

D Co, 1<sup>ST</sup> BN (M), 50<sup>TH</sup> INF



8<sup>TH</sup> BN, 22<sup>ND</sup> NVA REG

# ATTACK ON LZ LITTS

March 9, 1968  
Republic of Vietnam

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4<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION

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1<sup>ST</sup>  
**CAVALRY  
DIVISION  
(AIRMOBILE)**

"TROJAN HORSE"



**8TH ENGINEER  
BATTALION**



**"HQ" COMPANY**



**PRIVATE  
FIRST CLASS**



**COMBAT  
ENGINEER**

## JAMES GARRIS LITTS

Headquarters Company, 8th Engineer "Trojan Horse" Battalion

Private First Class, RA14917563, MOS Unknown (12B10?)

Home of Record: Bushkill, PA

Date of Birth: February 1, 1947, Age at time of loss: 19, Single

1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam

Start of Tour: January 6, 1966, Date of Casualty: October 4, 1966, Days in Country: 272

Non-Hostile, died missing, fixed wing - noncrew, air loss, crash on land

Body was recovered, Panel 11E - Row 045

On 04 October 1966 C-7B CARIBOU tail number 63-9751 crashed into Hon Cong Mountain near An Khe Air Base, Binh Dinh Province. Thirteen men died in the crash:

Flight crew:

Capt Francis H. Bissaillon, Williamstown, MA,

6252 Operations Squadron, 7th AF

Capt David O. Webster, Phoenix, AZ,

6252 Operations Squadron, 7th AF

SSgt Daniel P. Marlowe, San Antonio, TX,

6252 Operations Squadron, 7th AF

SP4 John T. Bird, Summit, NJ,

17th Avn Co, 1 Cav Div

Passengers:

CPT Johnnie L. Daniel, Johnston, SC,

HHC, 1st Bde, 1 Cav Div

1LT Kenneth W. West, Jacksonville, FL,

B Btry, 2nd Bn, 19th Artillery

SFC Armando Ramos, Santurce, PR, A Co, 13th Sig Bn, 1 Cav Div

SSG Richard M. Procriv, Salt Lake City, UT, HHC, 1st Bde, 1 Cav Div

SGT Homer L. Pickett, Oklahoma City, OK, B Btry, 1st Bn, 21st Artillery

PFC James G. Litts, Bushkill, PA, HHC, 8th Eng Bn

PFC Henry L. Creek, Dallas, TX, HHC, 1st Bn, 12th Cavalry

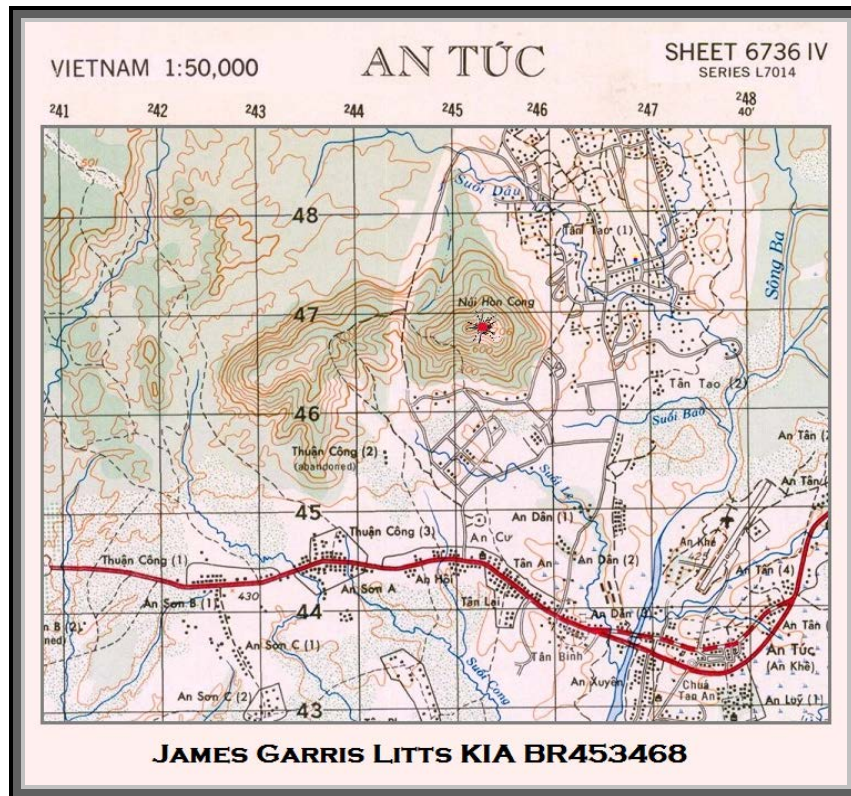
PFC Ronald E. Lewis, Chicago, IL, B Co, 1st Bn, 5th Cavalry

PFC Donald A. Smith, Royal Oak, MI, A Co, 5th Bn, 7th Cavalry

The three Air Force personnel are coded as hostile deaths, while the Army personnel are coded as non-hostile. There is no known evidence that the crash was due to hostile fire.



A Map of the location, BR453468, of the incident which claimed the life of James Litts is shown below.



**National  
Defense**

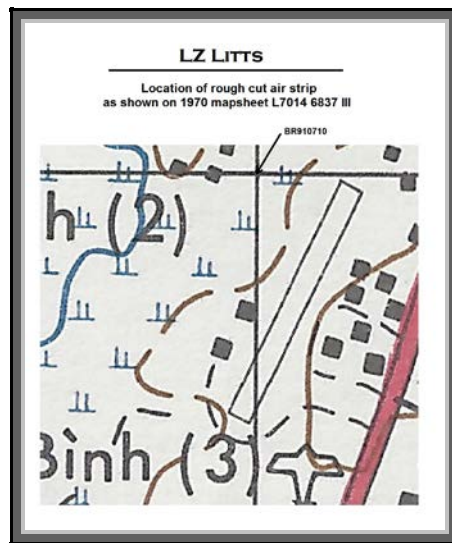


**Vietnam  
Service**



**Vietnam  
Campaign**

Sometime early in 1967, the 8th Engineers carved a rough runway out of a slightly elevated area near Highway 1 in Binh Dinh Province for a new Landing Zone, which they named "LZ Litts" in James Litts' honor. The fire support base was a busy place with regular C130 traffic. It was the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division HQ in May of 1967...complete with fortified bunkers and fences. When the 25th moved out in the summer of 1967, all that was left was the rough air strip as all fortifications were removed. A resettlement village had been located next to the former Command Base...and the inhabitants remained after the US Forces moved on.



Company "D", 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Mechanized), 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry, attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, fought a pitched battle that was nearly hand-to hand combat on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1968. They had been using the former air field area for a night laager on a regular basis.

At approximately 3:15 AM, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Regiment attacked "D" Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion (Mechanized), 50<sup>th</sup> Infantry, with a continuous B40 Rocket Barrage that was first reported as incoming Mortar fire. All 19 Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) in the formation were hit by enemy fires with one being totally destroyed and four others severely damaged.

The primary attack came from the West and Northwest...with other assaults from the South and North. Illumination Flares had been prudently prepared by Bob Gold before the battle & when fired, revealed hundreds of enemy troops attacking in various sized formations! .50 Caliber and M-60 Machine Guns as well as close in mortar fires, M-16 rifle and grenades rained a hot counter attack on the enemy and over 100 NVA bodies were counted after first light. The Company Commanding Officer, Captain Bruce Braun, was wounded in the initial volley & the main communications antennae were "knocked out" causing a temporary lapse in reporting the events to the Battalion TOC (Tactical Operations Center) at nearby LZ Uplift. During the battle, a brave Med-evac Helicopter crew survived crash caused by enemy fire and crawled into the friendly APC encirclement. Medivac of wounded was not affected until 0630 hours.



