

"REMEMBER WHEN"

By Bob Maves, Bravo 2/35th 1969-70

JUNE 1969

With less than six months of military training, I was assigned to Vietnam as an infantry soldier.

I remember flying past my parent's house on Center Ave. at 60 miles per hour on my way to the Rock County Airport early on the morning of June 12. Leaving Janesville and flying on a small plane seemed like the end of the world to me. Here I was going off to war and not really knowing why and not sure if I was prepared for what was ahead of me. Flying from Chicago to San Francisco seemed like it took forever although I was in no big hurry to get there. Not having flown too much, I was scared when we came through clouds and all I saw was water. Thankfully the airport was on San Francisco Bay. From there it was a helicopter flight across the bay (get used to chopper flights). Finally, I reported to Oakland Army Terminal. There, I spent a couple of days filling out reams of paper and securing jungle fatigues. The most important thing I learned was my DEROS date. That was my Date of Estimated Return from Overseas Station. My big day would be June 14, 1970 since I would be leaving for Vietnam on June 15, 1969. We were bussed to Travis Air Force Base outside of Oakland on a beautiful Sunday morning to catch our plane to Vietnam.

There were 200 scared soldiers as we roared down the runway on our way to who knows what. Our first stop was in Honolulu, Hawaii. With a couple of hours to kill, several of us went to the bar for a few cold ones. Guess what? I was 20 years old and Hawaii was a 21-year-old state. How can I go to war for my country and not be able to get a drink? I never could figure that one out. We crept closer to Nam as the night wore on. We made one more fuel stop in Guam. Our plane was supposed to land in Saigon, but the airstrip was being shelled, so we were rerouted to Cam Rahn Bay. At 2:00 A.M., June 17, 1969, I arrived in the Republic of Vietnam. The replacement depot was not ready for us so we wound up sleeping on the sand our first night. What a start.

After processing in for a few days it was time to get on a C-130 plane for the last leg of my journey, a flight to Pleiku in the Central Highlands. A bus took us from the airstrip to Camp Enari. This was the base camp of the Fourth Infantry Division. Several days of processing and indoctrination led to my being assigned to the 2/35 Infantry. Upon reporting to my unit, I started to meet some of the vets who had been there for a while. My learning experience of war had begun.

JULY 1969

I was assigned to B Co. 2/35 Infantry of the Fourth Infantry Division. After arriving at my unit, the next logical move was out to the field. I went from Camp Enari to LZ Ruth which was somewhere off of forward support base Oasis. After meeting some of the leaders, it was onto another chopper to the real thing- THE BOONIES.

There were a few of us on the chopper along with some supplies but it was mostly FNG's. I was assigned to the first platoon and went over to meet them. After introductions came the usual chitchat and learning more about the guys I would spend the next year with and depend on to stay alive. I hadn't been out there more than a couple of hours when one shot rang out and disturbed the peace and quiet. On the other side of our perimeter a guy had had enough

put a bullet through his foot. WOW!!!! What a start. My thoughts were " What am I doing here?" He was medivaced out and things calmed down.

Now was time to make out the assignments for night duty. Being a FNG meant listening post. This is where four guys go out several hundred yards and listen for any movement during the night. Just as we were settling in bullets started flying overhead- our bullets. "Now what?" We soon found out that they were 50 caliber rounds being fired by a drunken sergeant that was on LZ Ruth. Again things returned to normal (whatever that is.) That was a memorable first day in the field.

I remember that day like it was yesterday. It was July 3,1969 which also happened to be my daughter Kimberly's first birthday.

Day two for a new guy- POINT. You talk about being scared. Here I was leading an infantry company through the jungles of Vietnam. I was the same guy who had trouble finding his way around the block back home. Oh, how I wished I were back on that block.

After those first harrowing couple of days, things seemed to work into a pattern. I walked point and flank and did observation and listening posts, I kept learning and adapting to my surroundings because this was the real deal-WAR. I was determined to make it home.

