



THE LAST SEVEN DAYS

Of the
407th Radio Research Detachment
March 27th - April 2nd, 1972
Quang Tri, Republic of Vietnam

by G. Duane Whitman



Prologue

The events described in this article occurred almost four decades ago – nearly half a century. Shortly after I returned from Vietnam in 1972, I spent available quiet time writing out my recollections, thoughts and feelings of the events recounted in this article. With the exception of the introductory paragraph and the postscript, the narrative was written in private moments of reflection by a young 20-year old, most of which while sitting on a large rock overlooking Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. Quiet. Peaceful. Safe. Uninterrupted.

At the time, I simply wanted to document for myself my recollections – primarily to be able to remind myself in the future of the ordeal and experience – and to make sure that my memory would remain unfaded by time.

The writing was cathartic for me, and once completed, the pages lay dormant in a file folder for almost 30 years, moving along with me and my family throughout my career in the U.S. Army. Over the years, I shared it with family members, and once, in a fit of boldness, sent it to the "Reader's Digest," thinking for some odd reason, that they might be interested in publishing it. They were not. Back into the file folder it went.

Sometime in 2001, before the horrific terrorist attack of September 11th, I shared the article with a fellow veteran who strongly encouraged me to make it public. I have been amazed, encouraged, gratified and blessed by the numbers of people who have not only read this account, but took the time to leave me a message in my original "guestbook." I think I've responded to all of you, and if not, please leave me another message!

As you read through this, please remember our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guard and all others deployed in various outposts, remote assignments and combat zones. Thank the families – in person if you can, or in your prayers – who have suffered the loss of loved ones in defense of our Nation, and never, ever, forget and always honor their sacrifice.

Introduction

What can now be viewed as the beginning of the end of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam conflict, started with the North Vietnamese Army's Spring Offensive of 1972. The territory north of Hue, South Vietnam, which was lost during this massive push southward encompassed all of Quang Tri Province (the northernmost province of South Vietnam), and the majority of Thua Thien Province on the southern border of Quang Tri Province. Our unit, the 407th Radio Research Detachment (RRD), which provided intelligence support to the remnants of the 1st Brigade, 5th Mechanized Infantry Division, was headquartered just north of Quang Tri City on the Military Advisory Command, Vietnam (MACV) Three Star Compound, and was deactivated following the evacuation caused by the invading North Vietnamese forces. In addition to our Headquarters element at Quang Tri, we had elements located on two Fire Support Bases (FSBs): FSB Sarge, overlooking the Khe Sanh Valley from the Dong Toan mountain top west of Quang Tri, and FSB Con Thien ("The Hill"), also known as "Alpha Four," which was located on the eastern edge of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

Everything seemed pretty calm during the third week of March, 1972, almost too calm. Most of us in the 407th, including the guys at both Fire Bases, were short-timers, with less than two months remaining on our tour in Vietnam. Johnny, one of our personnel at FSB Con Thien, had recently returned to the hill after a few days of relaxation with us at the Detachment. All was running smoothly in the 407th Radio Research Detachment, Quang Tri, Vietnam.

Monday – Wednesday, MARCH 27TH – 29TH

We had taken sporadic incoming rockets in the preceding few days, but none that caused any concern, or any change in our normal routine. One of the attacks however, that has always stuck in my mind; occurred an evening while Johnny was at the Detachment with us. Johnny was playing cards with a few of us in the hooch (our home) and had just gone out to our "two-holer," when two or three rockets hit about 300 meters to the northwest of the compound. We all just sat there for a second looking at each other, waiting for the attack siren to blow, when into the hooch hopped Johnny, dragging up his drawers! It obviously wasn't very funny to him at the moment, but his retelling of the incident later always drew a good laugh.