**BRADFORD, WILLIE B.**

"D" Company, 1st Platoon, 1st Squad, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry  
SP4, E4, RA54361528, MOS 11B40  
Home of Record: Blytheville, AR  
Date of Birth: July 23, 1944, Age at time of loss: 23, Married  
4th Infantry Division, Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam  
Start of Tour: February 13, 1968, Date of Casualty: March 9, 1968, Days in Country: 25  
Casualty Type A1, MFW, Panel 43E - Row 065



**LEAVELL, MELVIN RANDOLPH**

"D" Company, 1st Platoon, 2nd Squad, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry  
PFC, E3, US53452975, MOS 11B10  
Home of Record: Atlanta, GA  
Date of Birth: January 30, 1942, Age at time of loss: 26, Married  
4th Infantry Division, Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam  
Start of Tour: December 17, 1967, Date of Casualty: March 9, 1968, Days in Country: 83  
Casualty Type A1, MFW, Panel 43E - Row 068



**PEREZ, JOSEPH ESPINO**

"D" Company, 1st Platoon, 2nd Squad, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry  
PFC, E3, US56830388, MOS 11B10  
Home of Record: San Francisco, CA  
Date of Birth: December 25, 1946, Age at time of loss: 21, Married  
4th Infantry Division, Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam  
Start of Tour: December 9, 1967, Date of Casualty: March 9, 1968, Days in Country: 91  
Casualty Type A1, ARM, Panel 43E - Row 068



**STERNIN, EDWARD MARVIN**

"D" Company, 2nd Platoon, 2nd Squad, 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 50th Infantry  
Specialist 4th Class, E4, US52687895, MOS 11D20  
Home of Record: Hillside, NJ  
Date of Birth: September 4, 1947, Age at time of loss: 20, Single  
4th Infantry Division, Binh Dinh Province, Republic of Vietnam  
Start of Tour: September 1, 1967, Date of Casualty: March 9, 1968, Days in Country: 190  
Casualty Type A1, MFW, Panel 44E - Row 003

## **KILLED IN ACTION**

1. Willie B Bradford: (APC 419)
  2. Edward M Sternin: (APC 403)
  3. Joseph E Perez (APC 412)
  4. Melvin R Leavell (APC 412)
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## **WOUNDED IN ACTION**

1. SP4 Bennett
2. PFC Berkley
3. SP4 Bickel
4. SSG Blackburn
5. 1LT Blochberger
6. CPT Braun
7. PFC Burden
8. SGT Cash
9. SP4 Cook
10. SGT Cotter
11. SP4 Craney
12. SP4 Croker (HHC, Flame APC)
13. SP4 Derowitsch
14. CPL Detwiler
15. SP4 Fernandes
16. SP4 Frisbie
17. SGT Gold
18. SP4 Hawkins
19. SGT Johnston
20. SP4 Knapp
21. PFC Miller
22. SP4 Overcashier
23. PFC Pearson
24. SSG Switzer
25. 2LT Tilton
26. PFC Tyler
27. SP4 Walulek
28. PSGT Ward
  
29. 1LT Bensema (7/13th Arty FO)
  
30. WO Ogle (Medevac Commander, 498th Med)
31. WO Mancina (Medevac, 498th Med)
32. SP4 Blackwell (Medevac Medic, 498th Med)
33. SP4 Gregory G. Savage (Medevac Crewchief, 498th Med)

## PERSONAL ACCOUNTS – BATTLE AT LZ LITTS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

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LARRY ASHLOCK  
FEBRUARY, 2018

*Below I have detailed my memories of the Battle at LZ Litts, March 9, 1968. Some details of that night I remember very well and some are faintly remembered. Some memories may have been manufactured in my mind during the 50 years since that night. However, I have been as accurate as memory allows.*

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I was one of the original “boat-people” and traveled on the US General John Pope Troop Carrier from Oakland, California to Qui Nhon, Vietnam in August, 1967. After our arrival in Vietnam, I was one of the first soldiers to be wounded and transferred to Japan for treatment.

I returned to my unit, Mortar Platoon, D Company, 1st Battalion/50th Infantry during late January, 1968. During the Battle of LZ Litts, I was assigned to the 4.2” mortar squad led by Sgt. Robert Gold.

I did not know LZ Litts by that name while in Vietnam. We called it either “Phu Cat LZ” or the “LZ near the Green Beret camp”. During my short time back with the company, we occasionally bivouacked at LZ Litts. Local children and some adults would usually come to visit before we settled down for the evening. I became friendly with a 10 year old boy who called himself “Jerry”. He would try to sell us cokes and snacks. On the afternoon of March 8, 1968, I remember several Vietnamese people from the local village visited our campsite and “Jerry” was among them. After our usual clowning around, I remember “Jerry” told us, “VC come tonight”. He repeated himself several times. I disregarded his comments because it was not unusual for Vietnamese children and G.I.’s to joke about “VC”. Obviously, I should have paid more attention to “Jerry”.

On the evening of March 8, 1968, we established our perimeter in the normal fashion with trip flares, Claymore mines and all night guard duty. I set out the trip flares with another member of my squad who’s name may have been Sanderson. I took pride in setting up trip flares and always tried to figure out the best placement.

The mortar platoon Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) that was 1 or 2 positions to the left (facing outward) of our position was manned by Jim Derowitsch, Harley Hawkins, Stan Walulek, Ron Overcasher and maybe one other person. Their position was a primary target for the attackers who came across a flat field from a dry creek bed about 100 yards from our perimeter.

The exact order and manner in which the battle unfolded seems to be somewhat different for all who were there. This is my version. I was sleeping on the base-plate of our mounted mortar inside the APC when I heard the first loud explosion at about 3 a.m. At about the same time, I heard trip flares ignite and heard Sgt. Gold yell “I got him”. Sgt. Gold, who was on guard duty, shot an enemy soldier as he knelt to fire a B-40 rocket at our APC. There were loud noises, explosions, gunfire and confusion all around. I yelled at our driver to put the rear ramp up as we were receiving fire at the rear of the APC. At the time, I believed we were about to be overrun. After the ramp was raised, we opened the middle top hatch covering the mortar and fired an illumination round. This was a great help because we could now see and shoot the enemy running around in front of us. We continued to fire illumination rounds as often as we could.



There was mass confusion all around us. A rocket hit the APC to our left. It was in flames and I assumed Derowitsch and his crew were all dead. I didn't realize until later that they had survived by sleeping outside the APC. They received a new shipment of grenades that day and threw the entire case at the enemy. The major thrust of the attack was directly in front of them.

The initial loud explosion from the attack was due to a mortar or B-40 rocket that hit the Command Track in the center of our circular formation. The Command Track was no more than 100 feet from our APC and I falsely assumed all were dead there also. Because of the enemy gunner's accuracy, I believe the Command Track was hit with a B-40 rocket instead of a mortar.

Lieutenant Blockenberger and his APC squad were located on the opposite side of our defensive formation. It was agonizing to hear him frantically radio for medical assistance for a seriously wounded soldier. Despite the Lieutenant's pleas, no one could get to his position. I saw the requested medevac helicopter shot down with a B-40 rocket inside our perimeter. The rocket hit exactly where the rotor mast attached to the helicopter body. I could not believe the shot was so accurate.

I learned later that Lt Blockenberger's wounded soldier was SP4 Willie Bradford from Arkansas. SP4 Bradford had been in Vietnam for 25 days. I was friends with Willie Bradford and fascinated that he spoke the Vietnamese language. Lt Blockenberger earned much respect from the surviving men by his valiant efforts to save Bradford who sadly, was one of the KIA's at LZ Litts.

Concurrent to these activities, we received air support from a Cobra helicopter. I remember seeing the Cobra fire on the enemy soldiers between our position and the creek bed. By this time, I had manned the 50 cal machine gun and was also firing in that direction. A squad member and I eventually had to replace the overheated machine gun barrel. At daylight, I found an unexploded Chicom grenade laying next to the 50 cal machine gun I had been firing.

The enemy had withdrawn by daylight. I remember feeling teenage bravado with their retreat. Many of us raised our fists and yelled at the enemy to return so we could kick their asses. We found beer and whisky to drink and cigarettes to smoke.

After sunrise and because my APC was operational, I was assigned to a detail retrieving the enemy dead. The detail team and I tied ropes around the corpses and dragged them to guard against possible booby-trapped bodies. We then threw the bodies on the APC ramp and moved them onto one big pile of mangled bodies. The stench and sight of mutilated bodies was sickening. In our area we collected 15-20 enemy bodies. I understood there were more bodies at different locations.

We found the bodies of an enemy soldier and medic killed while attempting to sew up the soldier's gaping thigh wound. They were probably killed by the Cobra since they were found in the creek bed and protected from most ground fire. Even at that time, I marveled at the bravery of the medic's efforts to help a comrade under such dire circumstances.

Later, people from the village carried off a few bodies. I assumed they were friends or relatives of the dead enemy soldiers. I had renewed distrust of the locals after that.

By mid-morning I finished my body retrieval detail and was covered with enemy blood and guts. The battalion brought out a breakfast of scrambled eggs and bacon from LZ Uplift. Even today when I have scrambled eggs for breakfast, I think of March 9, 1968.

Ichiban!



Larry Ashlock with beautiful Vietnamese children - Vietnam 1968



Larry Ashlock mans APC mounted 50 cal machine gun - Vietnam - 1968



Larry Ashlock with beautiful wife and grandchildren - California 2018

## **MICHAEL (MIKE) CLARK BENNETT**

US 53 810 886

D Company, 1/50<sup>th</sup> Mechanized

March 9, 1968

After AIT at Fort Polk, Louisiana, I flew to Fort Dix, New Jersey and left for Vietnam in early June, 1967, by way of San Diego, California; Honolulu, Hawaii; and into Bien Hoa, South Vietnam – 20 miles North of Saigon. I was assigned to the First Air Cavalry, 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Airmobile), 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, Company D, Third Platoon, First Squad.