One thing that I didn't learn to stay away from was "Jungle Rot." I got enough on my face and arms to put me on light duty. We were on Firebase Patsy, which was close enough to the Oasis that we could mine sweep the road in the morning and convoy supplies back in the afternoon. With jungle rot, I was kept off the mine sweep detail. Of course, the convoy back in the afternoon hit a mine and had two killed and twelve wounded. I consider myself very fortunate to have had jungle rot.

Now I have six weeks "In Country" and still don't like it but am bearing up under unusual circumstances.

AUGUST 1969

We were humping near LZ Patsy when I found out what contact was. Since I was still one of the low men on the totem pole, I was relegated to observation post. We had stopped for a lunch break and I was on OP. I heard a pop and then an explosion that wasn't too far in front of me. A lot of brush ahead of me prevented any shrapnel from getting to me. I was never any good at the low crawl in basic training but I sure improved that day. Crawling back to the perimeter I was asked if I was okay. Of course I was because I was able to fit into my helmet. There was no more incoming or any retaliation by us. That was enough for my first contact.

There wasn't many rice patties in the Central Highlands but we had to cross one one day. To cross the canals, we had to balance on a log. By the time I got to the end of the log I must have thought that I was Jesus Christ because I tried to walk on water. I missed the last step and must have made a big splash as big as I was with pack and all. Believe me, those canals are deep because I never touched bottom and for a guy who can't swim that is panic time. My buddies grabbed hold of my pack and pulled me out. Eventually, I dried out but it could have been worse and it is a good story to remember.

VOLUNTEER!!! You learned early in the Army that you never volunteered for anything. Well, I did. We were humping with the mortar platoon off of LZ Meredith. We were asked if anyone had mortar experience because they needed bodies to help carry their equipment. I hardly

knew what a mortar was but I VOLUNTEERED. I'm not brilliant but I could see that the mortar platoon didn't walk point, flank or go outside of the perimeter at night. A half hour later I was with the mortars. They must have thought that at 6'5" and 240 pounds I could handle any of their equipment: a 40 pound base plate, a 30 pound tube or a 15 pound bipod along with a couple of rounds. When we got back to Meredith, I asked the platoon sergeant if I should stay with mortars or go back to my line platoon. He said stay so I did. I guess that volunteering was the best thing that I ever did because on one of my company's missions in September they had three guys killed in two days walking into ambushes. Since I had been walking point before volunteering, that could have been me. Since the mortar platoon was left on Meredith, I was nowhere near that action.

One day while walking on Meredith somebody yelled "Maves." Who the hell knows me 8,000 miles from home? I looked around and saw Terry West, an old golf buddy from high school. It was good to see and talk to someone from Janesville. I knew where to go to get a cold one when we came in from the field because Terry was in 4.2 mortars and he was always on a firebase and had access to pop and ice. Since I had the Janesville Gazette sent to me, Terry was anxious to see me so he could read the news from home.

Now I have 286 days and a wake up left. I still have a long way to go just to get short. Still just taking one day at a time.

SEPTEMBER 1969

Even though I was in mortars, we still humped the boonies with the company on occasion. I was with them to help carry the equipment in the field and that's where we were. I was still getting to know my new platoon and they were eager to show me all about mortars. I actually got to be a pretty good gunner.

I saw my first "suspected" Viet Cong on a mission off of LZ Meredith. I remember him being dragged into camp blindfolded and his hands tied behind his back. He was whisked away by chopper and was never to be seen again.

We encountered a stream off Meredith that came almost to my neck. It was probably 12 feet across. Guess who had to stand in the middle holding onto the rope and help shorter guys to cross? I didn't lose anybody although I thought about letting a couple of Vietnamese scouts go but I didn't. The worst part about that stream is that we had to do it again a couple of weeks later. Still didn't lose anybody.