Our first tangible indication of an impending attack had come a few days prior to the initial attack on the fire bases, when the refugees began their frightful retreat to the tenuous safety of the Imperial Capital of Hue. The sad and weary faces on every member of this seemingly endless parade, was a picture I've never forgotten. Men, women and children alike wore the masks of fatigue and battle, burned onto them by decades of war. This trek to the south was not new to them, nor would it be their last. Too poor to afford the luxury of motor driven vehicles, each packed what they could carry, some even pulling two-wheeled carts filled with what they deemed their most important possessions, quite possibly their entire existence. A few, the more affluent ones, had water buffaloes to pull their carts stacked high with goods which also provided a place for their children and elderly relatives to ride. This surging flow of displaced humanity continued unabated throughout the NVA offensive, despite the indiscriminate artillery and rocket attacks that severely decimated their ranks.

Around the 27th or 28th, the rocket attacks seemed to be coming a bit more regularly, but still it was nothing to really get uptight about. It was probably the 29th when everyone got hit really hard for the first time.

Thursday, March 30th

It appeared that frequent attacks were here to stay, at least for awhile. I found out first hand on the morning of the 30th, after about twenty-five or thirty hours without sleep, exactly how Johnny had felt a few days before - it didn't seem so funny now. Since the afternoon of the 29th, the fire bases were getting hit at least on the top of each hour. CW2 Wilson (our Detachment Commander whom we referred to as "Willie") along with our upper echelon chain-of-command, who were fortuitously at the Detachment on a routine visit, began to seriously consider evacuation of at least the two fire bases.

Throughout the morning, while our superiors discussed their evacuation decision, we continued to communicate with FSB's Sarge and Con Thien, relaying any new information. More and more sightings of NVA and VC were coming in over the radio, and sometime between 3:00 and 3:15 p.m., I held our last contact with our two people on Sarge. We were to find out later that a 122MM rocket with a delayed fuse had penetrated their reinforced bunker before exploding, setting off the built-in destruction devices of their classified equipment. They never knew what hit them. Our efforts were now focused on keeping in touch with Con Thien. I knew that we would never have contact with Sarge again, but had to evade the constant queries from Con Thien on that subject. We were extremely anxious to get the guys off of Con Thien by night fall - we didn't want to lose them too. It was extremely frustrating for us trying to understand what was taking them so long to decide to extract our people from Con Thien. There was no apparent reason for delay. Were there no evacuation choppers available? What was taking them so long! What was I supposed to tell Con Thien when they asked me where the chopper was?



Night fell, and we doubled our vigil at the radio. Fifteen minutes between contacts were as long as I would permit. By this time, they had had in excess of two hundred rounds of assorted ammunition thrown at them, including 122MM rockets, 81MM mortars, 240MM rockets, and 130MM artillery shells. The Fire Base had approximately 300 more rounds to absorb before we had them evacuated to Quang Tri Combat Base, home of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) Third Division.

FRIDAY, MARCH 31ST

The frequency of the attacks decreased, but never stopped throughout the night. The rounds hitting us, now including artillery shells, came sporadically, making it impossible to catch even a few



minutes of sleep. The morning of the 31st brought only what had turned into a routine: cloudy skies, and continued attacks on Quang Tri and Con Thien. "What was taking so long getting us evacuated?" "Any word from Gulf Whiskey (phonetic initials we used over air to identify each other) and Charlie Charlie on Sarge?" These two questions were constantly asked by the guys on Con Thien, when passing the continuous updates on their status. I wasn't permitted to tell them we already knew that we would not have contact

with Sarge again, and it seemed we would never get the go-ahead to evacuate. We were really getting tense over the evacuation decision: Con Thien had reported that morning that they were the only ones still on the hill - the ARVN Infantry Company charged with their security, had pulled out during the night!

Finally, around noon we received word that the decision had been made, and that a UH-1 Huey ("Slick") had been laid on, along with an escort of two Cobra assault helicopters for the evacuation of Con Thien. The long excruciating minutes were just beginning. Call words for the choppers and last minute instructions to destroy everything except their portable PRC-25 radio were passed to Con Thien. The birds were en route, now all we could do at the Detachment was sit and listen. The last words we heard from Con Thien before they destroyed their main communications equipment was an urgent call to the choppers to hurry - NVA troops were at their perimeter! We were all clustered around the radio, listening intently to the one-sided conversation of the helicopter pilot.