In my eighth month in country, I was transferred from the 5/7 to 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad, Company D of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 50<sup>th</sup> Mechanized.

We would travel by day and set up a perimeter at night. Most of our patrols would be on the sandy beaches of the east coast line. You couldn't go anywhere without feeling the gritty sand on your body. At night the wind would blow and by the next morning you would be covered in sand. Leaving the coastline we traveled to the interior.

It was about 3:30 in the morning on March 9, 1968 in Binh Dinh Province. I had just been awakened for guard duty and handed the only watch that our squad must have owned. I stretched, put my helmet and rifle on top of my APC, and prepared to climb atop to pull my guard time. No sooner had I lowered my arms than a hail of automatic gunfire erupted on my side of the perimeter. In a split second it sounded like a hundred rounds ricocheted off the carrier. How they all missed hitting me, I don't know. In another second I fell flat on the ground and low crawled to the rear and climbed inside. Joseph Perez, our driver, must have slept in his seat for I could hear the engine being started. As soon as I clamored to the right rear of the carrier a rocket round penetrated the front wall killing Joe instantly (as I learned later) and shrapnel flew everywhere inside. It all happened so fast. After the explosion, I had turned my head looking towards Joe and seeing that he was probably killed. Another squad member was inside but I didn't know his fate.

I was momentarily deafened and blinded by the explosion. I felt a numbing pain in the right side of my head. Reaching up I grabbed a hand full of blood. The track began to burn and I knew I had to crawl back out. As soon as I did, I realized my greater injury was from a piece of the hot metal that had torn through my left knee.

Crawling to a half filled foxhole with nothing but my hindquarters below the surface of the ground, I lay in a pool of blood. I called for a medic. Within a few seconds our platoon medic rushed to my side and quickly examined me, bandaged my knee, popped a vial of morphine into my leg and scurried off to another. I was incapacitated.

I lay there watching the tracer rounds going out and coming in over my head. What lasted about three hours of exchanging fire with the enemy seemed like an eternity. I listened as a Medivac Helicopter hovered overhead only to be shot down by enemy fire. Fifty and sixty caliber machine guns blasted away towards a dry creek bed (north/northwest?) from where the enemy fire was coming from.

The morphine was wearing off and looking up I realized someone had carried me to the rear of another APC. The gunfire had ceased and the all clear had been given. Gary Erxleben and I had been transferred at the same time to the 1/50th. He was kneeling beside me wishing me well. He said that Gerald Bickel had been wounded, also. Gary's was the last face I saw in the field.

Later, my sergeant wrote me a letter to inform me that there were four KIA's—Willie Bradford, Melvin Leavell, Joseph Perez, and Edward Sternin—and 17(?) wounded from our company and many KIA's of the enemy. None of my personal belongings were salvaged. The carrier was totally destroyed. It was a mess of burned rubble when it was all over.

Since the med-evac helicopter had been shot down, we had to be transported out of the area on the tracks to a landing area where they loaded us on helicopters and flew to a field hospital. It seemed like forever getting there. I lay on the stretcher in the chopper and felt the cool breeze blowing and realized I was on the first segment of my long journey back home. I remember only bits and pieces of what was going on until I awoke after surgery in a field hospital.

The next day a Doctor came in and looked at my chart. He said it's time you exercised that leg. He picked up my foot and raised my leg about two feet in the air and let it go. I screamed at him with the pain he had caused. There was no way I could have held my leg up because all three muscles leading to my knee had been severed. He just weaseled out of the area without apologizing or anything. I never saw him again. Later in the day an officer came in and individually presented the Purple Heart to each wounded soldier.

After I lay in bed for several hours, I noticed the guy who had awaken me for my guard duty. Both of his hands were bandaged and I asked one of the corpsmen to return his watch. We acknowledged each other with a wave.

I spent about three days there and began my long three-week journey back home. I flew on a C141 cargo plane along with many other wounded to Manila in the Philippines for a two-day layover. I'll never forget the pain I endured while there. Flying to Camp Zama, Japan, I spent two weeks and had another surgery. From there I flew back to the U. S. by way of Anchorage, Alaska. (The nurses came on board to check us out and brought each of us a cup of Coffee.)

Finally, I arrived at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri Army Hospital that would be my home for the next 10 months. I was out of harm's way. There I had three more surgeries and a long period of physical therapy.

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## **CPT BRUCE BRAUN**

Letter to Lou Frisbie, 2013

LZ Litts was only on the West side of Highway QL1 and was only a landing pad...not an improved runway. It may have been a runway after we left\*. The LZ should be marked West of Highway QL1 and was on the contour line at elevation 40 on the map.

I recall we were in an oval formation West of the landing pad and all of the tracks were facing out. The tracks on the North side were mostly facing North and the Tracks on the South side were facing more South and East. The Command track was facing Southeast.

The landing pad was where the first Dust-Off was hit.

This is all I remember.

Historian Note: Semantics may be at work in the description of the runway at LZ Litts by Captain Braun. Some clearly remember the landing strip while others are uncertain and/or do not remember a landing strip. In October of 1967, I was with Charlie Company when we pulled security at LZ Litts while a 1st Cavalry Division "leg" unit awaited pickup. Although not paved, there was a definite and distinct straight flat landing strip of maybe 300 yards just West and south of the Vietnamese Settlement Village. It might put one in mind of a country field where crop dusters might land. I witnessed a Lockheed C-130 Hercules land there...load up the Cavalry troops and take off. It was quite spectacular! The C-130 is a four-engine turboprop military transport aircraft Capable of using unprepared runways for short takeoffs and landings. I believe some may not have identified this as a "runway" simply because it was not paved. Others may use nomenclature synonymous with "runway" and I believe CPT Braun may be identifying same as a "Landing Pad", meaning unimproved runway.

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## MY MEMORY OF ATTACK AT LITTS

BY JERRY COUCH

I was in 1st platoon 1st squad track #419. The track to my right facing southwest was Stoney's track which was 1st platoon 2nd squad track #412. This is the track that burned up that morning. I think Jameson was on his track, but I don't think he was there that night. I'm not sure. I have never had any one to talk about this to, now it is amazing how much I have forgotten, or is all clouded. It's nice to have some one to talk to that was there. I wish I had looked for some of our group sooner.

Earlier I had been on bridge security with Willie Bradford north of English right after he came "in country". He said he knew he would get killed. He just lasted 25 days. He died there at Litts. I guess he knew...strange. I always wondered who would be next but I never allowed myself to think it would be me.

Yes Litts was a dirty bitch, it's a wonder we made it out alive. I don't know what kept the gooks from coming in, I guess we had so many bullets flying, that they were more scared then we were. I guess that was the most scared I'd ever been in my life. I sure thought we were going to be over run that night. It was already crazy in our perimeter. I can't imagine how crazy it would have been with a bunch of them fellers in there with us. I was sure glad we didn't have to find out. I've never talked to anyone about it, but I've always thought that our south side and south west corner was hit the hardest. That night never seems to be talked about much.

My track was #419, the burning track was #412 the only names I can remember from that track are Jose Perez and Stoney the squad leader, but he was on R&R at the time. Joseph Perez was a good friend of mine and we were supposed to go on R&R together, in April. We were going to his hometown in Okinawa. That burning pile at the back of 412 was my friend and we couldn't get to him because of all the rocket and automatic fire. We were facing south, right next to the burning track on the left. We saw Perez get blown out the back. He was already on fire and we couldn't do anything about it, because of all the automatic fire right in front of us. By the time it calmed down it was too late to help him, I'll never forget that site. I just wish I could remember names, the more I go over them, the more I remember. I don't know why I waited so long to get in touch, but I'm glad that I finally did.

I don't remember a flame track at Litts, the one that burned was Perez's track. He was right next to us. The other track in 1st platoon was 410 The Fly, the old one was sunk out south of Litts, crossing a stream. It was replaced with a new one; Pancho (Daniel Valenzuela) was the driver. Rudy Uvalle was also on it.

Remember it's only my recollection, not facts written in stone. I feel as Rigo does, that it was a track to track battle, mostly contained to the south and west sides of the perimeter. I'm not saying that everybody didn't suffer from the battle, I just think it came from the southwest and west and that is where most of the gooks were, and most of the small arms fire.

I don't know who got shot crawling out of track 412, But that little ball of fire at the back of the track was Joe Perez, my best friend. He was sleeping in the track, when a B40 blew up inside and blew him out on fire, and I guess dead, because he never moved. It has been 37 years since that night, and my memory is very foggy, but some things you just can't forget no matter how hard you try. Hopefully talking to you guys will put things back into place in my mind. No matter how bad it was, I wouldn't want to forget any of it.