For some reason a dog befriended us on Meredith. He was a light brown mutt we called Jude after the Beatles song. Jude became the platoon mascot and went everywhere with us. Everyone liked him and he was fed pretty well even if it was Army chow.

After being associated with Meredith for close to a month, we moved on to LZ Helga. Since Helga was nothing but a hill, we had to build a firebase from scratch. It was B Company's turn to be the builders. Having to build mortar pits and sleeping areas meant having to fill lots of sandbags. I don't know where the sandbags came from but we always seemed to have more than enough to fill. We built a strong and secure firebase in a matter of days. Late one evening there was an accident on the other side of the perimeter. Engineers were cutting down trees and one big one fell on a tent killing two soldiers inside. As with a lot of firebases, once you get them built the way you want them you are moved to another area of operation and some other company takes over. It seemed that as soon as we were done with Helga, away we went.

Now I have 109 days in country and still counting. Almost one- third of my tour in and it seems like an eternity. Still plodding along taking one day at a time.

OCTOBER 1969

One day I was sent back to the Oasis to pick up beer and soda for the platoon. Once I reported to the company area, I was put on some details. They took long enough so that I couldn't get back to the firebase at night. Since I had to stay, they tried to put me on listening post outside of the perimeter. I refused. I didn't come back to pull their LP. They told me that I would get a court martial for refusing an order. I told the First Sergeant "So what." A Lieutenant whom I had never seen before intervened and talked me into pulling bunker guard duty. At least I had a roof over my head and it was drier than out in the bush. The next day, I got my stuff and got out of there.

Our next assignment was guarding the helicopters at the airstrip in Ban Me Thuot East. The whole company was to pull guard duty until further notice. We had to guard Slicks, LOC's and gunships. It was rather easy duty for a change. As in any group, there was always a scavenger. Ours was Staff Sergeant Bob Alfonso. Within days the mortar platoon had its own shower facilities. He got lumber, a fifty- five-gallon drum, a showerhead, mirror and sink. By the time he was done, we had the best shower area in the country. He arranged with somebody to fill the drum with water every morning. Within an hour the water was warm enough to have a warm shower. There was enough water for the whole platoon to clean up every day. Almost heaven --- a warm shower.

One day a bunch of us went to the PX in Bam Me Thuot. It must have been payday because the only soda left was Fresca. Since anything was better than water, I bought a case. What a mistake. Warm soda is bad enough but warm Fresca is terrible. I couldn't even give it away, it was soooo----bad.

Ban Me Thuot East was a nice area to remember, easy duty, PX and USO shows. We went to a couple of shows on the other side of the airstrip. I guess it showed me all of my time in Nam wasn't going to be all bad. It seems that if you took one day at a time that things would be all right. If you worried too much in advance, you would go crazy. Making progress- 140 days in. Getting closer to over the hump.

NOVEMBER 1969

November found B Co. still in Bam Me Thuot East for a week or so. That was the kind of duty we wanted to keep, but the war was calling us back to the boonies.

From the airstrip, we went to LZ Deane. Sitting high on a hill, we were pretty safe from a ground attack. A short distance away on a higher hill was a smaller firebase. These two bases were built by ARVN's and were quite old.

It was an interesting time on Deane. My platoon Sergeant Larry Curtis and I shared a culvert sand bagged hooch. Many nights rats running interrupted our sleep. I don't know if they were inside or out and I didn't want to know.

November 24th about 6:45 a.m., a loud explosion rudely awakened us. It took another one for us to realize that it wasn't engineers working but it was incoming. In front of our hooch was a sandbag wall. We had to crawl out and go to the right to stand up and go over to our mortar pits. As I was crawling out, there was a mass panic going on with rounds still exploding.

