

AMBUSH AT THE HOOK, Sept 17-18, 1968

**ORLL – Operationa Report for 39th Engineer Battalion (Combat)
for period October 12, 1968, Dated 9 November, Page 3**

On 17 September, Company A had their heaviest contact with NVA forces. A 29 man work party at BT 167134, having observed the ARVN security force leaving their positions at about 1750 hours , loaded on their vehicles to return to LZ Young. As the vehicles started moving, the lead dump truck received a direct hit from a recoilless rifle. As the remainder of the vehicles stopped, a reinforced NVA company opened fire on the work party with automatic weapons, mortars, and recoilless rifles. The work party took cover and set defensive positions. Two attempts were made to reach the trucks before dark, but both times the men were driven back by heavy fire. A relief force was dispatched from LZ Young at 1745 hours, but was unable to reach the ambush site until 1900 hours because of congestion due to the ARVN elements moving in the opposite direction and enemy fire. At the ambush site, the relief force came under heavy fire and all radio contact from both elements (the work party and reaction force) was lost. Artillery or gunships could not be employed without radio contact for fear of hitting friendly forces. Once radio contact was regained, artillery fire was called and the NVA broke contact. Eight engineers from Company A were killed in action and twenty three wounded. The engineers were credited however, with forty three confirmed NVA kills. Equipment damage was heavy, with the loss of two dozers, two dump trucks and one quarter ton truck. On September 18th, all work on Rte. 533 was stopped by order of the Commanding General, Americal Division due to a lack of security and heavy enemy activity. In the early morning of 26 September 1968, LZ Young came under ground attack in conjunction with a mortar/rocket barrage. Company A received no casualties, however, thirteen enemy bodies were found inside and outside the perimeter.

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Morgantown News (WVA)

Sept, 19 1968 Issue

Construction Crew and Reinforcements were Engineers from Co. A 39th Engr Bn (Combat), based at LZ Young

Infantrymen Rout Red Ambushers

SAIGON (UPI)—American infantrymen Wednesday routed Communist troops who ambushed an allied engineering team and a force sent to help them near South Vietnam's north coast. The Reds lost 43 dead in the fighting and eight Americans were killed, military spokesmen said.

The spokesmen said a North Vietnamese force first attacked a U.S. and Vietnamese construction crew near the city of Tam Ky late Tuesday, then ambushed a 16-man reaction force on its way to help the crew under fire.

The battle raged into Wednesday when reinforcements from the U.S. 198th Light Infantry Brigade swept into the northern coastal region and routed the North Vietnamese, spokesmen said. In addition to the eight dead, one American was wounded.

About a mile south of the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Vietnams Communist forces Wednesday poured 25 mortar rounds and automatic weapons fire into a U.S. armored unit on patrol. The Americans turned on the Communists with their tanks and supporting artillery fire and killed 29 of the Communists while suffering no fatalities and three wounded.

1. Vietnamese popular forces were assigned to provide security for 39th Engr, but left the area and the engineers without infantry support
2. Per Co. A ORLL: besides 8 Engr. KIA, 23 Engr's were WIA, not 1 as shown in news article.

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Lebanon News (PA), Sept 19th, 1968 Issue

Attack Set Monday

B52s Hit Raid Routes As Enemy Maps Plans For New Saigon Drive

SAIGON (UPI)—U.S. B52 bombers hit Communist invasion routes to Saigon with 500 tons of bombs today to try to

avert a third Communist offensive which allied intelligence sources said was scheduled against the capital on Monday, a Viet Cong holiday.

The bombing was concentrated around Tay Ninh northwest of Saigon near the Cambodian border where mixed Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces attacked last week. Other B52s struck Communist buildups in the Central Highlands and near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) today.

Sharp Clashes

Several sharp clashes were reported today and U.S. infantrymen fought a 10-hour battle in the Mekong Delta 50 miles south of Saigon on another

infiltration route to the capital. About 500 U.S. troops airlifted to the battle killed 25 Communists at a loss of three killed and four wounded.