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**JIM CROKER**  
HHC, Flame Platoon

Sgt. David Earich came to me and said he needed some time in the field. Since I had a lot of combat experience by that time and Earich and I were friends, he wanted to pair with me on the Flame Track. Both of us were Track Commanders but since Earich out-ranked me I decided to go as driver. I informed him Delta Company was going on patrol and we could go out with them if we cleared it with SSgt. Lee (our boss). So, off we went.

After some time on patrol with Delta Co., we arrived at LZ Litts to camp for the night. I set up our Track behind a small hedge row behind one of the line tracks on the south side of the perimeter. We ( Flame Platoon) believed it to be suicide to put our track on the line and we wanted to be away from others in case we get hit for obvious reasons. Also we would be able to more easily move to the side needed should the Company get attacked.

Late that night I was awakened by a large explosion. As it turned out the Track we parked behind got hit with a RPG. Immediately Earich and I prepared for combat with our M16s. I noticed the combat was fierce on the west side of the perimeter and as the fighting went on other Tracks were moving over to the west side of the perimeter to help with the fight, including the line Track on our left. That Track checked with me before they left as I said we could handle it.

I had plenty of M 16 ammo and noticed VC coming out of the woods directly to the south of me. Figuring the VC were probing us, I fired and hit (several times) a VC moving towards me from those woods. As there seemed to be more VC in the woods I kept firing always looking for fresh targets. Earich could not help me as his gun had jammed and could not fix it.

We were saving the flame thrower in case we were called upon. Explosions were all around us from RPG and mortar fire and that Track that got hit with the RPG kept blowing up all night.

Then, I felt something very hot hit me in the face. From what, I was never sure. A piece of jagged metal had hit me in the face and stuck there. There was no blood. Well, not until I pulled it out later. I figured that was it for me and told Erick I was hit. Moments later, I realized I was okay and shot another VC who had entered our perimeter.

Later as I saw no more movement from the woods in front of me. Someone in a track to the east of my spot was firing a M60. I figured ( I hoped anyway) the VC had given up probing us.

During the battle a Dust-Off was hovering to the east of me and I thought to myself if he tries to land he will never make it out of here. This place was just too hot. But the Dust Off WAS trying to land and I saw bullets hitting it especially around the engine. Then the Dust Off turned upside down and hit the ground hard sending torn off parts flying past my head.

I continued to fight until daylight when the battle was finally over. I felt bad for the guy who was killed in the Track in front of us as no one knew who he was. Just a new guy. That's all they knew.

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## MEMORY OF THE BATTLE OF LZ LITTS

By Louis Frisbie

On March 8, 1968, we were ordered to LZ Litts in the afternoon. After we got the tracks (Armored Personnel Carriers or "APCs") set in place, I remember quite a few people were in our perimeter from the refugee village next to Highway I. Some of the men got haircuts from them. (I suspect some of these were spies). I was one of the radio operators for the company commander, Captain Bruce Braun. I had the battalion radio and Fred Bantle had the company radio. We usually set up close to the center of our encampment.

On the command track #406, were SGT Montabano, SP Fred Bantle, SP Louis Frisbie, Captain Bruce Braun, and three others whose names I have forgotten but they were the artillery forward observer, his radio operator and the driver for the track. At night, Fred Bantle and me would take a piece of metal about 6ft long and stick it above the tracks on the APC at the back. Two ponchos snapped together making a tent. SGT Montabano, the driver, Fred and I had radio watch every night.

As I remember my turn was sometime early morning. For some reason I woke up early. (I think it was God protecting me). I guess it was around 2 AM and I thought it was time for me to go on radio watch. I put my shoes on and went to the front of the APC where we sat in the driver's seat to monitor the radios. I don't remember if SGT Montabano or the driver was on duty. I asked if it was time for me to start, he said I had another hour to go, so I went back and crawled in the tent. I was taking my shoes off when I heard what sounded like a mortar land close by. I woke Bantle and told him we had better get under cover. We crawled under the APC between the tracks.

We were there just a few minutes when there was a big blast. The next thing I knew Bantle was hitting me on the arm asking if I was ok. I was on the side where the B-40 rocket hit the APC above our tent. The next morning the tent was in pieces. I had a writing tablet an inch thick, it had a shrapnel hole all the way through. I finally realized the round had hit the track. I opened the small back door. Smoke was boiling around.



SGT Louis Frisbie receives his Purple Heart from LTC Bertholf while CSM Yamashita looks on. Spring of 1968

The Captain slept on the side that got hit, right under the track radios and they were knocked out. He had shrapnel wounds all on his left side. The artillery forward observer slept on the other side, he was all right. I pushed the Captain out and Bantle and I helped him under the APC. Then I could not believe I heard him cuss saying something about a snake where he was. This was true because the next morning when the APC was moved, there lay the snake he had squeezed to death with his hands.

The forward observer was firing his .357 after we got the Captain under the APC. I remembered we had a back pack radio. I went back on top and got it going and talked to battalion headquarters telling them we were under attack. I remembered the artillery and got on his radio, I was trying to adjust fire before one of the lieutenants came on the line. I remember one of the Flame tracks was on fire. One of the MedEvac helicopters got shot down. I don't remember if the wounded were Med-Evac'd out or not They brought out Lieutenant Schroeder the next morning. They promoted him to Captain and he became the commander. I think we counted about 110 enemy dead.

We were moved back to Uplift for a few days. I believe God had his hand on me that night at LZ Litts and kept me out of harms way by waking me up early. I did have a scratch on my wrist that night and my left ear was ringing which turned out I had a concussion. When we moved back to LZ Uplift I went on sick call because my wrist became infected. The medic pulled a piece of metal (shrapnel) out of my wrist and said I had an ear concussion. My ear had a ringing in it for along time after that.

This is my memory of the way things went that night. I realize everyone had a different situation.

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*But fame is theirs - and future days  
On pillar'd brass shall tell their praise;  
Shall tell - when cold neglect is dead -  
"These for their country fought and bled. "  
by Philip Freneau*

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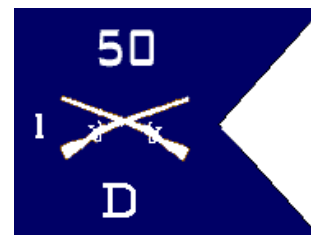


**LZ LITTS - THE LONGEST 3 1/2 HOURS OF MY LIFE**

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**SGT Bob Gold**

**Squad Leader, 4-Duce Mortar Platoon, "D"  
Company, APC# 425**



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On March 8, 1968 we pulled into LZ Litts at around 4:30 PM. As we had done several times in the past, we formed an elongated circular perimeter, parking in the same spots as usual.

Our Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) were situated as follows: My APC was at 12 o'clock pointing north towards LZ Uplift. To my right was an old airstrip, a small refugee camp and Highway 1. The APC to the right of us (1 o'clock) was the mechanic's APC. At the 2 o'clock position started the Infantry line squad APCs. At 11 o'clock was Noel Allen's squad (Recon) APC. To Allen's right were the other 3 mortar APCs. The mortar and Recon APCs were all side by side. The Company Commander's APC (Captain Braun) was behind ours... about 40 to 50 feet away facing towards the East.



After we got into position, we set up our makeshift tents as we had done in the past. Once finished, we took a break and ate C-Rations (there was no hot meal that night). As was always the case, some kids from the refugee camp came to visit us. We all enjoyed talking to them and giving them some goodies we had plus C-Rations. Some of them could speak English pretty well. After a while, a couple of them started saying "Charlie come tonight, 330, he kill all GIs." There were four or five of them. This started to get my attention. It's amazing how these kids knew this.

After the kids left I talked to my guys about it. They said it was nothing. I didn't agree with them and felt very uneasy. I got the guys together again and told them what I wanted them to do. This did not go well with them. After a few choice words we did what I wanted. We got 10 rounds of illumination, set the time and charge, put them on top of the track, and covered them with a poncho, in case of rain. I'm sure glad we did this... because of what was yet to come. When we got the rounds set, one of the guys made a comment (won't repeat)...it seems they felt this was all bullshit! We then set up some trip-flares and Claymore Miners. Dark by then, the five of us settled in for a quiet night...or so we thought.

### **Now the battle...**

My turn for watch (Guard duty) was 3 AM. I got up and walked to the rear of the APC and saw Noel there. We talked Softly for a while. I told him I was going to get some smokes. I came back to Noel and looked at my watch, I don't know why. It was 3:22 AM. I reached into my pocket and got out my trusty Zippo cigarette lighter. The second I lit it, two Rockets came right over us and hit nothing. The battle was on. When I lit my Zippo, it was a target for Charlie. To this day when I talk to Noel, he says I "lit up his life!"