Someone running by kneed me in the head. My glasses were broken and I was dazed but I got to the pit okay. On the pit wall, we had our helmets and flak jackets ready just in case. Since we could hear the rounds going overhead, this seemed like the appropriate time for using our helmets and flak jackets. That was the only time all year that I used my flak jacket. We retaliated by firing at the tree line across the valley. Mortars, 4.2 mortars and artillery really let them have it. When the shelling was over, we went to see where the incoming had landed. They hit the chopper pad about 100 meters past us and over the crest of the hill. The incoming had to have gone directly over our position. We were glad that they had overshot their target. The next morning, we were up before dawn and firing across the valley to beat them to the punch. It must have worked because they never fired back.

We celebrated Thanksgiving on Deane. The cooks had the full turkey day feast. That was one of the best meals I had all year. It beat the heck out of c-rations.

I was also promoted in November to Specialist Fourth Class. Rank didn't mean much except for more pay.

Now, I have been in Vietnam for 170 days. The hump is getting closer, and then I start to slide downhill and become more and more afraid. Still I only take one day at a time.

DECEMBER 1969

We went from LZ Deane to LZ Blue. I remember flying by chopper and thinking how pretty the countryside below looked. Too bad we had to be at war and destroy the beauty of this place. . LZ Blue was a nothing when we landed. We had to start from scratch building a firebase. It sure seemed a strange place to put a firebase because it was a fairly flat piece of ground. Seemed like it was a place that could be easily overrun. To build mortar pits and sleeping hooches meant a lot of work filling sandbags. Of course, the mortar pits took first priority. We had four or five guys filling sandbags so we got everything done in a couple of days. I don't know if Sergeant Curtis and I were lazy or what but we dug our hooch halfway underground. We filled the sandbags and stacked them around the hole we were digging. We actually slept underground when we were all done. It was a different way to build sleeping quarters.

While on Blue the Army had an awards ceremony. I participated in it, not to get an award but as the U.S. flag bearer.

We were sitting around on December 15 about 7:15 p.m. when we had some incoming rockets. We were the first gun up and firing. After a few rounds the battle was over. We then had to fire some defensive targets for the night. We got a little too close as we hit a water trailer inside the perimeter with a short round. Thank God nobody got hurt. A forward observer wanted to test us to see how accurate we could be. He spotted some water buffalos and we got one in the shoulders with a mortar round. I guess we were pretty accurate after all.

On a fire mission for one of our sister companies, we supposedly killed an enemy soldier in a tree. Of course, the other company got credit for the kill.

Near Christmas, radio personality Johnny Grant and four U.S.O. girls visited Blue. I got a picture with each of them. That was sure a different kind of day.

One of our guys had a Christmas tree sent to him from home. We were able to have Christmas in the boonies. The cooks made up a special meal for the day. It was hard being away from home on Christmas, but we all made it through together.

We went back to Camp Enari at Pleiku before New Years for a short stand down. The only thing that I remember about New Years Eve is going to a U.S.O. show and getting so drunk that I fell into a dry drainage ditch on the way back to the company area.

I finally made it over the hump on the 17th. Now I can coast the rest of my tour, don't I wish? I have 163 days and a wake-up left. SHORT!!!

JANUARY 1970

B Co. 2/35 left Camp Enari early in January for a firebase called Armageddon. In the Bible, Armageddon is " the scene of a great battle between the forces of good and evil to occur at the end of the world." This could have meant one of two things – a tremendous battle with many casualties or as we all hoped – that the troop pullouts would start with the Fourth Division and that we would be rotating home thus ending the battle. I was happy that it was not the former and sad that it was not the latter.

My bunker on Armageddon was one of the most solidly built that I was in during my tour. It had tree logs over the top with several layers of sandbags on top of them. We figured that a direct hit would do little damage but we put on a few more layers just in case. Armageddon wasn't bad duty until one morning while checking our claymore mines, we found that several had been turned around during the night to face us. We were put on alert but nothing ever came of the incident.

