ Ft. Belvoir, Virginia. I was an ROTC graduate of Bucknell University, had a degree in Accounting, BUT ABSOLUTELY NO ENGINEERING EXPERIENCE. I was also very "unmilitary" & was severely CHEWED OUT my first day on post by a FEMALE MAJOR who took exception to the fact that I didn't recognize my obligation to SALUTE HER. Fact is, I didn't know a Lt. from a Major from a General!!

(PLEASE FORGIVE MY LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ON THE SPELLING OF NAMES!!)

I was assigned as a Platoon Leader to Company D, under Captain Dave Harbach, a great guy, wonderful mentor & an Armor man from VMI (Years later became the VMI Commandant). I must have driven him somewhat CRAZY with my lack of Military knowledge! What do you expect from an "R.O.T.C.Y. GUY"! Sgt. Graham, Sgt. Alvarado, 1st Sgt. Bellamy & Sgt. Kelley tried to help me know ENGINEERING and the Army "WAY". I was a slow learner but LOVED every minute of my experience in Texas, particularly the WARM WEATHER- Building Barracks & CONCRETE Railroad Loading Ramps. It took a DIRECT ORDER from Major Snoke for me to quit the Post Basketball Team Tryouts, he said I was "irreplaceable"- GIVE ME A BREAK!! So I turned my Athletic Interests to Coaching the Flag Football Team, TO a POST CHAMPIONSHIP-(I think). This ultimately led to a 40-some year career in Intercollegiate Coaching & Athletic Director work.

We took a train to San Francisco with all our STUFF, including MANY Conex Containers of Kool-Aid, which we were told by our Mess Sgt., "would be like GOLD in Nam". They took our ammunition as we approached San Francisco so we wouldn't shoot the SOB demonstrators, being a-holes outside our train. The "Boat-ride" was like a "Luxury Cruise" for us Officers. When I finally saw the DISGUSTING LIVING QUARTERS & SOS foods my men ate, for almost every meal on "the boat", I routinely smuggled them a few cases of Apples & Oranges from our "Mess". Unfortunately, that was little relief from their "conditions", FIVE-HIGH-SWINGING HAMMOCKS & UNBEARABLE AIR. We, on the other hand were playing Basketball and "wearing-out" decks of cards playing pinochle & hearts. This ridiculous & painful disparity between Officers & Enlisted men remains one of my worse memories of the Army "Way"!

Our "Boat" stopped briefly in Subic Bay, Philippines and then on to "The Nam". I remember standing shipside as we docked in Qui Nhon Harbor. We saw some people living in huts made of cardboard & PSP, cooking & "crapping" in the same "front-yard". One of my men, who was from Harlem, NY, & had never been on a ship before & spent most of the trip "puking", said about these people & their situation, "And I thought I had it tough growing-up in Harlem"!! **WELCOME TO THE NAM!!**

We moved on shore, set-up a Battalion base camp, my Platoon built the Showers & Latrines with Lumber & Conexes that we "MIDNIGHT REQUISITIONED" from the ROK'S & the US Air Force. Then we quickly moved to another smaller base-camp next to a Special Forces site in the "An Khe Pass", to build an Airfield. My Jeep Driver, "Grif" (His last name was Griffin) from GEORGIA & I delighted in mounting "Panties" sent from his girl friend to a Tractor-Scraper that we used when "no-one-was-looking". GRIF KEPT ME SANE and after spending so much time with him, I developed a "Southern Accent". After Nam, I was never identified as to being from PA or anywhere "North of Virginia". Also, Captain Harbach's driver, Kazenski, a very bright & articulate young man from my home state of Pennsylvania, KEPT ME LAUGHING!! SPFC Muzic, a VERY BRIGHT & INDUSTRIOUS guy who could make anything, taught me how to "MAKE-DO" with POOR EQUIPMENT as we tried to convert a GRANITE MOUNTAIN TOP into an airfield. We actually used Shape Charges to blast the Granite until we finally received some Carbide-Tipped Drill-Bits. I enjoyed pissing-off Lt. Al Cochran by stealing & driving earth-moving equipment from his EQUIP PLATOON. He would get so red-in-the-face as he was chewing-me-out, in his beautiful Louisiana accent!! **UNFORTUNATELY** I never got to finish the Air Field project.

In late June of 1967, General Duke made a very dramatic Helicopter "swoop" into our An Khe base-camp & told Capt. Harbach that he was looking for a Captain in the Corps of Engineers with an Accounting degree to become the Brigade "STATISTICIAN" at Cam Ranh Bay. However, after going through their HR records, Ed Hegmann might just be the "best-they-could-find", a Second Lt. at the time! I told Captain Harbach that, "I wasn't going" and he said that wasn't an option. In fact, they had already loaded my Footlocker onto their Helicopter & in minutes I was on my way to Cam Ranh, via Long Binh. My stop in Long Binh revealed that "Flush-Toilets" actually existed in Nam, instead of Latrines fueled by jet-fuel. What pleasurable & ODORLESS "dumps" occurred in these wonderful porcelain inventions!! Cam Rahn also had an ICE-CREAM PLANT, when at the time, in the "field", we hadn't seen ice-cream FOR MONTHS!!

I was "Scrub-Cause 56" ("Tarzan Type", as Capt. Harbach referred to me) NO MORE & HATED Battalion Headquarters "Life". I really didn't "belong" among these arrogant, self-serving SOB's, most of whom hadn't even been "in-the-field". Fortunately, before I decked one of these guys, I was ultimately "Kicked-out" of there after only a few months, for disobeying a "direct order", ON A VOLLEYBALL COURT, no less!! (True Story & why I never considered a military career after that day) I was "banished" to Dak To, and assigned to the 299th Combat Engineers. I became a Headquarters Company Commander & Chief Scrounger. I used many skills in these duties taught to me previously by the one-and-only cunning WO Miller, except his "chain-smoking". I really enjoyed swapping Jeep Parts for Montagnard Cross-Bows @ Qui Nhon Harbor. I acquired the cross-bows by exchanging them for C-Rations. The Montagnards valued food that "lasted-for-months"!! However, these trips allowed me to periodically stop by & see my buddies from the 589th!! **THEY WERE THE BEST!!!**

Hope these "ramblings & memories" help!! Please don't "lay-us-boat-people-to-rest, YET". Maybe this will encourage other "Boat People" to "share" their memories"!!

Ed Hegmann