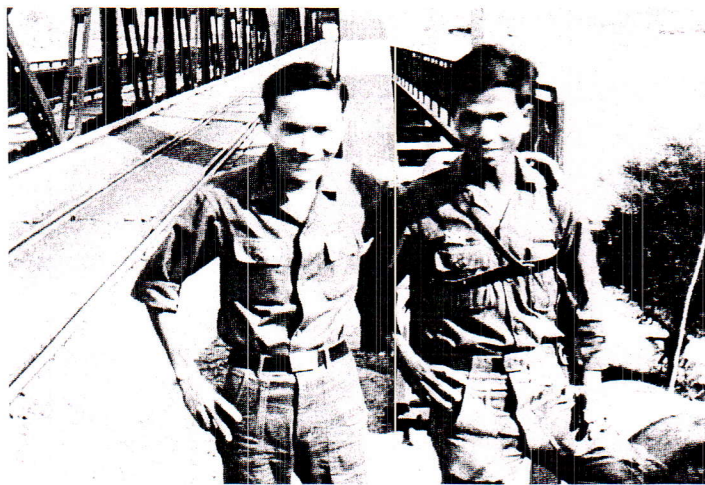


smiling to the now bewildered station master.

Fetching my bamboo chop sticks from within my grenade pouch, I sat on my haunches across from the bowl of steaming fish, and proceeded to selectively eat some stew. The station master and his son seemed quite pleased with the new table fair and while we carried on a deep conversation during dinner, I left not understanding one word he had said. We managed to catch several other fish during our stay at the bridge, but took great care to avoid the cooking of the station master.

One evening, I was ordered to cross the bridge and stand guard. The outpost was presumably to insure the ARVNS wouldn't blow up the bridge themselves, at least not without warning. I recall being uneasy about this, but did see the logic in it. So about dusk, I picked up my rifle and map case and walked by the long line of Claymore mines to the far side of the river bridge. I passed the early evening reviewing my maps, listening to the chatter of the ARVNS, as they ate with contentment their meals of brown rice. Shortly, though, it began to rain; I slipped my poncho on and sought partial protection from the outside wall of the guard bunker. The inside would be crowded during the storm and I preferred to stand watch alone than with unknown company.

Sergeant Hong Thi came by, a decorated AVRN soldier whom I had met earlier.



SGT. THI ON RIGHT WITH — His C.O.

"Wain. Mooch wain," he said.

"Yes, a lot of rain," I replied, slapping him on the shoulder.

"Yôu stand guard here tonight?" I asked, motioning to my rifle.

"Oh yes, gard."

"Great!" I smiled. It was good to have a friend to stand watch with. The night went on.

Along about midnight, the V.C. opened fire with machine guns up on the mountain slope where I supposed the ARVN unit to be.

At that moment Sergeant Thi began yelling orders and ARVNS were running everywhere to their positions. Thi and I made our way to the main bunker where I had stowed

my gear. As we reached the bunker entrance, we heard voice from within. Thi held me back with his arm for a moment, then turned and quietly said, "V.C."



VIET CONG RADIOMAN ON RIGHT

I produced a hand grenade, placing my hand against the bunker wall so he could see it in the dim light. I understood what I was going to do. Almost simultaneously, he did the same thing. I gently nudged him toward the other side of the bunker door, pulling the pin on the grenade. Suddenly I realized, you had to walk down the offset hall a few feet in my direction to enter the room. I was in the wrong position to throw a grenade. I motioned to Thi to throw his. At that moment I heard a spoon fly as his grenade went into the bunker. I turned my face toward the wall as the grenade exploded, feeling sharp pain in my left knee. Dust belled out of the bunker while I carefully replaced the pin in my grenade, realizing I was hit, we made our way into the bunker, turning on his flashlight. We couldn't see anything at the room still full of dust and smoke.

Leaning against the wall, I reached down and felt my knee. It had a half inch piece of steel stuck in the cap. I was in there good, my first attempt to remove it failed.

"Thi, I'm hit," I called in a low breath. Thi's light hit my face as I found his hand and guided it to the problem. "Get hold of it and get it out, Thi."

He pulled and it didn't budge; pain shot up my leg. "Shit, let me do it," I said. Reaching down, in one movement, I pulled it out.

"Okay, it's not bad. I got it." I waved Thi off and began searching the now clearing room. There, laying on the floor, was the radio. The radio was the V.C. He had been their radioman. I had been a V.C. suspect for some time. His back was badly damaged. Part of his spine was gone. The body almost doubled backward when I pulled on his shoulder, the smell of dinner was keen in my nostrils. He was dead; real dead.