It was time for the mortar crew to go out and hump the boonies. Lt. Ed Mosey needed a radio telephone operator for the mission so I volunteered- WHAT??? There was little or no activity in the area, so why not? It was quiet for a few days until C Co, was ambushed. They had three killed – pointman, Lt. And RTO. My buddy Lt. Mosey volunteered us to go to the rescue. The next day we were airlifted to a LZ near the ambush area. Being the RTO for the platoon leader meant being on the first chopper into a suspected hot LZ. Gunships prepped the area and our door gunners blessed themselves while firing at the tree line. We landed and jumped into the elephant grass for cover and started moving toward the tree line. Fortunately, we met no resistance and moved onto the ambush area. We found nothing in our sweep, which was fine with us. We finished up our patrol and headed back to Armageddon. Upon arriving I told Lt. Mosey that there was no way in the world I would ever be an RTO again. The only bird that I wanted to be first on was the freedom bird going home. We finished out the month with no further hassles.

Now I have 231 days in country with 134 to go. No matter how fast I want time to go, every day still takes 24 hours. However, every day gets me closer to my DEROS date. I can still only take one day at a time.

FEBRUARY 1970

While we were on Armageddon, the Fourth Division moved from Camp Enari near Pleiku to Camp Radcliff near An Khe. After a few quiet days at Armageddon, we went to Camp Radcliff for a sort of stand down. We took turns pulling guard at the Generals quarters, bunker guard, hospital and we were the division mortar platoon for a few days at each place.

Guarding the Generals quarters was a piece of cake. There were four guys patrolling the grounds at all times. It was peaceful during our time there. I do remember one night while on guard, we were walking past the mess hall and one of the cooks asked us if we were hungry.

Of course we were. He served us liver and onions. It was the best liver and onions I have ever had. Remember though, that any hot chow was relished in Nam.

Next we had bunker line duty. There were two of us and one local from An Khe. I don't think I slept at all any of those nights. I couldn't bring myself to trust the locals. At least nothing happened and those were uneventful nights.

Guarding the hospital was tough. From our tower we looked right at the mountain in Camp Radcliff. During Advanced Individual Training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, one of my drill instructors told us of a story about the "f--- you" lizard in Vietnam. He said that was the sound it made. Yea, sure, right. While on lookout in the tower one night I heard, "f--- you, f--- you." I couldn't believe it when I looked on the ground and saw five or ten lizards. I woke up the rest of the guys to see and hear them. I would not have ever believed it if I would not have seen it or heard it myself. In the mornings, we were able to eat breakfast in the hospital. Again, some decent chow. Take it when you could get it.

Next we were division mortars for a few days. One night while we were sitting around, a fire mission came in. Some of the line guys were shooting the breeze with us and asked if they could help. They unwrapped 100 rounds and set them on the mortar pits. We were ready but only fired a few rounds. What a mess to clean up.

From Camp Radcliff we became Bravo builders. We landed on a hill and started building LZ Hooper.

Now I have 259 days in country with 106 to go. Slowly but surely the days are going past. I can almost start to feel short. I don't know if that is good or bad.

MARCH 1970

Payday in March brought good news from home for me. Lt. Mosey was pay officer and when he saw me he congratulated me. I said, "Fine, what was it?" I had become a father again of a daughter, Michele Lynn. He had figured the Red Cross had informed me that all was okay back home. I was happy to get the good news.

Now it was time to return to the war. Bravo Company was in charge of building firebase Hooper. Starting from scratch meant a lot of work. This was to be a huge firebase stretching from one hill to the next. Filling sandbags was no fun but at least it made time pass. We were so high up, that some mornings when we woke up there was fog in the valleys below. It was really neat as it reminded me of snow back home. The platoon scrounger somehow got eggs from the mess hall. He heated up some C-4 and put the eggs on a shovel to cook. That worked great and the eggs tasted pretty good, too.

