

## Viet Nam Memories from Dennis Cluth 589<sup>th</sup> C Co.:

### First Impressions

- Wondering if I would need an M16 as soon as I got off the plane.
- The overwhelming heat when I arrived in March from the mid-west.
- The taste of the water from the water bag and that it was so warm.
- Malaria pills.
- The helicopter ride to Qui Nhon and everyone sitting on their helmets.
- Being the FNG and getting conned into doing nightly PT....of course I was fresh out of training and in good shape. Kinda backfired and petered out the first night with a good laugh.
- Norm Goodman and I having the same birthday.
- The boat ride to Wunder Beach and not being able to stay below deck without getting motion sickness.

### Wunder Beach Memories

- Sleeping with my grader on the beach for a few nights and swimming during the day....the last break we would get for a few months.
- Swimming with Newell, Goodman, Cummings and Borman.
- Waiting for the minesweepers to get done so we could work on the road.
- Wounded grader operator....Goff? I was next in rotation.
- 2 ARVN to guard me as I graded the beach road.....
- Some wild guy wanting to have a boxing match and Cummings volunteering.
- Connex showers.
- The beginning of C-Ration trading.
- Mortars walking their way toward us on the beach.
- Filling sandbags
- The road out of the beach area and snipers

### LZ Jane

- Rats in the tents
- Constant alert at night
- Rotating artillery on site
- Huey's coming and going

- Tracers at night in the distance from Cobra mini-guns
- Mortars multiple times a week
- Steaks sent from some Good Samaritan in the States and ?Billy Brown? cooking them for us.
- My 19<sup>th</sup> and Norm's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Warm Ballentine beer
- LZ Hardcore
- Watching the scraper I was grading behind rise 4 feet into the air when its blade hit a mine. I was pelted with debris and just stood there, on the grader, shocked when everyone else hit the ground. If he had missed it my grader blade would have hit it.
- A Quad-50 response to a mortar attack that lit up a hillside (could have been in Song Pha)
- Using up ammunition to get rid of it
- My M16 jamming
- Cooking C-Rations with C4
- Really getting good on the grader
- Claymores on the perimeter
- Sitting on a bunker while they were testing the perimeter range of a 105MM and having a junk of shrapnel land next to my leg.....burned my hand picking it up.
- Shedding the Flak Jacket for good .... Better than sweating to death
- Rome plows on some D9 bulldozers
- The boat ride south was much less stressful and actually enjoyable Song Pha
- Being dressed down by an officer as we got off the boat for being out of uniform and having long hair.
- Arriving and nothing being there but a cleared field.
- How fast the compound was built.
- ARVN's
- I spent \$30 the first time we hit the strip on 5 buckee's and paid the price 3 days later
- Post-problem advice from the 1<sup>st</sup> SGT
- Swimming in the river off some awesome boulders and told we couldn't do that anymore because it wasn't guarded
- Seeing a dead Bengal Tiger being carried down a hill by that river.

- Buggy Borman extending to get an early out. He went home to Wisconsin and visited my fiancé in Chicago per my request.
- Water buffalo
- Pot Bellied pigs
- Stopped taking the malaria pills
- Getting my new grader with a “Detroit Diesel” engine.
- Montanards and raised huts near the river
- The steering gear on my grader breaking and driving it back about 10 miles by using front wheel “tilt” to steer
- Sneaking into town at night
- Becoming the driver for the platoon SGT....nice work
- Christmas and New Year’s in the hootch
- Barfing all night after New Year’s drink fest
- Mortar attacks and Norm’s death ... Newell taking him to the medic and feeling intense shock by the episode
- Being talked into punching a belligerent drunk to knock him out in February.
- Becoming Spec 4 then Spec 5 before leaving
- Receiving the official 589<sup>th</sup> Zippo lighter....which, I lost during the next year
- Taking one last shot of Song Pha from the back of the “deuce and a half” that started my trip home
- Borrowing \$25 from Borman to have spending money on the trip....never paid him back

#### Home

- How tall my future wife looked compared to the women in Viet Nam
- Bill Cummings being my best man
- 6 months at Ft. Stewart, Ga. With Newell and some others. Then a year in Karlsruhe Germany with the 249<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion at Gersewsky Barracks. Bored to death pulling monthly maintenance on equipment that never went anywhere and training for a Russian invasion.