

**Dong Ha Combat Base Vietnam:
The Date was August 19th, 1967
By: Jim Bagnell**

The day started out as any other day. I woke up in the security bunker where I slept. We headed to the chow hall for breakfast, then back to the security perimeter to check our concertina wire for any flaws. We were scheduled to go into the nearby village on a recon patrol in the afternoon. At about 1 pm, after eating lunch we geared up and met the patrol leader with the rest of the guys assigned for the village patrol that day.

I was having some stomach pain after lunch but it seemed to be better, so I gave it no more thought. We headed out on patrol to check the village to make sure all down there was OK. As we approached the village my stomach pain had returned and gotten much worse. I couldn't go another step. I was doubled over with pain and that was the last thing I remembered until I woke up at the base's Delta Med and was told that my appendix had ruptured and they had to remove it! I was later told that a 3rd year medical student, who was a corpsman, had to do the emergency surgery because all of the field surgeons were up north at Con Tien and Gio Lin working on recently wounded men.

The next day around noon I was released, early, due to the number of wounded that had been brought into Delta Med from Con Tien and Gio Lin. They gave me my gear and told me to contact my base to get a ride. Having no way to contact anyone, I started walking back--it was probably a ½ mile I figured. I never did check how far it really was, but I did make it back to my hut where I immediately laid down, too tired to check in with our battalion medical staff. I just figured I would check in the next morning. The pain drugs kicked in and I fell asleep. That evening we came under a rocket attack and I woke up, and did what I always did, jumped into the hole in the floor that led to our concrete bunker outside the hut. I did not realize until I got to the bunker my stitches where my surgery was done had come apart--it wasn't pretty!

After the attack they took me to the medical bunker to have my wound looked at and it was decided I would stay in the medical bunker with the

wound left open until they were sure no infection had gotten in there. The next day the doctor decided it would heal by leaving it open and heal from the bottom up so I spent the next 10 days in the battalion medical bunker.

On August 28th at around 5:45 I woke up to a rocket attack. About 6:15 a corpsman told me to get dressed and man the doors to the medical bunker ramp while he went to prep the emergency room. One of our Charlie Company huts had taken a direct hit. I stood by the doors waiting--I am not sure how long--as the explosions continued. Then after all we had been thru since February's arrival, the reality of war hit me head on as our dead and wounded came down that ramp. I will never forget that day.

Time in the Navy and Career Since

I left home for boot camp on August 28, 1966 in Davisville RI and arrived in Port Hueneme CA in early November for orders. I was first sent to pole climbing class, then did a beach landing exercise in Coronado, and went to Camp Pendleton for combat training. I was on the advanced party for the Dong Ha deployment where my work party assignments included Con Tien and Khe Sahn. I was assigned to the Quang Tri deployment but my earlier appendix operation became a hernia requiring more surgery. I remained in Port Hueneme on MP duty until I was discharged on August 28, 1968.

My wife and I recently celebrated our marriage of 47 years and the raising two children. We have five grandchildren.

My career following discharge saw me work through Apprenticeship, Journeyman, Forman, General Forman and my retirement as a Superintendent after 35 years in the electrical field.

My hobbies are golfing and fishing and I coach high school in each where our teams have gone to the Illinois state finals several times.

You can reach me at 309-261-1735