As was usual in the Army, we got Hooper done the way we wanted to and we were replaced by another company. It was our turn to go back in the jungle. Humping the mortars was a lot of work and not much fun but it was our job and we did it to the best of our ability. While we were out in the bush, we made light contact on March 22. We received small arms fire and 60mm mortars incoming. It was over in a matter of seconds with no harm done. We had been in the field for a couple of weeks straight and were getting tired of it. It was getting late one day, and we were on a hill waiting to get extracted by helicopter. My platoon sergeant Earl Punchard told me to go out on OP. Earl was a friend of mine and I told him he wasn't worth a ----. I went on OP to cool down. When I came back I apologized to him. I had too much on my mind. The pressure of being tired of the field, being shot at, getting short and being a new father all came

out of me in that one statement. He accepted my apology. We finally got extracted about dusk and were taken to LZ Challenge. At least we didn't have to build this one and had a couple of days to wind down.

Now I have 290 days in with 75 to go. My 99 days short timers helicopter calendar is starting to fill in nicely. I sure do wish there were some way to make time fly, but as in the beginning one day takes 24 hours to pass.

APRIL 1970

B Company 2/35 Fourth Infantry Division started April on LZ Challenge. I was a mortar platoon squad leader. On April 3, I went up in front of a three-panel board to take a test to make sergeant. The board consisted of Capt. Fisher, a high ranking NCO and a Top Sergeant. 'Top' was the same one who threatened me with a court martial for refusing to go on LP back in October. I don't think he remembered me because of the fifty slots for sergeant I came in third. Of course, as soon as word came down that I had made sergeant, we got a shake-n-bake in from the world and he was made squad leader and I was made a gunner. I didn't care because I got my stripes and the money and that was what counted.

On April 14 at 4:00 p.m. Challenge was attacked by three 107 recoilless rounds. On the 15th at 9:00 a.m. we had one more fired at us. Fortunately none of them hit the firebase. One day we were sitting around when some planes flew over and dropped napalm out in the jungle. That was the only time I saw napalm dropped and it was a memorable experience.

Our next firebase was Raquel. We were out humping the boonies and not left behind as the mortar platoon for the firebase. On April 20th we were setting up for the night and I was out on OP. At 5:15, probably not 50 meters from the perimeter a sweep hit an ambush. We had three guys wounded, Don Reich, Ron Roepke and Roy Harris. None of them were wounded seriously but they had to be airlifted up through the jungle canopy. It seemed like hours because we knew 'Charlie' was in the area. I was never very good at the low crawl but when the firefight started, I got to be the best one around. Of course we were edgy all-night and hurried to break camp the next morning. We were just getting a good start when a shot broke the stillness. The guy walking flank shot himself in the foot to get out of the field. I guess some people just couldn't handle the pressure. Again, we had to wait for the medivac to take him up through the canopy.

After two days, I was ready for a break. Time for R & R, I & I or whatever you wanted to call it. I left for Bangkok on April 30th with two friends, Paul Ramos and Ken Gocht. It was good to get down to Cam Rahn Bay and get into some civilian clothes. I sure liked getting on that Pan Am plane and taking off to leave the war behind us for a few short days.

I can't believe it, but I have 329 days in. You talk about getting 'short', you talk about getting scared..... I made it this far and didn't want to be denied the opportunity of being able to go home safe and sound.

MAY 1970

R & R Bangkok. Ken Gocht and Paul Ramos had been to Bangkok before on R& R so I tagged along. We stayed at the Golden Palace Hotel and got the same cab driver they had the first time-Johnny Coke. I think we hit the high spots as well as the low spots of Bangkok. One day I took a bus tour of some Buddhist Temples and out to the Bridge on the River Kwai. It was a very interesting piece of history of WWII. Like everyone else, I bought some tailor made

threads cheap! Of course several months later they didn't fit. Bangkok impressed me as a modern city with new buildings and was very Americanized with ITT, Caterpillar and Kentucky Fried Chicken signs adorning the area. We all had a great time and leaving the war for a week was a welcome relief. The damper of that week was the United States invaded Cambodia. That was also the same week of the Kent State shootings. We watched the papers, but the Fourth Division hadn't gone into Cambodia yet. Leaving Bangkok we read the Stars and Stripes and it stated the Fourth Division had just gone into Cambodia. Ramos was shorter than me, I had about 40 days left and Gooch had about 60 days, so we didn't want any part of Cambodia. That made for a long plane ride to Cam Rahn Bay.