Our ears were fine-tuned to the radio, all heads bowed as one in an anxious prayer for our guys on the hill and the chopper crews. We knew what the procedure would be: the Cobras would go in first and "dust-off" the perimeter, and then the Slick would move in and touch down only long enough for the guys to jump aboard. Timing had to be near perfect - errors could result in the deaths of the chopper crews and our men. When given the word by the pilot of the slick, the guys would have to sprint approximately 100-150 meters down a rain rutted road to the pad; all the while both they and the landing chopper would be fully exposed to enemy fire.



The seconds seemed like hours while we waited for some word from the chopper pilot. Weeks seemed to pass in my mind when finally we heard from the radio: "grab your radio and run!" Time

stood still as we waited for the guys to reach the helipad. One-by-one the pilot of the slick counted as they scrambled aboard his ship, finally announcing, "Got eight aboard and am coming home." Relief overwhelmed us. No one moved for what seemed like an eternity. Then, as if on command, we all started shouting and carrying on as though our favorite team had just won the Super Bowl, and rushed out of our operations building to meet them at the helipad.

After the arrival and subsequent departure for Phu Bai of the guys from Con Thien, the die was apparently cast by the NVA for the conquest of Quang Tri Combat Base.



The largest attack on us so far hit shortly after they were on their way, and we began preparing for what now seemed inevitable: our own evacuation. We destroyed everything except those materials needed for a day-to-day existence, and tried to settle down for a few restless hours of sleep, only to be awakened every hour-on-the-hour by a rude barrage of eight-to-ten 130MM artillery rounds.

Saturday, April 1st

The early morning hours of April Fool's Day brought little relief from the nightmares of the preceding week, but by daybreak, there appeared to be a lull in the enemy's efforts. Incoming artillery and rocket attacks were fewer and farther between, but all volleys seemed to be hitting our small "Three-Star Compound." Mid-morning brought us no relief from the bad weather, meaning once again, little or no Tactical Air support. The attacks became more intense. We began to measure our time as the span between each attack, with some moments being longer than others.

CW2 Larry Wilson, our commander, was not one whom on first impression, we would have chosen to lead us under fire. He had appeared to us as a technically qualified and competent officer, but lacking that charismatic combat leader image that we young troops thought was important. We weren't far into our crisis before we began to see his leadership abilities emerging. His recently acquired trademark, an unlit, eight-inch stogie, reflected to me the metamorphosis that had occurred between the "man-in-charge" in peace, and the leader under fire. We were seeing a new side of Willie: a little fatherly instinct, calm decisive leadership, and a morale lifting sense of humor. This cold, wry humor, which we hadn't seen before, often put us at ease during this time of extreme stress. By the time Easter Sunday was over, we would all hold a deep respect for him.

Around noon, another lull set in, with only twenty-to-thirty rounds hitting from then until 5:00 p.m. Jovial plans for our evacuation were passed around, trying to convince each other that it would never actually come to that. At the stroke of 5:00 p.m., the sky caved in, and within the next thirty minutes more than five hundred shells of assorted sizes impacted and detonated, in turn setting off numerous secondary explosions of ARVN munitions. Time froze once again, that half-hour lasting an eternity, with the barrage ceasing as abruptly as it had started.

It was probably the first shell of this attack that hit the compound's generators, knocking out our electrical power, forcing us to crank up our "rat van" (a non-armored Radio/Teletype (RATT) Communications Van), and put our communicator in it to keep in touch with our parent unit at Phu Bai. Throughout the night of the first and until noon on the second, Bill remained inside this tiny cubicle, maintaining contact and passing periodic updates to the command there. It was a miracle, and an incident of unsung heroism on his part, that he maintained his vigil and emerged from it unscathed in spite of the numerous shrapnel holes through the van when we left.