Another flurry of fighting was reported near Tam Ky, on the coast below Da Nang. North Vietnamese carried out two ambushes, both of which backfired. In the first they ambushed a U.S.-Vietnamese construction crew, then ambushed a relief column. Troops of the 198th Light Infantry Brigade killed 43 and lost eight dead and one wounded.

In a battle one mile south of the DMZ the Communists hit a U.S. armored unit on patrol with a barrage of mortar and automatic weapons fire but were driven back by tanks and artillery. The Americans killed 29 with no loss.

The air war stepped up a notch and U.S. planes flew 131 missions Wednesday against the North Vietnamese panhandle, losing one plane and pilot. Two MIG21s challenged the flight but two Navy F8 Crusaders chased them off in an eight-minute encounter in which neither side lost a plane.

POW Report

The heavy bombing around Saigon by the B52s followed a report by prisoners that similar raids killed 300 Communists on the northern coast.

At the same time, U.S. spokesmen announced that allied troops bracing for a long-anticipated nationwide offensive have seized 90 tons of Communist arms over the past week—

(Continued on Page 7 — Col. 2)

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- 1 Vietnamese popular forces were assigned to provide security for 39th Engr, but left the area and the engineers without infantry support.
2. The Company A 39th Engr's involved were credited with the 43 KIA, not the 198th LIB.
3. Co. A, ORLL identified not 1 but 23WIA.

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Pacific Stars and Stripes, Sept. 21st, 1968 Issue, Page 6

81 Reds Slain in 3 Clashes

S&S Vietnam Bureau

SAIGON — Allied soldiers killed 81 Communists Wednesday in bitter clashes in the three northernmost provinces of South Vietnam.

Meanwhile, fighting continued in the embattled province of Tay Ninh along the Cambodian border northwest of Saigon.

Enemy troops lobbed mortar shells into a South Vietnamese airborne battalion camp 40 miles northwest of Saigon Wednesday evening and followed up with a ground assault.

Airborne casualties were termed light. South Vietnamese military spokesmen said enemy losses were unknown.

Another mortar attack early Thursday killed one Vietnamese civilian and wounded five others at the Phuoc Ninh subsector 60 miles northwest of Saigon.

In a delayed report, U.S. military sources said 43 Reds were killed Tuesday 10 miles southwest of Tam Ky in Quang Tin province. The allied force, which suffered eight killed and 19 wounded, was made up of the engineer battalion of the Americal Div. and Vietnamese popular force soldiers.

Some of the allied losses were from a 16-man engineer reaction force that was ambushed while moving in to reinforce the construction party. Spokesmen said all casualties were Americans.

Twenty-nine enemy were killed just south of the Demilitarized Zone by soldiers from the U.S. Army's 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Inf.

The U.S. soldiers were hit with a barrage of 25 60mm mortar shells while on a sweep a mile northeast of Con Thien. It was the fifth straight day of fighting in or below the DMZ.

Pinned down by automatic weapons fire, the soldiers called in artillery and advanced on the enemy with tanks. After a two-hour running battle the enemy withdrew, leaving 29 dead. Three U.S. soldiers were wounded.

In the Mekong Delta south of the capital, 25 Communists were killed by soldiers from the 2nd Brigade, 9th Inf. Div. A company of infantrymen dropped into a landing zone shortly before noon, flushed the Reds from a bunker complex nine miles southeast of Ben Tre.

More companies reinforced the American soldiers and fought until the enemy withdrew nine hours later. U.S. losses were three killed and four wounded.

217 Americans Killed In Week of Battles

SAIGON (AP) — A total of 217 Americans were killed in action in Vietnam last week, the U.S. Command announced Thursday. This was slightly above the weekly average for the past few months.

The command said 1,485 Americans were wounded and that 739 of these were hospitalized. This also was slightly above the recent average.

The weekly report said 2,484

Communist soldiers were killed, also somewhat above the recent average. South Vietnamese casualties were 286 killed, 1,269 wounded and 37 missing.

The report did not include casualties in hard fighting early this week in the northern provinces and northwest of Saigon.