When we got to Cam Rahn Bay, the three of us hid out for a few days. Finally we had to go back to An Khe. Our barracks sergeant let us hide out for a few more days. Finally on May 12th, we boarded a C-140 to some firebase in South Vietnam. We tried to hide out again, but after a couple of hours we were on a chopper to Cambodia. When we landed at LZ Conquest, we got the good news we were going back to An Khe the next day.

May 13th we boarded Chinook helicopters to go to South Vietnam. The one I was on vibrated more than most and I wondered what would happen if it went down. Eerie. We landed and boarded trucks and went to a staging area to await the rest of the company. The third Chinook after us went nose first to the ground and killed three people. Unfortunately, one of the guys was Paul Ramos from R & R, who was shorter than me. That goes to show, there was no controlling your destiny.

Once back in An Khe, I got more bad news. Our new commanding officer from Wisconsin Rapids, wanted all infantry soldiers back on the line. *WHAT!!* I'm too short for that. Mortars were safer than the line but he made no exceptions. Fortunately, I was put in Lt. Mosey's platoon. He made a platoon rule of no extra duty with 15 days or less in country. We went to LZ Warrior and LZ Lance during the rest of May. I was too damn short to remember anything about them. God, 351 days in, 14 to go, please let me get home safe and sound.

JUNE 1970

Here I am, 14 days to DEROS and I'm still in the bush. At least with the Lt's rule of no extra duty with 15 days or less, I don't have to go on sweeps, LP or OP. A shake-n-bake sergeant came up to me and told me to go on a sweep and I said NO. He asked why and I told him to ask the Lt. The Lt came back and I told him I had 14 to go. He said to sit still because he was going to get me home.

We were waiting for a bird with re-supply, when shots broke the silence when he tried to land. He decided not to land and took off. A couple of days later we set up a LZ for him to come in again. We needed emergency re-supply of food and ammo so he had to make it. We had an ambush set up on the trail and wounded a suspected VC but never found him. Since this was my last day in the field, when the ambush broke loose, I literally climbed into my helmet. They didn't have to blow the ambush on my account. Lt. Mosey came up to me and said that if anybody got on that bird that it would be me, because I had been a good troop for him during our time together. The chopper came into a napalmed field with 3 to 4 foot stumps. They dropped the supplies from what seemed like 10 feet. I motioned for them to come lower and they motioned for me to come up. I don't know how but I wasn't going to be denied getting on that chopper, so I made it. I got back to some firebase and caught the last chopper of the day back to An Khe.

I got out of the field with about 5 days to go, and did all the necessary processing to leave the Fourth Division. From there, I went to Cam Rahn Bay for more processing to leave South Vietnam.

The night of June 13th about 9:00, there was a roll call manifest for the 2:00 am flight. With a few guys from the 13th still there, I didn't know if I would be on this one or not. I couldn't believe it when my name was the first one called. When I got my papers, I found out why. I had to escort an undesirable back to the states for a discharge. He was all right and didn't cause me any trouble. At 2:05 a.m. June 14, 1970 my Flying Tiger freedom bird took off. We went to Japan to refuel and from there to McCord AFB in Washington. It took us 3 hours to fly across the Pacific Ocean with the time change. After some processing at Ft. Lewis we were set free. In a few hours I was on a plane to Chicago and home.

I spent a total of 362 days 1 hour and 5 minutes in the Republic of South Vietnam. When we landed back in the world, I felt that I was fortunate enough to leave the past in the past and to continue on with my life. As much as I didn't want to go to Vietnam, I would not trade that year of my life for anything. I thank God every day for watching over me and bringing me home safe and sound.