

REMEMBERING MORRISSEY

by Frank Huffman

"Morrissey", as we called him, was our APC (Armored Personnel Carrier) driver; I was the 50 "gunner." One month we "humped", 2nd month we lived on the APC's and pulled road security, and the 3rd month we spent on one of the bridges in our AO, then the cycle started over again. We were working out of LZ Schueller outside of Camp Radcliff in An Khe doing our 2nd month of mechanized stuff. To tell you what kind of guy "Morrissey" was, in Dec '68 we were told that one person from the Company could go to the Bob Hope Christmas Show and the Company elected "Morrissey." The closest the "Show" was coming to us was 50 miles away. His only assignment was that when he returned he had to tell the whole Company all about the show. He returned and joined us on the 29th of Dec during one of our operations on the APC's in the "boonies" looking for "Victor Charles."

We were leaving LZ Schueller on the APC's that evening, the 29th, and heading to the bridges on Highway 19 to help with night security. It was dusk and we had a long haul, 12-15 miles to reach our assigned bridge for the night, needless to say we were all very edgy. We were traveling in a line of 10 to 12 APC's and as we crossed a bridge the last "track" in line would stop and spend the night at that bridge. The last 2 bridges were the most dangerous....like something out of "Apocalypse Now." We had 3 tracks left....one to stop at bridge 19, and the last 2 to go to bridge 18.....the "Apocalypse" bridge. Before we reached bridge 19 one of the 3 remaining "tracks" broke down and had to be towed to 19. We decided to leave those 2 tracks there and head out to 18 alone. BIG MISTAKE....."Victor Charles" was waiting. We were half way between bridges 19 and 18, approximately 3 miles, and we were ambushed.....Intel said we were hit by a B40, RPG 7, and possibly a LAW.

We were going up a slight incline at about 30 mph and at the crest the road made a gradual right turn and started down a long straight stretch of about 1/2 mile. As the 50 gunner I had the best view from the track. As we exited the turn I thought I saw something like a 4th of July sparkler coming out of the tree line towards us.....in a matter of seconds we were hit.....left rear at the fuel tank.....thank God we only used diesel. There was a bone jarring impact as the B40 went through but no explosion...just a huge fire. Immediately after impact I felt the APC accelerate...."Morrissey" was getting us the "Hell out of there." I was looking down and inside of the track to locate the release for the turret so I could turn the 50 and fire when we were hit again.....this time through the side and into the left side of the engine. This explosion blew the top vent hatch off of the engine and the barrel of the 50 straight up. I leaned over to my left and looked in the driver's hatch and did not see anyone....also to my left usually sat my Sgt., but he was missing; I looked to the rear and did not see any of my buddies; we always rode on top for safety reasons. I decided it was time for me to "di di mau." (Vietnamese for "Go...Fast") I climbed up on the turret and did a " PLF " to my right, off a burning track traveling around 30 miles mph, hit the ground and came up running and looking for cover. Thank God for all the training at Jump School. I watched the track continue on down the highway, was hit again by another rocket, and then run off the side of the road and stop. We were also under constant small arms and automatic weapons fire from the time the 1st rocket hit and the track finally stopped.

Help arrived shortly and I was medi-vaced to a Mash unit. When they wheeled me into the Operating Room I saw my buddies and everyone had made it except "Morrissey." We were told that evidently just before the 2nd rocket hit us everyone was evacuating the track. "Morrissey" had climbed out of the driver's hatch and was getting ready to jump when the 2nd impact and explosion knocked him off the front of the track and he was crushed. The next day in post-op we were asked if any of us would identify the remains. Two of us went.....it was "Morrissey." I firmly believe that what he taught me, and how he drove that night is one of the biggest reasons I'm here today and writing this. May God continue to bless him and his wife that he left behind that night. As it is said "All Gave Some.....Some Gave All."