The casualties brought overall American losses in the war to 27,921 dead and 92,622 wounded and hospitalized.

Cobra—Just in Time

man," the gunship pilot said, "all I could make out was a radio antenna and a pair of eyeballs staring at me. Fogelman had buried himself in the mud to avoid being taken by the VC."

Haney landed his chopper, and the downed pilot squirmed out from under the 6000 and made a run for it.

Cobras aren't known for their roominess. Where to put Fogelman created a small problem. Haney handled that. Jumping out of the Cobra's cockpit, he opened the chopper's ammo bays and threw out his remaining ammunition.

Fogelman isn't the biggest man in the world, but the 23-by-40-inch berth he was just allotted didn't leave much leg room. He didn't care. He just wanted out.

"He managed to get most of himself stuffed in the bay," Haney said. "Then all he had to do was hang on."

Fifteen minutes later, the Cobra touched down at the MA-CV Compound in Can Mau. Its cargo safe and sound, Fogelman was still wet from the mud and cold, but he was unhurt.

"He was a little shook up afterwards," Haney said. "but who wouldn't be?"

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Pacific Stars and Stripes Sept 29th, 1968 Page 6

WASHINGTON (S&S) — The Defense Department has announced the following casualties in connection with the conflict in Vietnam.

KILLED IN ACTION

Army

Sgt. Larry H. Allen, San Diego, Calif.
SP4 Raymond H. Albert Jr., Imperial Beach, Calif.
Pfc. William D. Ealy, Englewood, Colo.
Sgt. Leon D. Bullock, Jacksonville, Fla.
Sgt. Elias J. Paulk, Ocala, Fla.
Pfc. Ross T. Hulstander, Gainesville, Fla.
1Lt. Daniel R. Spurlin, Atlanta, Ga.
Pfc. Johnny C. Simpson, Elberton, Ga.
Sgt. Michael P. Simpson, Matoon, Ill.
SP4 Bernard J. Cook, Bloomington, Ill.
Pfc. Bernie Rosales Jr., Chicago, Ill.
Pfc. James C. Schultz, Chicago, Ill.
SP4 Rex M. Heaver, Logansport, Ind.
Sgt. Bruce J. Fedler, Dennison, Iowa.
Pfc. Randall L. Farlow, Booneville, Iowa.
SP4 Gary L. Browning, Hutchinson, Kan.
Pfc. Robert E. Gray, Corbin, Ky.
SP4 Albert E. Rose, South Lyon, Mich.
Pfc. Warren A. Smith, Grand Rapids, Mich.
Pfc. Mark W. Langlin, Red Lake Falls, Minn.
SP4 Larry D. Smith, Jefferson City, Mo.
SP4 James R. Schultz, Lincoln, Neb.
1Lt. Robert L. Janowitz, Glen Rock, N.J.
Pfc. Steven J. Dawson, Newark, N.J.
Pfc. Michael E. Zibura Jr., Baantou, N.J.
1Lt. Joseph S. Bravin, Bronx, N.Y.
Sgt. Colombo P. Del Terzo, Brooklyn, N.Y.
Sgt. William R. Turner Jr., Gornerville, N.Y.
Pfc. Frank J. McManus, Jackson Heights, N.Y.
Pfc. Ronald W. Zydell, Cheektowaga, N.Y.
Sgt. Charles L. Freeman, Steadman, N.C.
Sgt. Kermit L. Williams, Clinton, N.C.
SP4 Wayne D. Jenkins, Bryson City, N.C.
SP4 Michael K. Hammer, Chillicothe, Ohio.
Pfc. Ted R. Jamison, Portsmouth, Ohio.
WO Derrell W. Clemmer, Willow, Okla.
Pfc. Krag A. Viestenz, Eugene, Ore.