I started screaming "we're getting hit"... several times, and woke the guys from the squad. As soon as we opened the APCs top doors, we put a round in...made a minor adjustment...and dropped another. I got on the 50 caliber machine gun and started shooting. Gary, Mike, Bob L, and LT Charles Tilton kept the illumination rounds going up at intervals and getting up more rounds. When I looked to my left at 10 and 11 o'clock there was a large dry rice paddy with a large ditch at the north side of it. The VC were everywhere, coming out of the ditch and in the paddy coming for us. Some were as close as 40 to 50 feet...maybe even closer to us. Noel and I were knocking them out.

The other mortar tracks were taking hits from RPG's and a lot of small arms fire. These guys were really taking a beating. We were getting pounded on the Northwest, West, Southwest and South sides of the perimeter. On the west side of the perimeter from about 10 o'clock to about 7 o'clock was a path and a thick row of brush and bamboo...perfect cover for the enemy to make an attack. Charlie had us really zeroed in.

As the battle raged on, I heard a large "Boom" behind me. Captain Braun's APC took an RPG hit on the center of the right side. The captain and others were hurt badly. As the battle continued... I got on the radio (Apparently, no one else had called Headquarters...since the Command APC had been hit) and was talking to an RTO at LZ Uplift. I don't know who this person was, but I told him we were under heavy attack and needed support from artillery for illumination, gunships and Med-Evac. His comment was that there was a lot going on elsewhere and we were on our own!

I looked at my watch. It was around 5:30 AM. I heard a helicopter circling around the area. Then it started to land on the East side, at about the 3 o'clock position outside of the perimeter. As it was close to landing it took a hit and crashed. It was a Med-Evac Chopper. The crew was hurt pretty bad. I heard later they were rescued by the guys on that side and all survived. It was starting to get light now and the battle was dying down. The enemy was leaving. I could hear APCs approaching. It was "A" Company coming to help us out... Thank God!

By daylight, the battle was over. As I looked over the area I couldn't believe we were alive. We had several KIAs and a lot of us were wounded. The enemy thought they would kill us all, but in all reality we kick their asses! The body count on their side was very high.

There are a lot of things that I did that morning, but the story is about the brave men of "D" Company, not me. I feel very proud and honored to have served with such fine and heroic men.

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## LZ LITTS ACCOUNT

Extracted from the Book "The way it was", by Harley "Mick" Hawkins

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We pulled in to an old French airfield called LZ Litts. We had stayed there many times before so we just rolled in and pulled into the positions our APCs are always set in, not a good move. For Mickey One, it was straight across the old airfield on the West side of our perimeter.

Larry Ashlock, one of the first men wounded in Nam from our battalion, the 1st Battalion (Mechanized), 0th Infantry, was back with us from Japan. It was great to have him back, but I'm sure it was hard on him for awhile, as we were pretty much hard core at this time and had seen a lot of action. I'm sure it took a little getting used to. I have a letter I wrote home saying that on Larry's first day back, we let him drive our APC named "Mickey One" and none of us could walk the next day.

Sgt. Ward was to our North and then Bob Gold. To our south I'm not real sure who was there, might have been another heavy weapon's APC or could have been Rigo's APC. To our front was a dry rice field and then a ditch that ran cross ways in front of us. A little to our right was an old concrete block or marker of some kind. I always thought it was something the French had left behind.

If 12 o'clock was North, we would have been at 9 o'clock, but we were not in a circle, more egg shaped. There was a village next to Highway 1 and the village people always came down to sell us coke and beer. Some of the village people told Bob Gold, "Boo coo, VC come tonight."

The village sat right on Highway 1 and it was a ways on down to the old Litts airfield. There were fence rows and old dry rice paddy fields there. Jim Derowitsch and I purchased two cans of beer apiece from the village people and put them in our pockets. We ate c-rations and then went out to set trip fares and claymores. Jim asked me if I was going to set a hand grenade under my claymore mine? Sometimes Charlie would crawl up on you and find the claymore mine and turn it around, so when you blew the claymore, it would be aimed at you. We would counter this by digging a small depression under the claymore and placing a hand grenade with the pin pulled under the claymore. When Charlie picked up the claymore to turn it around, boom it got him. The big drawback to this was, it was very risky picking it up in the morning and I would sometimes just blow it, rather than try and pick it up. Sgt. Ward wasn't big on wasting the Army's money, blowing claymores and, of course, his favorite - the hand grenade. I told Jim, "No, I wasn't going to put any under mine.

Jim and I always seemed to be the ones setting trip fares. I guess we just liked it. I had one I was going to try this night. Charlie was very good at finding trip wires and cutting them. He would roll up his pant legs and could feel the wire with his bare legs. I had an idea that I had been using, and I told Jim that I was going to set some flares in a can. I would tie a can upside down to a stick and run the wire on the bottom of the trip flare through a hole in the bottom of the can, over the stick, and run that across our line, then tie off to another stick. When Charlie cut the wire, the flare would fall out of the can and go off. I set these a ways in front of our other trip flares. I had set it several times, but never had it used.

We came back and sat in front of the APC, drank our beers, and talked about the rodeos. I used to ride bulls, my brother and myself, and Jim was always interested in that. We sat there and I showed him how to tie a bull rope and mark a horse out of the chutes.

We went to bed. As always, I set my tent beside my APC (Armored Personnel Carrier). I think all the guys next to us, that had slept in their APCs, died that night.

It seemed like I had just gotten to sleep when all hell broke loose. I always sleep with my boots on in the field. The only time I ever took them off was when we were at LZ Uplift or some other safe LZ. When the enemy is attacking at night, there is not much time for putting on boots, something we tried to tell the new guys right off. We need the use of our fire power fast; no time for putting on boots.

We had the ramp up on our APC and I jumped in the small door in the back. A rocket had hit the front of the APC and it was full of smoke. I wanted to get on the 60 and I heard Derowitsch yell, "Toss the 60 on the ground before they hit us again." I crawled up on the APC to try and get to the 60 when another rocket hit the APC. I jumped or fell to the ground hitting very hard. I went back around to the rear and Jim was there on the other side. He hadn't gotten to the 60 either. We got back in the APC and got hand grenades, a M79, rifle shells and tossed them out the back. Why the APC hadn't burned up, I don't know. There were one or two on fire to our left.

There had been a new kid with us from Tenn., I think. He hadn't been with us very long. I know he was wounded right off. I got behind the right side of the APC and Jim was behind the left side. I had the M79 grenade launcher when the attack first started. The APC to our right, was Sgt. Ward, Johnny Johnston, and Danny Scott. The APC to their right was Bob Gold, Mike Craney, Mills and a new guy they had.

Bob said, because he had earlier heard some of the village people say, "Boo coo, VC come tonight." he got a bunch of illumination rounds ready, setting the fuses and charges. This move very well may have saved a lot of lives.

When the first round hit the new guy, Bob was on guard duty and he had locked the top latch on top of "Goldie Locks", his 4.2 mortar APC, and you had to open the latch to fire the mortar. Theirs was the only APC with a 4.2 mortar in it. So Bob sent someone out to crawl up and unlatch the hatch.

The command APC had Cpt. Braun and his RTO (radio telephone operator) Louis Frisbie. Their APC was hit and knocked out, so our main line of radio communication was out. They crawled under their APC to keep from getting killed, and I think it was here that Cpt. Braun laid on a snake under the APC.

To their left, Johnny Johnston was the first to put up illumination rounds from the 81 mortar they had on their APC. Johnny was a lifesaver that night. Danny Scott was on a 60 and Sgt. Ward was on the ground doing his thing, tossing grenades over the top of the APC.

A rocket hit the top of the APC burning Johnny's arms and starting a fire on top. Johnny got up on top and kicked the fire out. Danny was yelling at him to get down, as bullets were everywhere. Danny noticed several NVA near the concrete block in front of us and opened up on them with the 60. I could see the NVA in the ditch and would fire the M79 at them and Jim was shooting the M16 on the left side. As an illumination round went up Bob Gold saw an NVA soldier stop dead in his tracks. We were taught when a candle (illumination round) went off and you were in the open, to not move, no matter what position you

were in, to freeze until the light went out. The NVA must have been taught the same thing, as he froze and Bill shot him.

Another candle went off and we could see NVA soldiers in the ditch. I yelled at Derowitsch that we were going to have to get all the shells we could out of the APC as it was starting to burn now. We went inside and Jim was handing me boxes of shells and a M16 in there. He also handed me some handheld flares. I remembered the claymore detonator, jumped inside and tossed it to the ground as it was hanging from the side of the APC. The smell was really bad inside the APC as the burning aluminum made an awful smell.

Another rocket hit Mickey One and I jumped off. I hit the ground by the claymore detonator and immediately set off the claymore. I ran back behind the burning APC. I was afraid it would blow as there was still a lot of ammunition inside.

Another candle went up. I had the M16. I saw some NVA soldiers moving along the ditch and fired the whole clip at them. I then would try and reload clips of M16 shells. The shells were in cardboard boxes and it was very slow going, pulling one shell out at a time, and putting in the clip. I got to just dumping the shells out of the box on the ground and picking up a handful and loading; that way was a lot faster.