Our communication lines to the platoon had been cut and there was no way to reach my unit until morning. The radio under the V.C. was still on. I picked it up, found my map case and we made our way to the outside. The air there was great compared to the stench inside the bunker. The rain washed the blood off the PRC-10 radio. We made our way to a position forward of the guard bunker.



radio seemed to check out okay, and I tried to  
Hotel two Actual (our platoon Commander).  
el Two, Hotel Two, this is Hotel O.P., over."  
going through the whole frequency scale several  
decided either my radio had been damaged or the  
's radio wasn't up. I appeared to be alone.  
kly, I took compass readings of the enemy machine  
itions, their tracer fire clear, even in the night rain.  
ting them on my map, I began to mark their grid  
ances down for artillery. It looked like they were  
ng another river bridge up the road some four miles

then we began to receive light enemy fire and our  
s returned fire. I had to assume we were the target,  
ccordingly began to take grid coordinances that  
cover us with shell fire should we come under direct

ehow, I had to get this information out; I tried the  
gain.

y station this net, any station this net, this is Hotel  
Over."

r and over I tried up and down the frequency scale,  
g . . . no response!

ecided to try again, giving a "May Day" call. If  
e was listening, they would respond.

y station this net, May Day, May Day." Over and  
made the call. Finally a patrol answered the call.

ay Day, this Echo Three, Echo Three. Over."

ho Three, this Hotel Two, can you relay fire mission  
Six? Over."

otel Two, wait one, Over."

o Three was too far and was transmitting very weak  
of any assistance, however he might be able to relay  
sage to battalion.

otel Two, this is Echo Three. Over."

cho Three, this is Hotel, go."

otel, unable to relay; say again, unable to relay.

oger, Echo Three, thank you, out."

ood luck, Echo Three, out."

at's roughly how it went; the PRC-10 radio had done  
b, reaching some seven miles. I couldn't expect to  
battalion in this weather. Yet I had to keep trying  
hen finally . . .

otel Two this is Bat Six, Bat Six. Over."

umn, I almost swallowed my hand mike . . . I got  
ugh!

at Six, this is Hotel Two. Over!"

ie rain had slackened somewhat, and the fighting up  
he mountain had become more intense, spreading  
rd the oil refinery.

Hotel Two, what is your position? Over."

Negative, Bat Six. Over."

Hotel Two, identify yourself. Over."

This is Hotel Two, name and serial number to follow.  
ard — Lema india papa papa alpha romeo delta  
k, two zero four ate one ate break. Do you copy, Bat

"Roger Hotel Two, stand by."

I refused to give my position over the air for obvious  
reasons; no since giving Charlie my grid to fire on. After  
several minutes, Bat Six responded.

"Hotel Two, roger your last break break. What is your  
situation? Over."

"Bat Six under attack, request fire mission, can you  
copy? Over."

"Roger, Hotel."

"Bat Six enemy position grid 927868 break grid 932869  
break 914865 break 912857, do you copy, Six?"

"Roger Hotel, stand by."

The rain had stopped now, but the thunder and lightning  
continued, often sounding like artillery explosions over-  
head. There was machine gun fire now on the oil refinery,  
several flares on the perimeter having gone off.

"Hotel Two, this is Six. Over."

"This is Hotel Two. Over."

"Hotel, you are out of range, say again, out of range.  
Over."

"Bat Six, this is Hotel, roger, break break, enemy now  
attacking oil refinery, grid 935866 and 940865. Do you  
copy? Over."

"Roger, Hotel, stand by."

Minutes passed and firing increased in our area, howev-  
er, it was now apparent to me the real target was the oil  
refinery.

Just then an enormous explosion rocked me back. One of  
the oil tanks in the refinery exploded, lighting up the entire  
sky. I could feel the heat on my face as I shielded my eyes.  
There were many secondary explosions, probably grenades  
and sachel charges, going off everywhere. The fire raged  
on, carrying fire and smoke thousands of feet into the air.  
Nearly two million gallons of fuel were destroyed.

The storm had passed and I heard a jet, very high, but I  
couldn't see it. In a second, all hell broke loose on the  
ground as tons of bombs exploded where I gave the first  
coordinance.

"Hotel Two, Hotel Two, this is Navy Two Five. Over."

Jesus, the call came in so loud it startled me. I turned the  
squelch down.