Sgt. Thomas F. Sudlesky, Susquehanna, Pa.
SP4 Neal G. Bollinger, Palmyerton, Pa.
SP4 Harold J. Kissinger, Pottsville, Pa.
SP4 David R. Latsch, Philadelphia, Pa.
Pfc. James P. Concannon Jr., Marlon, Pa.
Pfc. Peter J. O'Toole, Pittsburgh, Pa.
SSg. Ronald L. Roll, Wilmet, S.D.
Pfc. Steve J. Reckery, Tellico Plains, Tenn.
Pfc. Vernon L. Hoodrick, Knoxville, Tenn.
SP4 J. B. Spearman, Conroe, Tex.
Pfc. Robert M. McVea, Converse, Tex.
Pfc. David C. Johnson, Roanoke, Va.
Sgt. Donald E. Turner, Port Orchard, Wash.
Pfc. Jose M. Ruiz, Vega Boja, P.R.

Navy

HN David J. Eisenbraun, Youngstown, Ohio.

Marine Corps

Cpl. Albert J. Dair, Wickenburg, Ariz.
LCpl. James C. D. Simmons, Eloy, Ariz.
Cpl. William T. Parker, Stockton, Calif.
LCpl. George Sandoval, Los Angeles, Calif.
Pfc. Delon Hunter, Los Angeles, Calif.
Cpl. Thomas J. Cavanaugh, Waterbury, Conn.
Sgt. Larry A. Johnson, Varna, Ill.
Cpl. Richard A. Hoffman, Highland, Ill.
LCpl. William J. Gskilanec, Homewood, Ill.
LCpl. Philip J. Wojda, Chicago, Ill.
Pfc. Mark L. Triplett, Carbondale, Ill.
Pfc. Jerry L. Marcum, Muncie, Ind.
Pfc. Gregory S. Mundell, Frankfurt, Ind.
Cpl. Ronald R. Stroschein, Elkader, Iowa.
Cpl. Michael W. Pousson, Iota, La.
Pfc. Michael H. Deschenes, Auburn, Maine.
LCpl. Gary R. Doffin, Baltimore, Md.
Pfc. Steven W. Decker, Baltimore, Md.
Pfc. Ronald J. Pointier, Somerville, Mass.
Pfc. John M. Donahue, Gregory, Mich.
Pfc. James C. Durham Jr., Lincoln Park, Mich.
Pfc. Dewayne T. Williams, Saint Clair, Mich.
Pfc. Steven J. Reichardt, Saint Charles, Mo.

39th Engr's Killed In Action at The Hook in order shown in article and with location on Vietnam Memorial Wall:

sP4 Bernaard James Cook (43W L13)

SP4 Rex Michael Hoover (43W L16)

PFC Randel Farlow (43W L14)

PFC Warren Allen Smith (43W L23)

SP4 Larry Dean Smith (43W L22)

SP4 Neil George Bollinger (43W L12)

SP4 Harold James Kissinger (43W L16)

PFC Steven James Dawson (43W L13)

AMBUSH AT THE HOOK, Sept 17-18, 1968

Headquarters, U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam,

Monthly Report for September, dated December 12, 1968, Page 27

- **BURLINGTON TRAIL (Quang Tin Prov):** At approx 1950 hrs, a comb const party cons of pers fr the Engr Bn of the AMERICAL Div & VN PF pers rec SA fire fr an unk size en force 10 mi WSW of Tam Ky. A 16-man react force enr to the site was ambd by an unk no of en. The engrsrtn fire & contact cont until an unreptd time before another react force fr the 198th Lt Inf Bde began swp the area at 0045 hrs. 43 en bodies were found in the vic of the 2 contacts. US cas were 8 KIA, 1 WIA. No PF cas.

1. Vietnamese popular forces (VN PF) were assigned to provide security for 39th Engr, but left the area and the engineers without infantry support.
2. The Company A 39th Engr's involved were credited with the 43 KIA.
3. Company A, ORLL identified not 1 but 23 WIA.