A candle would go up, I would see NVA soldiers and shoot. When the candle went out, I would load clips in a hurry. A candle went up and the NVA were right there by the front of the APC coming hard. I knew they were going to overrun us. I went to full auto and when the candle went out, went to tossing grenades as fast as I could pull the pins out.

The guys to our left were having a bad fight as two APCs were on fire over there. I think Ashlock and Wallace were over there somewhere. A Med-Evac chopper was coming in to get the wounded. It was behind us and about on the ground when it was hit by a rocket and crashed.

Rigo Ordaz and his guys got the crew out. We didn't have time to pay the chopper much mind, as we were pretty busy at the time. I was tossing more grenades, then shooting the M16. The NVA were right on us and when you would shoot the M16 the NVA would see the muzzle flash and you would get all kinds of return fire. When you tossed a grenade, you didn't get any return fire, as they couldn't see a muzzle flash and besides that, we didn't have very many shells to go around.

Three rockets had hit Mickey One. One entered the driver's side (that would be the left front) and one hit the engine compartment and exploded inside. The third came into the main compartment of the APC where all the ammunition was. I think the ones that hit the engine compartment and driver's side was when Jim and I were in the APC and why we were not killed. The one that exploded inside, I do not know how it kept from blowing up the whole APC, but it didn't. It just burned real slow and hot.

In between candles it was really dark, and I was trying to load clips and then would get scared that the NVA were right there so I would toss a grenade. It was not easy to pull the pin out of a grenade. They had a cotter pin that was bent and you had to straighten that pin and then twist the pin and pull to get it out. My fingers were very sore from bending all those cotter pins!

A candle went off again and I could see two NVA to the left and out front of Ward's APC. I fired at them and they moved around to the other side. About the time the candle burnt out, I saw a flash and heard a boom about where they should have been. My guess was that Ward got them with a grenade.

We still had no air support or artillery. I later heard that After Action Reports indicated LZ Uplift, Our base

camp...not too far to the North, had intercepted a radio message from the NVA saying they were going to hit Uplift. They never did and I don't think it was ever a plan. They wanted to get D company and this was a way to keep Uplift and their support out of the way and it worked.

The first reports from the day log indicated Uplift said they had not received a ground attack ...but we were fighting for our lives! With Captain Braun's radio out, we did not have a link to Uplift and everyone else was busy at the time. It took a while before a radio from another APC was able to make contact.

Uplift did not have choppers. They were relying on LZ English, about 15 miles to our North, to get us support and after they lost the first chopper in, they were not too anxious to help us. It was us against the NVA. They had the numbers, as we were outmanned and outgunned. As always, that night D Company would not back down. We held our ground.

Our radios were knocked out right off, and it seemed like an hour into the battle before we got radio contact. The APC over where Ashlock and Wallace were was on fire. Someone had run in to get ammunition and came out the driver's hatch on fire, the NVA shot him as he came out.

On the south side they had two APCs on fire and burning. This seemed to excite the NVA as they were attacking in massed over there. This, I think, was 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoons. They did a great job stopping the NVA attack.

I yelled at Jim to see how much ammunition he had and he said he was getting low. Someone came over and said that they had a lot of wounded men to the south and asked if we had any range poles to make stretchers or any medical supplies. I jumped up and headed for Sgt. Ward's APC to the North. I would run when it was dark, and stop dead if a candle went off, then take off again when it burnt out.

There was a guy laying out between us and Ward's APC. I grabbed him by the collar and dragged him back and headed on to Ward's APC. Sgt. Ward was standing on the ground, tossing hand grenades over the top of the APC and Danny Scott was yelling at him that he was going to land one in the APC. Johnny Johnston was putting candles up on the mortar. I told them we were low on ammo and needed medical supplies. Sgt. Ward got me a shotgun and shells and then handed me more M16 shells. I just took off at a run, arms full.

I came to the guy I had dragged back and dropped everything to check on him, he was not hurt, just scared, so I picked everything up and headed back to Mickey One.

I came back behind the APC and told Jim I had M16 shells and a shotgun and shells. I asked him which one he wanted? He said the shotgun. Jim was loading it, a candle went off and there was an NVA soldier not 35 feet away. Jim shot him with the shotgun. It just kind of picked the enemy soldier up and laid him out. I didn't know a shotgun had that kind of knockdown power, but it will do a number at close range.

I saw NVA soldiers all along the ditch. I yelled at Jim that they were getting ready for another charge. I was pouring shells on the ground and filling clips as fast as I could. I tossed a grenade out front and then went back to filling clips. I was really scared now, estimating the NVA soldiers would be on me before a candle went off. I had a handheld illumination flare. I removed the cap, put it on the bottom of the flare and hit it against the ground. It didn't make much light, but I did see some NVA out front and I shot at them. Then a big candle went off and I could see them good as they charged. I was shooting as fast as I could; aim, shoot, aim shoot. I was not on full auto as I wanted to make sure of every shot and save ammo. There was a time I was sure they would overrun us, but it seemed like about the time you knew this was it, they

would pull back a bit, and I could load maybe a clip or two. I had a system now. I would pour the shells out of the box on the ground, pick them up, and load clips.

Finally a candle went off and I saw no NVA. I sat up, as I had been in the prone position for a long time. I shot out front... no return fire. I wondered if they had left. I tossed a grenade. It was getting a little lighter out now and I asked Jim if he thought they were done. Jim said he thought so.

At first light we just sat there. You could now see the damage we had done, a lot of dead NVA laying around. We were coming down from a very high adrenalin rush that combat always brings. As we walked out to get a body count and pick up weapons, I was amazed at what I was seeing. The NVA had been trying to drag off their dead and wounded. Sometimes you would see ropes tied around an NVA corpse's ankles as they had been dragging the wounded or dead off. I saw where their medics had been very busy treating their wounded, as many had been bandaged.

We were picking up weapons and bringing them back to the perimeter. I showed Jim my leg. I had some shrapnel in it and it was bleeding. Jim said I should go in and get it looked at. I said I would later, as we had some badly wounded that should take priority.

A chopper came in and a Major got off the chopper. He walked over to where Bob Gold was checking wounded and picking up weapons. Bob was like the rest of us that had been in combat. This was a time you had to be very careful, as the wounded NVA had a habit of booby trapping themselves so we would poke them with a long sharp stick or use a rope to turn them over, to make sure they were not booby trapped. This Major jumped all over Bob for this, for some reason. I think he must have been "new in country". Bob just said, "Fine, you check them," and walked away.

The Major saw Johnny Johnston and Danny Scott with no shirts on and jumped all over them for being out of uniform. Sgt. Ward all but ran up to the major, and was telling him in a very loud voice, that "THESE MEN WERE ATTACKED LAST NIGHT WHILE THEY SLEPT. NO ONE HAD TIME TO FOLLOW ANY DRESS CODE. IT WAS JUMP OUT OF YOUR TENT AND FIGHT!" Then he asked him, "Where were you last night? SIR!" Things got real quiet and the Major just turned around and walked back to the chopper. I don't think Sgt. Ward was wanting to hear any rear-echelon Major chewing on his troops, that a few hours ago were fighting for their lives. We all had great respect for Sgt. Ward and I hope he didn't get into trouble for his verbal attack on that Major! We all just kind of moved on about the business of picking up weapons and taking body counts.

I was out in front checking NVA bodies when Sgt. Ward came by and told me to go in to get my wound checked out. I didn't say a word, got on a chopper, and went to the aid tent. I stayed at Uplift for a few days and then returned to the field. They were working north of uplift towards LZ English. I talked to Johnny Johnston about the firefight and how close we came to getting overrun and he told me, "Mick, when you use charge zero, maximum elevation, they are too close".

There were 110 NVA, KIA and 5 POWs. There were 4 Americans KIA and 33 wounded.

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*"But, we shall be remembered, we few, we happy few, we band of brothers, for he today that shed his blood with me shall be my brother."... Wm Shakespeare*

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**RICH LINCOFF**  
Maintenance Platoon

I've been reading the accounts of the LZ Litts and can provide a little info. I was in the track next to Capt Braun's, we were all mechanics or specialties other than 11B (Infantryman)...although I don't remember having any tools. Sgt. Fred Quinn was the track leader Larry Knowlton was normally the driver but alternated driving the command track. During the battle at Litts Larry Knowlton was not there.

In our track, which for the life of me I can't remember the number, was myself (Rich Lincoff), Hernandez and Fred Quinn. We took an RPG that hit the side of our track but did not penetrate although wounded three people sleeping on that side of the track.

We were bringing the wounded inside our track cause we were not in a position to return fire. We also were bringing ammo for the 50s and M60s to the other tracks. We were the first track to head back to uplift and we were full of wounded.

It's been a long time since thinking about that battle or my two years I spent in Vietnam . If any other memories pop up I'll try to post them.