"Navy Two Five, this Hotel. Over."

"Hotel Two, request your fire target. Over."

"Navy Two Five, enemy attacking refinery, grid 935866  
grid 940865. Over."

"Stand by, Hotel Two."

In the darkness, a Navy destroyer had steamed in,  
anchored fore and aft, and now proceeded to deliver broad  
sides on the enemy positions. You can't believe the sight!  
Three and six guns firing at once, bright orange flames  
lighting up the ship, then fire balls on the hillsides. Fires  
were started everywhere.

The destroyer continued to fire throughout the night.  
About daylight I heard that deadly sound of a short round  
exploding "berrrr-rip." A deadly sound indeed if you have  
ever heard it. It must have scattered the ship with frag-  
ments as the explosion appeared to be just 20 yards from  
the muzzle. The cannon fire continued, though, without a





NOTE THE SHELLED AREAS IN BROWN FROM THE USS CRAIG EXTENDING TO THE FAR LEFT. OIL REFINERY CIRCLED

hint of damage. While not an authority on naval gunfire, their performance was outstanding to me. Evidence of their accuracy could be readily seen at dawn. Large areas of jungle had been reduced from a deep green to an ash brown and gave the appearance of having been restructured.

Shortly after first light, the Vietnamese company commander sent Sergeant Thi to get me. Not speaking much Vietnamese, coupled with the feeling that I was going to have to defend my actions concerning the death of the ARVN V.C., I was very reluctant to go. Too tired at this point, to give a damn, I gave little resistance and went along.

We arrived at the C.O.'s bunker amid pleasantries. I was given a cup of hot black coffee.

Broken conversation ensued as I managed an uncomfortable smile, scarcely noticing the gathering of officers and men.

There, in the early hours of August 6, 1965, I was awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for Valor.

Often since, I have wished to turn back the clock. Perhaps I could have been more receptive and attentive. While I feel that I was only doing my job, there was little doubt the ceremony meant a great deal to them.

Shortly, I returned to my platoon, expecting to account

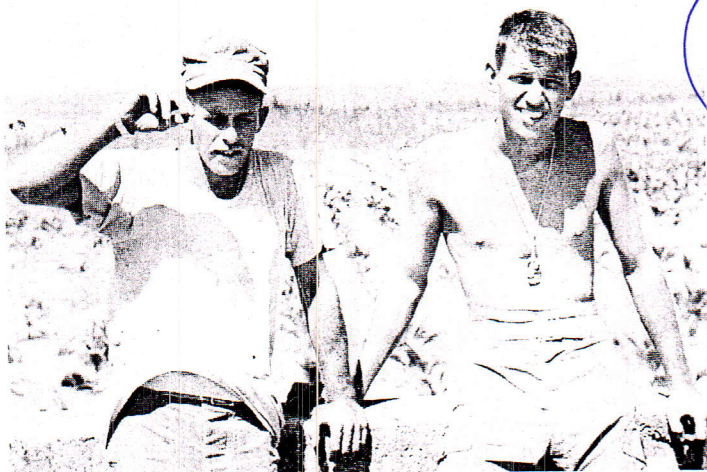
for the happenings of the previous night. In Redman didn't mention it at all. Climbing to the station house, I watched the last firing from the destroyer, finally sneaking away to dress my sleep.

U.S.S. John R. Craig (DD-885) ship's history, January, 1966, records the following:

"On 20 July, 1965, the Craig was designated commander of the then newly forming Naval Gunfire Support Unit in Vietnam. The mission of this unit was to provide support for various U.S. military operations and the Republic of Vietnam Military Force employment of Naval Gunfire Support. During the days, Craig ranged up and down the Vietnam coast carrying out this mission. During this period, over 3,300 rounds of five inch illumination and explosive projectiles at many targets with dramatic results. Records were made and broken on almost a daily basis, not only in rounds expended, but in re-armed as well. On 11 August, 1965, Craig, relieved by the Support Unit Commander by COMCRUDESF headed for a long overdue upkeep period at Japan."

The USS Craig's performance and readiness when called is now a matter of record. During the hours of August 5, 1965, the Craig's accuracy safely a thousand men under her protective fire while inflicting heavy enemy casualties.

On behalf of the Second Vietnamese Regiment and myself, I extend our most sincere thanks and to the ship's captain, CDR. James K. Jobe and his crew for a job well done.



SGT. F. DEMPSEY JR. TO THE LEFT, SILVER STAR 3/9.

*USS Stoddard  
on station this day.*