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OTHER ACCOUNTS / RECOLLECTIONS

“That is the day that eight 39thers from A Company were killed near LZ Young. The work party was returning late afternoon and was ambushed. Then the ones that went out from Young to help were ambushed. I remember that 43 NVA were killed that evening. (that number of enemy was confirmed by the Bn Surgeon who was there the next morning) 35 of the 39thers were missing the next morning but were all located my mid day. I hope that someone will give you more info on what happened. I think that someone from our group was there, but what they remember I do not know. My site has a photo of A company leaving ChuLai when they deployed to LZ Young Aug 1968. Also photo of HQ dozer with bullet hole in block and A company truck. Also I have a small article about the ambush that was in the Pittsburgh Press, the unit mentioned was the 198th, but it was the 39th.

***See the pictures under A Company related at my msgroup site. JB's 39th photos.
<http://groups.msn.com/JBS39THPHOTOS/> A link to my site is at the left of this group' s under links.***

I remember there was a lot of bad feeling about what happened in that ambush, one being from the poor security provided the work crews by the ARVN's.(They left early as night was falling, providing the NVA the chance to set up the ambushes) This I heard from someone from HQ heavy equipment platoon who was a dozer operator during the ambush.I hope you hear from someone who was there and knew your uncle. All of those killed were good soldiers doing a tough job and not getting the credit for it they deserved for serving there country. I hope that someone who knew Randy will get in touch with you and your family”

SP4 John JB Barden - 39TH Engr Bn Alumni Web Site, 2/19/2006 email/post

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OTHER ACCOUNTS / RECOLLECTIONS

"Let me see if I can add some insight. "A" Company was upgrading a road from Tam Ky to Tien Phuoc (spelling?). Rick Waldrop was the Company Commander. I was the platoon leader of the platoon that was working west of our firebase the day of the attack. About dusk we noticed that all of our local "Ruff Puff" Vietnamese security forces had disappeared. (They provided perimeter security so that we could use all of our people to work on the road.) We started back to base camp, and had just reached the start of an "S" curve in the road when the lead truck took a rocket. I was at the rear of the convoy, and when I jumped out to go see what happened, my jeep was also blown up, killing my driver. We all rolled to the right to get into the ditch next to the road, and the enemy was in the opposite side ditch. We exchanged shots, rolled grenades back and forth, etc. throughout the night. 2LT Jerry Bright led a relief party from the firebase to try to get to us. That's probably the group that your uncle was in. Unfortunately, they were ambushed as they came around the "S" curve and took a lot of casualties. Early the next morning (still dark), we were joined by an armored cav unit commanded by 2LT Tom Jackson. They helped put down suppressing fire and chased most of the enemy away. We were finally able to get Medivac choppers in to take away the wounded, and those of us still walking headed back to the firebase at dawn. Incidentally, the NVA had set up triangulated 50 cal positions, and shot down 1 jet and 2 choppers that were trying to support us. One of our NCOs earned a Silver Star that night for going out onto the trucks and killing enemy soldiers that were trying to come in and kill our wounded. The next day the rest of the armed cav troop swept the woods and found a reinforced NVA bunker complex not far from the road as well as several of the M-14s taken from our troops. Unfortunately, we had many Purple Hearts resulting from that night. No officers were relieved of duty. The incident made the Stars and Stripes as well as several stateside newspapers. I hope this helps."

Lt. Al Borman - 39TH Engr Bn Alumni Web Site 2/15/2006 email/post

AMBUSH AT THE HOOK, Sept 17-18, 1968

OTHER ACCOUNTS / RECOLLECTIONS

"I was with A Company 12/67 - 1/69, and was Alpha 6's (Captain Waldrop) driver and RTO, and was on LZ Young during the ambush-battle at The Hook. During the fight, I was kept busy on the radio trying to maintain communications with the field, getting and giving information, relaying the Captain's directions, and making sit-rep's and requests for support to BN HQ, the infantry, and even to the Vietnamese PF's (Popular Forces) or "Ruff Puffs" that were supposed to be supporting our work group, but who'd bugged out at the outset of the fighting at The Hook. During the fighting, we at CoHQ lost contact with both the ambushed work group and our rapid response team sent out to relieve and re-enforce. Further, most attempts to get air support into the area were unsuccessful due to well placed and coordinated enemy automatic weapons fire from the bordering mountain peaks surrounding the Hook. During this time we also started receiving sporadic fire at the LZ. At one time me and another guy were sent to the lower helipad near the front gate to help bring in and offload an incoming chopper; there we received ground fire and had to seek cover, but we were able to flag off the bird and get back up to HQ. Ultimately, the infantry committed to an early morning sweep to relieve our people at The Hook. Because we'd lost effective contact, we agreed on a challenge and response of "Pall Mall," hoping our guys would recognize the cigarette brand and respond to the infantry's challenge; some of our guys figured it out, and the others were able to communicate enough info for recognition. After the guys had been relieved, I had the sorry job of radioing BN with after action report details ."