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**ROBERT MELENDEZ**  
Medic

I was on Guard duty and remember that the men doing Guard duty usually sat in the Armored Personnel Carrier's (Track) driver seat using the Starlight Scope to look out into the rice paddies...all eerily green through the scope. I woke up my replacement at the end of my shift and handed him the scope. He took the scope and sat in the driver's seat. It seemed like just minutes later that the attack started. A B-40 rocket hit that Track right near the driver's seat. I do not recall my replacement's fate...but had this happened just a few minutes earlier...it could have been me in that dangerous spot.



I remember Bradford, who was either Jamaican or from the Virgin Islands...being in the CP earlier in the day. I spent 2 hours with him & we had dinner together. For some reason he was with the CP personnel that night and he wanted me to stay there. He had pitched a tent behind his APC and his position took a direct hit. He had a bad wound to the throat and died quickly. It could have been me in that position had I stayed.

I remember being two Tracks to the right of the guys firing the illumination rounds. On that Track were Derowich, Bierman and Hawkins. They continued to fire illumination rounds, even after receiving at least two separate B-40 rocket hits on their Track. They were literally thrown out of their track more than

once...yet they continued their actions, likely preventing our being over-run. All three received valorous Bronze Stars at SGT Ward's recommendation. I also remember Melrose standing, unprotected, firing the 50 for what seemed like a very long time. He probably deserved a Bronze Star as well, but no award was recommended.

During the attack, the CP took numerous mortar rounds with CPT Braun receiving a head wound (His helmet saved his life). Later (After the battle) I remember CPT Braun being loaded on a helicopter and I did not see him again until Bob Gold's "Pig Roast" in Ohio in 2002.

The rumor was that the enemy had the entire LZ mapped out, complete with specific Track locations and identities by number...and knew the CP location. This would explain why the mortar rounds seemed to be focused on the Command Track.

I'm not saying this is 100% accurate, but it's how I remember things happening from my perspective on the battlefield. Of course, it will be 45 years this coming March 9th...and time can play tricks on our memories.

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## **LETTER TO HARLEY "MICK" HAWKINS FROM CHUCK OGLE**

Mick,

I would like to thank you for the great article in the March/April VHPA magazine, as I never did have the exact unit designation that I was even supporting that early morning. I am Chuck Ogle, call sign Dustoff61, and I am the aircraft commander that was flying the helicopter that you pictured. By the way the skylight wind screen that you have your left hand on is above the seat that I was sitting in. I was laagered out of LZ Uplift just a few miles north of your position supporting that region.

I was assigned to the 498th Air Ambulance Co. outside of Qui Nhon, in A valley. Matter of fact I have two black and white pictures of that aircraft (very much like your picture) hanging on my wall today that were given to me by my unit when I left Vietnam.

After we were shot down, I was up-side down and had to cut myself loose ...fell to the bottom and climbed out the back door. I ran to the perimeter where two men went back with me to get the rest of the crew. When we all got back inside the encircled APCs, someone helped me get my helmet off. My terrible headache was explained by the gash caused by an AK round that creased my scalp!

You asked about the crew on this aircraft. I was the aircraft commander, my pilot was Paul Mancini, my medic was Specialist Blackwell. I am sorry to say I can't remember my Crew Chief's name.

Paul received 32 breaks in the right side of his jaw in that crash, and was evacuated to Japan for about 3-4 months. He then returned to the unit where he was shot down and wounded in the leg on his first hoist mission back in country!! Paul returned to the states, resigned his warrant, and moved back to California. I remained on active duty, returned to Vietnam flying Chinooks in the Delta the second tour, and remained on active duty for 22 years and retired as a CW4.

I had a welcome visit in the 67th Evac hospital from a Captain from your unit, while I was recovering from a head wound that I received that day. I had left my flight helmet off during the remaining activity that morning, and he brought it to me in the hospital along with an AK47 bullet that was still lodged in the helmet (that took 32 stitches across the top of my head). One time I was glad to be only 5'7"!! I still have that helmet today, as well as the bullet that someone nicely put on an ID tag chain. He also presented me



with a board mounted AK47 that was picked up from the dead NV A, but even though the bolt was welded shut customs would not let me bring it back to the states!!

My wife and I now live back in Nebraska near our daughter that was born 13 days (March 22nd) after being shot down on the 9th.

Chuck Ogle



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## REMEMBERING THE BATTLE OF LZ LITTS

BY RIGO ORDAZ

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Most of us will agree that battles in Vietnam had similarities, but there are some that stick out more than others. We all experienced the initial shock, of getting shot at, rocketed or mortared. At this initial time, I don't remember anybody praying, but perhaps some did in their minds. What I do remember is a lot of scrambling and a lot of yelling and cussing, right? Once the damage was assessed, things got a little bit more organized, sometimes. At least we were on the 50s, 60s and personal weapons shooting back.

The reason that the attack at Litts sticks out more in my mind- is that it was total confusion, and mostly it was every man (squad) for himself. Litts was also remembered for a battle where we did not have the support, like we did with the 1st Cavalry Division.

The way I remember it, the circle was oblong (like an egg). Part of the line to the north the tracks were hardly visible. I was squad leader in 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad. My track #403 was on the line facing west. To my left (South) was track #412 from 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad, and to the left of 412 was track 419, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, 1<sup>st</sup> Squad. Jerry Couch was on this track.

We all thought it was R&R time since we had very little contact since the Tet battles. I remember there was beer, old "mama sons" selling Rice wine or whiskey, the pink paper lady selling marijuana cigarettes.

I also remember a lot of our people getting plastered. I remember our First Sgt. coming in, steel helmet buttoned up, and bringing personnel and taking some. Sternin (my squad driver) was brought in although he had been recuperating from his 3rd wound. I know Pete Tovar was taken back and possibly Bob Melendez brought in. We all thought that the 1st Sgt's anxious nervousness was possibly a sign of not being in the field too much. Most of the guys were lounging around without shirts. The people at Uplift knew something was up, but this was not transmitted to us or we would have been at 50 or 100% alert.

I went to sleep in a tent I made along with Antilla, about 20- 30 feet away from the track. Antilla had been hitting the juice pretty good. For some reason, he got inside a sleeping bag and zipped himself up.

When the first rocket hit my track, I got up and ran towards it. I expected Antilla to be right along. I assessed the situation; the first rocket had hit our driver Eddy Sternin. Lt. Welsh was calling on the radio; I answered and told our situation. Our Platoon Sgt – Switzer, got on the Fifty, as I realized that Antilla had not come up to the track. I ran back expecting him to be wounded. I found him wiggling and struggling to get out of the sleeping bag but he could not find the zipper. I just grabbed the sleeping bag with him inside and dragged it to the back of our APC. There I got him out, and he climbed into the track. In the meantime, another rocket hit the 50 and one sixty that was still up, and knocked Sgt. Switzer down, he was stunned but I didn't know if he was wounded.

Lt Welsh was calling again, that he was going to throw CS gas. I told Sgt. Switzer to take care of the radio. At that time I was firing my M16 and throwing grenades-to keep the enemy back. I could see them trying to get into our perimeter.

Arturo Perez had the other 60 and was firing from a position on the ground close to the tracks. I noticed the track to my left (412) burning up. I saw a guy try to get out of the driver's compartment but was shot down. I think he was Jose Perez, the driver of 412. With the light of the burning track I could see the enemy (possibly zappers) trying to get into our perimeter to finish us up.

I kept on throwing grenades and firing M-16s which kept jamming up in full rock and roll. The guys inside, either wounded or treating the wounded kept me supplied with M-16s and grenades. With the light of the burning track I could see three guys from the burning track. I ordered Helvie to move the track to cover me as I was going to try to rescue them. The enemy was shooting at them, as they could see them with the light. I could see the puffs of dirt all around them.

We maneuvered the track as close as possible to the burning and blowing up track, I got one by one and put them in our track, they were wounded. We moved back to our original position, but Arturo Perez, with our only machine gun, had taken off to another track. I had yelled for him to come with us but he did not hear with the entire racket going on. In the meantime, one of the wounded I got from the burning track- wanted to go outside to defecate. I told one of the guys to open up a 50 ammo can and for him to go there- and he did...So there we were with no Fifty or Sixties with a track full of dead or wounded. I kept on shooting with M16s moving from one side of the track to another- to make the enemy believe there were several people shooting back. Every time I would throw two grenades one right after another and then I would spray the area. One time as I was shooting on the left (south) side of the track, we got hit with another rocket, very close where the numbers were, and where I was at- The blast stunned me, I was physically drained and at that time I thought I was going to lose it. I did a short prayer to God, to give five more minutes. I figured I could regain my composure in five minutes. I clenched my teeth, and was able to come back. I continued firing and throwing grenades - until the shooting died down.