At 5:30 p.m., when the heavy barrage was lifted, we resumed destroying all that was not an absolute necessity. Concentrating on this destruction made the night seem to roll on faster. Simple acts like putting documents into our destruction barrel took on the studied movements of a drill team. All that could be destroyed prior to our evacuation had been completely wiped out by 10:00 p.m., and Willie told us to sack out on the floor: something that by now was not unusual. How long had it been since we had slept in our bunks in the hooch? The incoming rounds continued, not real fast or heavy, but steady. The cold concrete vibrating beneath me from the concussion of each exploding shell caused another night of fitful sleep filled with nightmares of what could happen. The night dragged on. Flashes of life back home, my family, friends, and images of school days were intermingled with the dream interrupting eruptions of incoming artillery. Drifting in and out of fitful sleep, surrealistic scenes flashed through my mind of a telegram at my home, a funeral, muted family and friends. Would this night ever end? Oh, for a couple of hours of uninterrupted sleep!

Loneliness and fear began to creep over us as the noose tightened around Quang Tri. The realization was sinking in that two of my friends, one of whom had flown to Vietnam with me, would not fly home with me. How much longer did I have? Hour after endless hour of lying face

down on the concrete floor, wincing at every whistle and each thump of incoming artillery, hearing the stones and sand rattling off our thin tin roof reminded me of how very near I really was to joining Chuck and Gary. During those last few hours, I was oblivious to the others for moments at a time, concentrating on people and places back in "the world." What kind of news was reaching into that faraway place? The expressions borne by the others told me that I was not alone in my thoughts.

Easter Sunday, April 2nd

Daybreak, Easter Sunday. This would be an Easter not soon forgotten. With the rising sun, the nightmares of the previous night were temporarily forgotten, while we tried to keep busy until the time came for us to leave.

The shells came quite a bit more regularly, but now there was more than just 130MM artillery and rockets. The morning had brought with it mortars and 90MM recoilless rifle fire, meaning only one thing: the NVA were getting closer and closer, close enough now to use the 90MM direct fire weapon and begin accurately targeting their short range mortars at anything that moved within the



compound. The Quang Tri Detachment Main's only casualty occurred during this period of time, when one of our Military Policemen was wounded by shrapnel from a 90MM round while on an excursion outside of our operations building to survey damage.

Every round seemed to get nearer and nearer to our little fifteen-by-thirty foot building. The only thought now crowding our minds was, "why aren't we gone yet?" By noon, we all had our most prized possessions crammed into our duffel bags (which we had to leave behind anyway), and were ready to pull out at a moment's notice. Actually, we had been ready for a long time, but now it was just a matter of getting the order to hit the helipad.

The 2nd was by far the worst day for us. There was apparently no end to the NVA munitions. Over the preceding week, there had been in excess of two thousand rounds of assorted ammunition dumped on us alone. Around 2:00 p.m., Willie told us to set up for final destruction, get out of the building and head for the perimeter. We set up trios of thermite grenades (heat grenades capable of melting almost any metal) on each piece of equipment, and dumped diesel fuel inside the building.

When I thought that everyone was out of the structure, I yelled inside just to make certain, and not getting an answer, pulled the pin on the last thermite grenade, and tossed it inside. The exploding grenade ignited the fuel and above the roar of the fire, I heard frantic screams for help from inside the building! Bill and Joe were still in one of the back rooms, and hadn't heard my call to them: I had just sealed the only exit!

Our building was surrounded by a ten-foot high blast wall with walkways at the front and rear ends of the building. Surrounding the building, about six feet from the four-foot thick wall was a six-foot high anti-personnel concertina wire fence. The fence had only one opening - the one I had just sealed. Running to the rear of our fenced-in area, the realization of what I had just done struck me, rendering me helpless as I watched Bill and Joe scramble from the rear of the blazing building, escaping from the fire through the rear opening in the blast wall. Simply climbing over the fence that stood between us would've resulted in multiple lacerations to them from the thousands of tiny razor-like barbs on the fence. Looking behind them, the fence appeared to be the less threatening choice. How they did it, I don't know, but within seconds, both of them were up and over the fence, with the only injuries being a crotch-to-knee rip in the leg of Bill's pants and a corresponding

superficial scratch on his leg. We then headed for the compound's perimeter to await the chopper.

The Three Star Compound's only helipad had been demolished during one of the attacks, so we would have to catch the chopper outside the perimeter. The short wait was filled with last minute destruction of anything and everything in sight that the enemy could conceivably re-use against us. In the distance the characteristic sound of a Chinook helicopter could be heard, and we moved outside the perimeter to meet it.