Douglas Franksen - 39TH Engr Bn Alumni Web Site 3/6/2007 email/post

AMBUSH AT THE HOOK, Sept 17-18, 1968

OTHER ACCOUNTS / RECOLLECTIONS

- 1. SP4 Walter Gurbisz:** *"I was with a-co, 1st plt from 4-1-68 to 4-1-69 my nickname was twiggy and my call sign was junky spray 6-5 and black jack 6-6, my plt sgt. was sgt Singleton. I was the RTO and alternate Demo man, I remember curtis bell , virgil stormer, dan goddard and john pedro. I was wounded at the ambush out side of LZ Young, Like to know if u rem. me or can help me out with locating some of the guys. I was next DOC Steve Dawson when he got shot, then we got separated, we both got hit with shrapnel at the beginning of fight then got shot in rt. arm, then doc got hit again, he gave me a bandage and that was the last I saw of him"*
- 2. SP4 Douglas Franksen:** *"I was Capt Waldrop's RTO and driver. Although I don't remember the faces (and lost most of my VN pictures in a fire), I recall your name, nickname, RTO information as well as several of the guys you id'ed in your email, i.e., Curtis Bell and Steve Dawson. I thought you'd get a kick out of one of the remaining pictures I have (attached) that shows Sgt. Singleton getting his Silver Star. That's me next to him. Do you happen to remember a Pvt. Randy Farlow who was with the reaction team sent from Young to your aide and was one of our KIA at the Hook? He was also one of our KIA'd that day. His nephew, Rice Thornburg, is a member of our web group and has been trying to get any information he can on his uncle. We've told him about the events of that day, his place on the Wall, and other misc. info., but nothing direct and personal about the man. Regardless, you might want to get in touch through the site."*
- 3. SP4 Walter Gurbisz:** *"Pvts Randy Farlow and Harold Kissinger were sitting right across from me and Doc. Dawson when the truck got hit with a B-40 rocket (i think) Randy and Harold were shot in the back of the neck or head. I believe the driver's name was TAYOLOR. also I think I was in that formation with Sgt Singleton (awarded Silver Star,I was getting my 1st. Purple Heart ,next to me was a Spanish Sgt*. can't remember his name." (Note: *SSG Julio Perez was awarded the Silver Star for his actions during this ambush.)*

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OTHER ACCOUNTS / RECOLLECTIONS

“When the September 1968 ambush occurred, I had just been assigned as S-2 Sergeant and was stationed in Chu Lai. Although I was only a distant observer and not a participant, the incident has always bothered me. I remember clearly, almost thirty nine years later, when the runner from Battalion came and told me I was needed in the S- 2 section because something bad had happened at L. Z. Young. The remainder of that night was spent hoping for a good outcome for the soldiers trapped in the ambush at The Hook. I was not needed. Everything was being handled from the S-3 section and my section could do nothing but wait for the end of engagement, daylight, and the arrival of the dreaded enemy encounter report with its summary of friendly losses. We even turned off our radios (in S-2) to make sure we did not accidentally break squelch on the wrong frequency and reveal the location of one of our own troops. A Company definitely did not need any interference from us that night.

There are, I guess, several reasons for my more than usual interest in this as opposed to the many equally serious engagements the battalion had. First was the realization of how helpless I, and the rest of battalion staff were once the company was in contact in such a situation. Next was my feeling about how inappropriately the matter was handled at division and higher levels.”

