

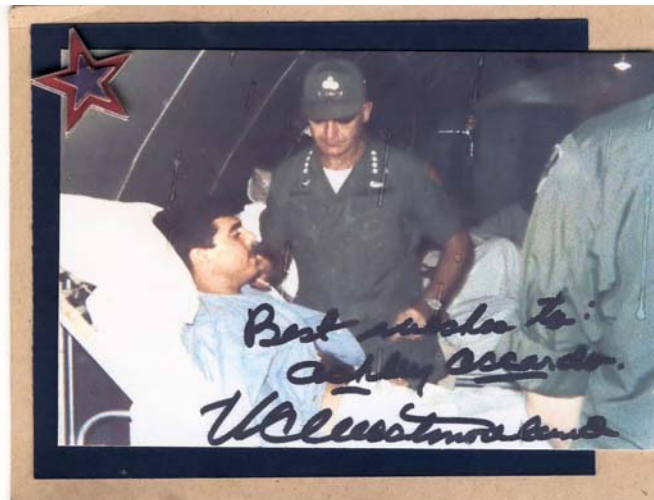
Private First Class Franklin "Frankie" Accardo's tour in Vietnam began with the 21 day boat ride on the USS Pope in September 1967.

"I served in the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry, Charlie Company, 2nd Platoon of the 1st Cavalry Division. On October 10, 1967, just before dark, PFC Melvin Michalski, myself, and a radio operator (RTO) assigned to our mission that night were walking on a jungle trail near the Tiger Mountains. We were tasked with setting up a listening post (LP) for the night with Michalski leading us, the RTO second, and I behind him with a spacing of about 20 feet between each of us. Michalski had walked past a point on the trail and I saw a grenade bounce on the trail behind him and in front of the RTO. The RTO said "What the hell..." and bent down (I thought he dropped one of his grenades and was bending down to pick it up). Within seconds, the grenade detonated and the impact blew the RTO up into the air. When I saw that, I started to dive off to the left and a second explosion went off to my right about 10 feet from me. As I was diving off to the left and the grenade went off to my right, shrapnel hit me all throughout my body including my face. I landed in the brush and kept my face down.



When the explosions stopped, my adrenaline slowed down and I let out a loud yell. I had thought the concussion had blinded me. I opened my eyes, put my hands on my face and became aware that I could see. I couldn't feel anything from the waist down. I heard the guys from the company running up to us to see what happened and at this point I realized someone was working on my wounds. I couldn't see what was happening to the other guys who were wounded because I was lying on my back. There was a group of men standing around us and someone called in a Med-Evac. It wasn't long after this that the chopper came in to pick the three of us up. While on the chopper, the medic continued to work on us. What seemed like several minutes later, we were landing at the 67th Evacuation Hospital in Qui Nhon, South Vietnam (I believe). A priest read me my last rites and I was taken into emergency surgery.

While in the intensive care unit (ICU) recovering after the operation, I awoke to a general and several men around my bed. The general put his hand out to me and I raised mine to shake his hand, and he boldly stated "Westmoreland to see you!" He bent down and pinned a Purple Heart medal on my pajama top. As the general was pinning the Purple Heart medal on me, an ICU nurse took pictures of it. She said she'd mail the pictures to me. The only address I had at the time was the 1/50th address, so I provided her with that. I received the negatives several months later at my army address.



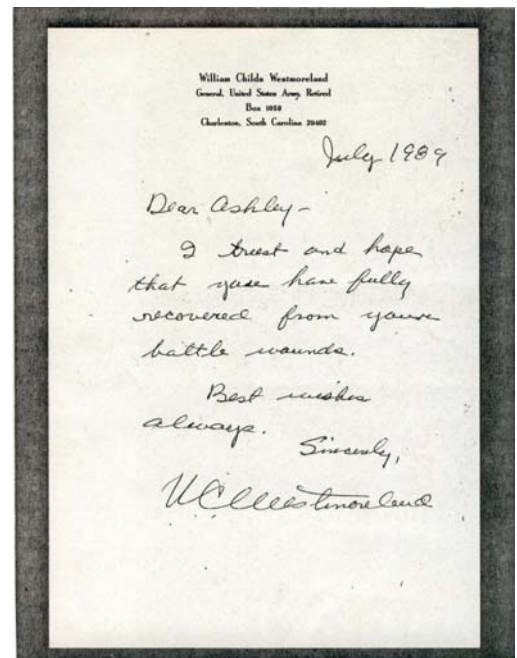
I think this could have been 1/50th Charlie Company's first experience with its men being WIA, but do not have documentation to substantiate that. The war became very real to me at this point. In another war story on the first Charlie Company KIA, which occurred several hours after our incident, it is noted that several men in Company C 2nd Platoon were wounded the night before in a grenade booby trap while on the trails. It further states that future

missions were advised to be aware of grenade booby traps on the trails.

I stayed at the 67th Field Hospital for several weeks then transferred to the 7th Field Hospital in Japan. Prior to my transfer, I was visited by Company Clerk Wallace Chow and First Sergeant Sammie Blount. During that visit, they informed me of the incident where Company C lost several men including Sergeant Brown. Of all the soldiers I thought would make it out of Vietnam, Sergeant Brown was one of them because he had his sh*t together and had been through combat before (in Korea).

I was at the 7th Field Hospital for several weeks, and then transferred to Camp Zama for a 30 day profile. It was deemed that I still had shrapnel in my left knee and right chest. After discovering the shrapnel, it was determined that I would be returning to the states. Once back in the states, I finished my tour at Fort Polk.

In 1989, my daughter Ashley mailed a copy of the photo of General Westmoreland presenting me with my Purple Heart medal to him requesting his autograph. The general autographed the photo and sent it back to her with a hand-written letter on personal stationery iterating that he hoped Private Accardo had fully recovered from his battle wounds. General Westmoreland mistakenly referred to the soldier as "Ashley"; however, his devotion to honoring the soldiers who served under his leadership in Vietnam is ever present."

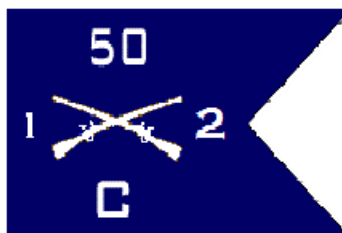




Update: Through pictures in Chucksey Spotts' 1/50th photo album and discussions with Chucksey Spotts and Leon Harris' widow, we believe the RTO may have been Leon Harris; an Alpha Co soldier transferred to Charlie Co. This has not been confirmed with documentation. Leon Harris' widow confirmed that he was involved in an explosion in Vietnam. He survived the explosion and lived many years, but has since passed. She said he didn't like to talk about it, so her knowledge was minimal.



1ST BATTALION (MECHANIZED), 50TH INFANTRY



CHARLIE COMPANY, 2ND PLATOON