Following MACV Directive, the Deputy Senior Advisor, MACV Team 155, sent the eight of us RRD members out to meet the helicopter, followed by the MACV Team personnel that would be able to fit into the Chinook. When all available space was filled, the bird lifted off and headed south, to Phu Bai, or so we thought. We had been airborne for only a few minutes, when the chopper landed at a small POL (Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants) Point, and we were told to empty the craft. We assumed that we were at a safe Landing Zone (LZ), but as we soon found out, we were only a couple miles south of Quang Tri City on Route QL #1, at the small hamlet of La Vang. Within a matter of seconds after the chopper left us and headed back north, we heard the sound of mortars leave the tube, whoosh over head, and explode just south of our position. This was definitely not a safe LZ.

Willie assumed command of the group of GI's from Three Star Compound, which numbered about 35, and moved us out to a row of ARVN bunkers along the south edge of the POL point. Needing no encouragement, we all sprinted for their relative safety. Making sure that everyone was under cover, Mr. Wilson then left to try to contact Phu Bai to check on another chopper to take us further south. About twenty minutes passed before he returned, going bunker-to-bunker telling us to be prepared to move out to the pad where the chopper had left us.

At his order, we broke cover at a run, forming a staggered single file line, trying to ignore the ominous eruption of small arms fire and mortars as we high-tailed it toward the helipad. The Chinook had picked up extra passengers from somewhere, not leaving enough room for all of us to fit. The pilot informed Mr. Wilson that five men would have to stay behind and wait for the next helicopter. Pointing to four of us, and indicating that he would be the fifth, Willie advised an Engineer Lieutenant as to where the remaining RRD personnel were going. After conferring with the pilot, he rejoined us in the grass along the east edge of the helipad, and told us to make tracks for the bunkers again while he went to find out about another chopper.

We were barely under way, when a fire fight broke out, with us caught right in the middle of the helipad! Faster than we thought possible, we hit the grass along the south edge of the pad. A quick inventory told us we were in bad shape: we had a total of about 80 rounds of assorted .45 caliber and M-16 ammunition among us, and the ARVN bunkers were about 40 meters to our rear with a concertina wire fence between us. The firing was left-to-right across the helipad with none coming from behind us. We could see M-16 tracer rounds, and hear the distinctive "pop" of the NVA AK-47 rifles coming from both sides of the pad. Which side was "ours"? Realizing that we weren't the targets of the firing, we hugged the ground waiting for the cross-fire to cease.

As soon as there was a perceptible lull in the firing, we made our break for the bunkers to our rear. It wasn't long before Mr. Wilson located a radio and once again contacted Phu Bai to get us another bird. His return brought some disheartening and frightening news: we may have to remain there in the bunkers overnight. The idea of staying there was not too appealing to any of us, even though we now had more ammunition than before: the ARVN troops that had vacated the bunkers while we were at the helipad had left theirs behind. While explaining the situation to us, Mr.

Wilson was interrupted by an ARVN officer who informed him that someone was trying to contact him on their radio.

With only about three hours of daylight left, we all had our fingers crossed that we would be leaving the area before darkness fell. No one wanted to spend the night at La Vang, believing that by morning we would be the only ones remaining. Mr. Wilson had been gone for only a few minutes, but with the mortars and small arms fire continuing, we were all concerned that he wouldn't return, and wondered among ourselves who would assume the responsibility for the others should something happen to our commander. The few minutes that he was gone felt like hours. When he finally returned, we were informed that a chopper would be there in a few minutes to pick us up just behind the bunkers, but due to a lack of room, he would stay there and wait for another one. Once again, we assumed that this ride would terminate at Phu Bai.