Our Lt. at that time told Sgt. Switzer to take the dead and wounded, to the command area- that a Med-Evac was on the way. There I saw CPT Braun, wounded, sitting at the back of his track. We moved to an area South East of track #406 waiting for the chopper. The chopper came in from the south, and turned around facing south. The guy on the ground guiding it, saw a trench or hole where the right skid was going to land, so he signaled for the chopper to get up to move to another area- that is when the chopper was hit.

From pictures and what I remembered , the chopper ended facing northeast.

There were some of us that went to get the crew out- we didn't know if the chopper was going to blow up or burn. After that we left all our dead and wounded in a designated area, and we went back to our original area. Once there was more light, we noticed a bag full of M-79 rounds which were burned popped out of the casing but not exploded- so we moved south of the burning track close to track 419. At that time, a starched, spit-shined Major came in and ordered us to police the area- so we went back to our original position, and we went out on foot to police the battlefield. I remember quite well, that Selonia, then Arturo Perez and then myself were walking close to the drop-off that led to the rice paddy, when there was movement to our left. Selonia swung his M16 around and let off a burst, but since he was left handed , he could not swing around enough to shoot the gook. At that time I told them to hold it, that we were going to take him in as a prisoner. By that time others came to the area because they heard the shots. We got to the area close to my APC, I told them to detain him, that I was going for the Lt. I had walked, at the most, 20 feet when one trooper shot him. We dragged a lot of dead enemy to my original position. The guys were angry because of the firefight, nobody knew who did it. Later on my recollection dims, as I don't remember if we went back to Uplift, or we went somewhere else. Only those moments of terror remain burnt in my mind.

This is what I remember of the attack of LZ Litts. Rigo Ordaz

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## **RUSS ROTH**

### **Medic**

I don't recall what number track I was on, but I am pretty certain it was Jerry Bould's track. When I first went to "D" Company, I rotated riding on different tracks for a short while to get to know the guys. David Jones told me I needed to ride on Jerry's because he would keep me out of trouble. I took his advice and the day Tom Ramey and Larry LeDonne lost their lives we were the point track. Jerry refused to take the same path a second time but our platoon Sgt ordered Larry to go ahead and being the very good soldier he was he followed that order.

At LZ Litts we were facing the highway and the Med-Evac went down almost straight in front of our track. I remember Lowell Miller, a fellow infused from the 1st Cav... we called "Hippy" (from Washington State, near Canadian border), probably Jerry and myself on that track. Don't think anyone else was on it.

Hippy was peeking out the big hatch, said the Med-Evac was coming in and then saw it go down. He grabbed me by the arm yelling "c'mon Doc we gotta get those guys out!" We bailed out and ran to the chopper. One of the pilots was still strapped in his seat (left seat) and the another man was sitting on the ground, knees pulled up and his head kind of between them. We couldn't figure out how to get the other one out so I grabbed this guy and asked how to do it. He reached up with a fist and hit the guy in the chest, which released the straps and he fell right on top of us. Somehow we got back inside the perimeter. I was doing Triage that night long before I ever heard that term used years later during my Fire service career.

I remember one of the men killed was hanging, head down, out of the driver's hatch from the waist. I got him out and checked him...felt one carotid pulse...and that was it. Checked him a bit further and much of his left chest was gone. Hippy was right there and said he thought I was going to do something stupid. I told him "No"...I just wanted to make sure he was gone.

Also after the battle I remember seeing CPT Braun with his head bandaged and Leddy there also looking very filthy and dirty. It seems the Command Track was almost directly behind us. I also remember the configuration of the tracks ad being somewhat rectangular. Our 4 tracks were on the East side and I do not remember any others there.

(I could not recall for sure all the track #'s but you confirmed 413 was Noel Allen and I remember 414 and 415 being 3rd platoons also. The 4th track must have been 416, maybe?)

LT Flakne was 3rd Platoon Leader and had only been there maybe a couple of days. This was his first action. I remember his fatigues were brand new. We still keep in touch over the phone from time to time.

One thing I think we need to keep in mind is that it has been nearly 45 years since the battle. Each of us remembers things somewhat differently as we had different vantage points during the fighting. Also, our memories are sometimes not as good as they once were! I know I don't recall everything that happened in every battle, but I do have very clear "snapshots" in my mind of certain events.

Yes, Litts was a very bad night. Way worse than what we experienced during the TET offensive in Binh Dinh Province.

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**GREGORY G. SAVAGE - "DUSTOFF 6 ALPHA"**  
498th Med Co (Air Ambulance)

I was with the 498th Medical Company stationed at Lane Field (Qui Nhon).

I came over on a troop carrier that left San Francisco on Oct 1st 1967. We arrived in Cam Ranh Bay on Oct. 30th 1967 and were picked up by our DUSTOFF choppers and flown to Tuy Hoa on the South China Sea.

We where a small company of medevac aircraft (6 Hueys) some were still white in color with red crosses on them. They were in the process of being painted over at Tury Hua AFB which, at that time, was a couple of large maintenance tents and a PSP runway.

Because we had come over as a unit, the aircraft and pilots were sent ahead on a flattop. I was transferred to the 498th Med Co as a medevac chewchief. I received a Purple Heart from wounds suffered when our aircraft was shot down and crashed just south of LZ Uplift supporting the 1st BN, 50th infantry (Mechanized) in March of 1968. I also received the Air Medal with V device for action up in I Corp in the Ashau Valley near the DMZ. My aircraft was shot up in the Phu-Cat mountains on Christmas day 1967. We where supporting the ROK Tigers.

## LITTS AS I REMEMBER

Dan Scott

The order of battles I fought are scrambled and the dates are a mystery. Monday was when we took the big malaria pill and that's the only day I remember. An enlisted man's world is small to begin with. An infantryman's world shrinks according to the location of the enemy. That night our world was very small. Please keep this in mind while I tell this story.

We had been to this spot several times. When we pulled in late in the afternoon, someone said on the radio, "You know where to go". "Yes" was the response. We parked in the same spot each time. First mistake. I can't remember which direction we were facing...North, South, East, or West, but there were three open rice patties and then a ditch a little to my left front. Bell's track with Mick, Witch, and Overcasher was to my left. There was a little cover and a cement something to their front. Bob's track was at my right. I can't remember what was in front of them. The CP track was in the middle of the perimeter and there was an abandoned airstrip close to the perimeter. I think it was to the right and slightly behind us.

Just before dusk, a chopper came in with two replacements and chow. The two replacements were assigned to my track which included Sgt. Ward, Johnny Johnston, and Bradford. Ward told me: "Scotty, you get to sleep all night". What a treat...the first time since I had been In Viet Nam.

Johnny set out the claymore with a trip flare underneath and we sat around bullshitting. I set up my gear and air mattress on the left side of the track. Johnny and Ward slept in the track and Bradford and the two new guys were behind it in a foxhole.

I awoke to Johnny walking around in front of the track and just a little later the first mortar round hit. I heard Bob Gold say, "Are we being hit? Hell, we're being hit." Then several rounds landed. I grabbed my shotgun, ammo, and steel pot and got in the track. Johnny was there and Ward was laying behind it. Then the whole thing shook and it was on fire up by the 50. Ward was hollering, "Get out and let it bum." I found a foxhole between Gold's track and ours. It was full of trash and I scooped it out and cut the hell out of my hand. Johnny was knocking the fire over the side and Bob was trying to get the 50 hatch open. I heard him yell, "The Gooks are on top". Someone had latched it from the outside and he crawled up from the back and opened it. Johnny had the fire off the track and it was burning by the right side. I got up and ran back to the track and Ward said, "Glad to see your ugly face. Where have you been?" He didn't remember telling us to get out and let it bum.

I got on the 60 on the left, shoved the barrel down, and sprayed everything I could reach. Everyone was behind Bell's track and I saw them start back and then a rocket hit it and shot them out the back like popcorn. Bob had his 50 going and I had the 60 kickin'. Johnny got an Illumination Round up and gooks were everywhere. Ward was throwing grenades over the top of our track and he would holler "over the top" and let another one go. I never saw anyone throw a grenade as far as he could. Gold and Johnny were both putting up illumination. I had the 60 with a huge belt of ammo and there were clusters of gooks everywhere. Two were right in front of us with a B40 on their shoulder but they never got it off. Bell's track got hit again and I was spraying in front of them. Johnny would load the 60 while I would let the 12-gauge go. We kept up a steady rate of fire.

The CP track was hit and I heard someone say that the captain was wounded. A track directly across the perimeter was burning.



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Contact Jim Sheppard, Historian/Archivist at [50thInfantryAssociation@gmail.com](mailto:50thInfantryAssociation@gmail.com)*

*....The sand of the desert is sodden red, --  
Red with the wreck of a square that broke;--  
The Gatling's jammed and the colonel dead,  
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.  
The river of death has brimmed his banks,  
And England's far, and Honor a name,  
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks,  
Play up! play up! And....*

**PLAY THE GAME!**