Morris Beamer, CSM Retired, THE HOOK, “A” Company, 39th Combat Engineer Bn., L.Z. Young August 1968,”
written 2007

Other Related After Action Rpt's

History - Warlords, B Co 123rd Avn Bn, Aero Scout, Warlord

After Action Report

Combat Casualty Report, (26 September 1968)

On September 26, 1968, an OH-6 "Cayuse" (tail number 67-16185) assigned to Company B "Aeroscout", 123rd Combat Aviation Battalion, AMERICAL Division was conducting an armed aerial reconnaissance in the Divisional AO. The unit was based at the Ky Ha Heliport on the Chu Lai Combat Base in the I Corps Region. The crew consisted of Captain Bill Staffa as pilot, SP4 Hill was a very experienced Aeroscout observer, sat in the left seat of the aircraft. The crew chief was SP4 Donald L. Brown, who was an experienced Huey Crew chief (MOS 67N20) was sitting in the rear compartment.

"On the first reconnaissance mission of the day, about 20 miles west of the city of Tam Ky, they were flying in support of D Company, 1/52 198th Lt. Infantry and searching an area for enemy soldiers who had ambushed a platoon of Combat Engineers attached to 1/52 while they were working on the road adjacent to LZ Young." The weather was a little foggy and rainy so they could not recon the mountains to the west, the likely direction of enemy withdrawal. It was decided to check the area around the firebase. They observed several crew-served weapons (mortars) under a lean-to and leather combat gear hanging on pegs in a hootch about 2000 meters to the northeast of the firebase. The items were exposed by hovering over the thatched structures and blowing the roof away with the rotor wash.

It was decided to have the supporting armed helicopters attack the structures with rocket fire. Afterward the loach moved back into the area, but returned to LZ Young when a strange noise was heard coming from the aircraft. The noise turned out to be wind blowing across the exposed barrel end of an M-79 grenade launcher. When they returned to the search area, several blood trails were observed and they took sporadic small arms fire. The supporting gunships were called in again with rocket and mini-gun fire.

When they returned to the area for damage assessment, a body was observed on the ground in front of the original structure. As they slowly flew over the "dead" body at 15 feet, he rolled over and fired at the slow moving aircraft with an AK-47 assault rifle.

Captain Staffa was hit in the right foot, driving his leg onto the instrument console. At this time, the aircraft went into a spin as his left foot pushed the pedal all the way in. It could be heard that SP4 Brown was firing his machine gun and was overheard to say to the effect, "I got him." SP4 Hill put both feet on the pedals on his side of the aircraft and stopped the spin before they impacted the ground. Captain Staffa took control of the aircraft and headed back to LZ Young. SP4 Brown would not answer the intercom, and SP4 Hill looked over the bulkhead reporting that Brown had been hit.