Within minutes, we could hear the approaching chopper, and left the cover of the bunkers, moving into the bushes behind them to wait. At the pilot's gesture, one at a time we broke cover and scrambled into the hovering helicopter. Airborne for the second time, we all breathed a sigh of relief, carrying with it a silent prayer for Willie's safety. Again we were headed south, this time on our own. Flying barely above the ground at more than 100 miles-per-hour, the chopper suddenly banked sharply to the left, and it appeared that we were headed out to sea. Were we being taken to the U.S. Fleet that was off-shore instead of to Phu Bai? But no, stopping as if on a dime, the pilot brought the chopper into a hover over a rice paddy and told us to get out! Get out? Did he really want us out? Frantic thoughts raced through my mind. This whole day was a bad dream. We were extras in a John Wayne flick doing a combat assault jump into a rice paddy that was probably deeper than I was tall. Any minute now I would wake up in my bunk at Quang Tri, pick up my pencil, and mark off another day on my "short-timer's calendar". Snapping out of my daydream, I was the first one to jump out of the hovering slick into the paddy below, which proved to be only a couple of feet deep, but still leaving only my chest, shoulders and head above the short rice stalks.

From our vantage point there in the rice paddy, things were looking rather bleak. None of us knew where we were, or where we were supposed to be going. We could see a road from the paddy where we stood, and headed for it. Upon reaching the road, we noticed a small compound off to our right with a very comforting sign hanging above its entrance: "U.S. MILITARY ADVISORY COMMAND, VIETNAM".

Inside the compound, we located the Commander and informed him who we were, where we were coming from and where we were supposed to be going. We told him that we were expecting our Warrant Officer to show up soon, and asked him to please check and see if he could find out what had happened to him. Promising to check for us, and to try to get us transportation to Phu Bai, he sent us to their mess hall for Easter Dinner. Easter! We had completely forgotten what day it was. While eating our first real meal in several days, we saw familiar faces of personnel from MACV Team 155. Worried about the other members of the 407th RRD, we asked about them, finding out that we and Mr. Wilson were the only ones who hadn't gone directly to Phu Bai from the POL point at La Vang.

After finishing our meal, we headed for the compound's bunker line, resigning ourselves to the likelihood of staying there for the night. We were issued additional ammunition and began cleaning our weapons to occupy our time. We had no sooner gotten our weapons broken down when Willie came jogging from bunker-to-bunker, with the by now familiar unlit stogie in his mouth, in search of his displaced troops. He told us to grab our gear and get out to the main gate, unless we wanted to spend the night in the bunkers there. I had never before, nor since,

reassembled an M-16 as fast as I did then. En route back to the rice paddy where we were dropped off, Mr. Wilson informed us that another bird would be there shortly to take us further south, and that he would remain there at the MACV compound until morning and rejoin us at Phu Bai the next day.

Back into the rice paddy we slogged, sure that this time the next ground we touched would be the familiar turf of Tri Bac Station, home of the 8th Radio Research Field Station, Phu Bai. Once again airborne, and in high spirits, we watched the ground slip swiftly by beneath us. Seeing the Citadel of Hue, we knew that it would be only minutes before we reached Phu Bai. Our hopes were again dashed as the pilot reined the chopper in, and landed across the river from the Citadel, informing us that this was where he was told to drop us off and that someone would be along shortly to pick us up. Bewildered, we watched the chopper take off. Standing there in a daze, we didn't have time to speculate as to what we should do next, when a jeep pulled up and the driver informed us that he had been sent to pick us up and take us to the MACV compound there in Hue.

Apparently we weren't expected, or they weren't expecting what they saw. Into the compound we tramped, in clothes that we had been wearing for at least a week, soaking wet, covered with mud, decked out with gear that we had acquired throughout the day, ammunition threatening to fall out of our crammed full pockets, Bill with his pants torn from the crotch to the knee: and there they were in their freshly starched fatigues, khakis or clean civilian clothes, wide-eyed and mouths gaping. What a sight we must have presented!