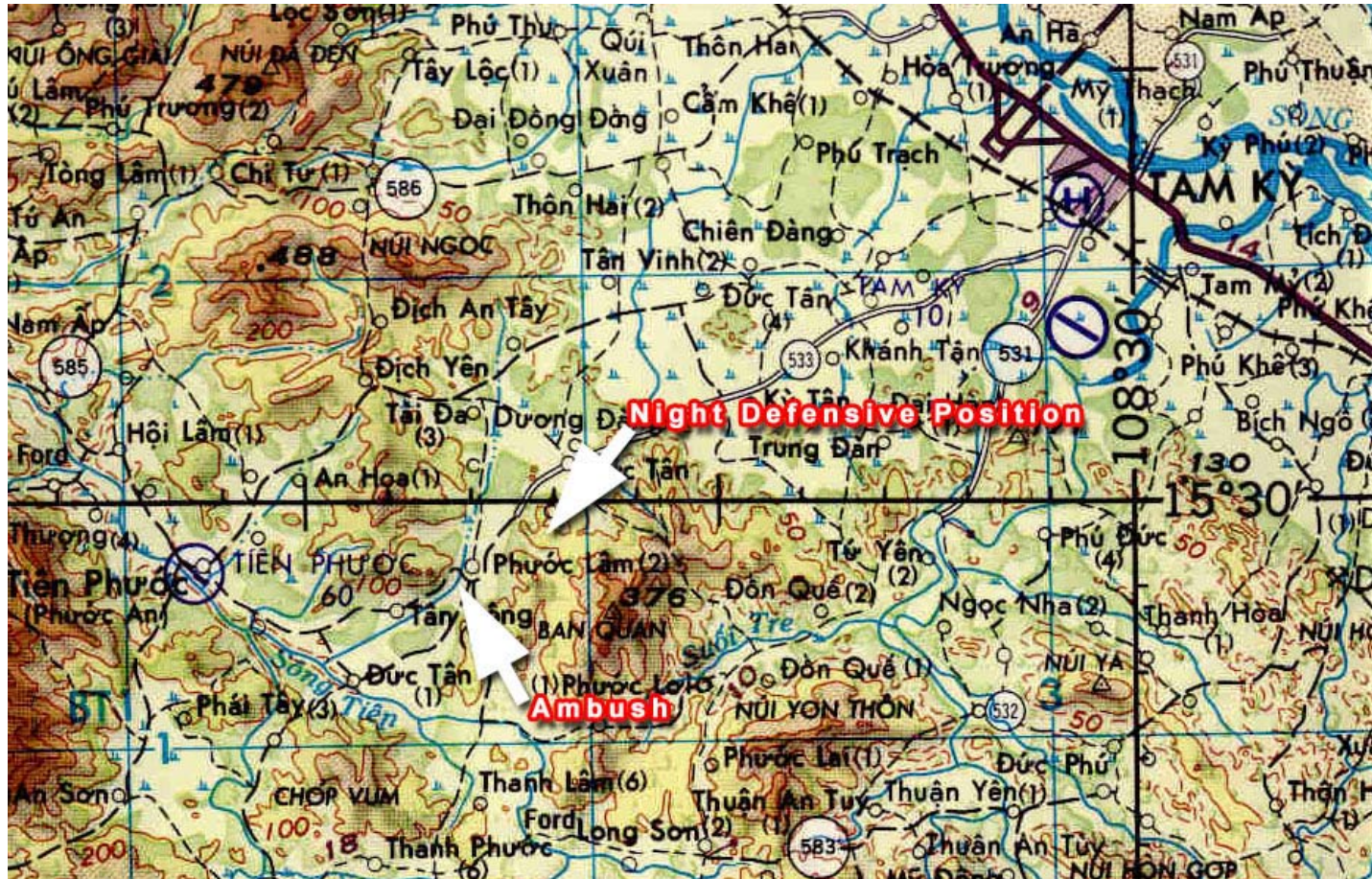
At LZ Young, both Staffa and Brown were transferred to the gunships and flown back to the 2nd Surgical Hospital at Ky Ha. SP4 Brown had been wounded by a bullet which came up from directly below him, penetrated his body in the buttock area, then ricocheted off the inside of the ceramic armor vest back into his body. He died on October 23 in a hospital in Japan. Captain Staffa's wound to his right heel was completely healed in two weeks and he returned to flight status.

(ADVA Historian Note: SP4 Brown was posthumously promoted to Sergeant. His bloody gear was left sitting near the orderly room. It was very depressing for myself and many in the battalion to see the gear in this condition. Brown had gone through AIT with men from A & B/123rd Avn Bn. Several men had just finished reading a letter from Brown telling them that he was sure he was going to make it, when they were told that he had died. The funeral was held at the Chapel on the hill above the 123rd Avn Bn heliport. at Ky Ha. I recall that his boots were part of the ceremony.)

← Re: Co. A
39th Engr

AMBUSH AT THE HOOK, Sept 17-18, 1968

AMERICAL 198TH LIB SHOWING GENERAL LOCATION



The Hook: A “S”turn” with sharp bends in the road where it crossed a stream, in narrow valley bordered by hills and high mountain tops.