Finally, for the first time in a week, we were out of the immediate danger area. The Team Commander ushered us into his office where we could contact Phu Bai to let them know where we were and that we were all safe. He told us to make ourselves right at home, anything we wanted was on the house, and to let him know if there was anything that he could do for us. The others returned to the lounge area with him while I put through the call to our parent unit. It took several minutes of concentrated effort to get through on the antiquated telephone system, but finally I reached the Commander of the 8th RRFS and informed him that the four of us were fine but that we were concerned about Mr. Wilson's whereabouts and safety. Colonel Powers, the CO, told me that the other members of the 407th, including Mr. Wilson, were safe and sound at Phu Bai and instructed me to insure that we abstained from the luxuries of Hue so that we would be ready at the crack of dawn to meet a helicopter at the helipad by the river. I assured him that we would all be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed in the morning - under no circumstances would we miss that chopper ride!

It was over. It wasn't long before we were all sound asleep enjoying the long needed restful slumber. There were no nightmares that night. We were out of the immediate grasp of the crushing NVA offensive. In the morning we would be in Phu Bai, and leaving Vietnam within the month. The long-awaited sight of the "Freedom Bird" winging her way across the Pacific filled my dreams.

Postscript

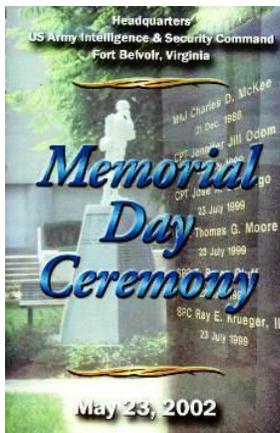
Specialist Gary Westcott (left) and Specialist Bruce Crosby (right) were the last Army Security Agency Soldiers killed in action during the Vietnam War. I only knew Bruce by radio, since at the time of the Easter Offensive I had only been in the detachment a couple of months. Gary I knew well. We



met at the Oakland Replacement Depot while processing for the deployment to Vietnam. We were together for the first several months in country: in-processing at Long Binh, processing through the 509th Radio Research Group in Saigon, and then transfer to the 8th Radio Research Field Station in Phu Bai. Gary, an excellent Vietnamese linguist didn't stay at Phu Bai very long, opting for duty with the 407th.



I caught up with him in January, 1972 when he returned to the detachment after a mid-tour leave.



In 2002, Major General Keith Alexander, Commanding General of the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, dedicated the Command's Memorial Day Ceremony to the memory of Specialists Westcott and Crosby. Several veterans of the 407th Radio Research Detachment were able to attend this ceremony – several of whom were with the Detachment during the Easter Offensive of 1972.

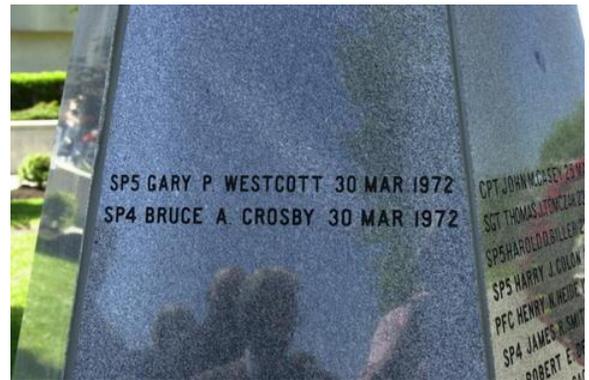


All of us visiting the Command were welcomed as honored guests, and a former detachment commander, Captain John Osmundsen, was given the additional honor of assisting in the laying of the wreath at the Command's Vietnam Memorial Statue. The wreath laying ceremony is conducted every year during the Intelligence and Security Command's Memorial Day observance.



The statue was commissioned and paid for by the Non-Commissioned Officers of the U.S. Army Security Agency, and originally unveiled at ASA Headquarters, Arlington Hall Station. When ASA was merged with a couple of other Intelligence organizations to form the Intelligence and Security Command, our memorial statue was moved with the command to its new headquarters in the Nolan Building, Fort Belvoir, VA.

The picture on the right, a close-up of the memorial panel with Specialist's Crosby and Westcott, inadvertently captures the author's reflection on the panel taken after the 2002 Memorial Day observance.



Here, an Army bugler plays "Taps" while the salutes are rendered following the laying of the memorial wreath.

The memorial commands a prominent space at the entrance to the Nolan Building and has the names of all ASA Soldiers killed in Vietnam inscribed on its panels.

