

Gary Halverson
Specialist Fifth Class
Radar Installation and Maintenance
U.S. Army

Vung Tau Long Binh
Vietnam



I was drafted in July of 1966 after I had signed up at the Ames Draft Board and had my Draft physical at Fort Des Moines. Mike Nelson and I were drafted together.

Two weeks later, I was told I had qualified for the Reserves, but since I was already drafted, I was no longer qualified. I went to Fort Bliss, Texas, for Basic Training. The train stopped for draftees all along the way from Iowa. At the Welcome Station in Fort Bliss, I was offered more schooling and chose the Electronics School in Fort Ord, California for two months of training. I wanted Air Defense radar, but ended up in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, for Ground Surveillance Radar training for nine months. My next orders sent me to the Pennsylvania Army Air Defense Post as a Radar Repair Man. This was a Missile Radar Direction Center (a missile base) near Elizabeth, Pennsylvania.

On to Biloxi, Mississippi, for a month and a half for training in ECM (electronic countermeasures) at Keesler Air Force Base. Then I received orders to go to Fort Sill, OK – a restricted area – where I trained on Counter Mortar Radar to detect mortars. At the Artillery Base, they formed a Unit, the 519 Signal, to go to Vietnam.

I spent 30 days on the troop ship USS General John Pope. We landed at Vung Tau, Vietnam, a popular R and R site, and unloaded onto a barge which took us to the beach, and then to trucks which took us to Long Binh, north of Saigon.

My maintenance company worked on CMR, Counter Mortar Radar units which were installed on fifty-foot towers. Chinook helicopters were used to set the radar on the towers. Men had to jump into the helicopter which was used to sling the towers. The radar was used to spot mortars and rockets, and we passed on this information to the artillery so that the rockets could be intercepted and shot down.

We worked near the Cambodian border south of Vietnam. Then I moved to Camp Red Ball and worked from there, doing new installs, maintenance, and radar repairs all over South Vietnam and up to Cambodia. I would watch small helicopters fly low over the treetops to draw enemy fire, then the Huey helicopters would come in and shoot or destroy the enemy on the ground. Also attacking the enemy from the air was “Puff, the Magic Dragon,” which is what we called the Douglas AC-47 Spooky, a fix-winged gunship with more firepower than lighter planes.

My own guns that I carried were an M-16 rifle and a .45 pistol.

Ed Rood told me that Denny Reinertson was in the same area, and we were able to get together. Ed suggested in one of his letters that we should do an ad for the “Halverson-Reinertson Travel Agency,” which offered “exotic, adventure-filled vacations” to Vietnam.

In April of 1969, I returned to Oakland, CA and signed out. Oakland was where I had started and then came back to. It was the departure and return location. I had some relatives in California so I was able to visit them for a few weeks before flying back to Iowa.

I was awarded the Bronze Star and left the service as a Specialist 5 after serving 3 years.

The VA provided money for my heart problems and meds, because I was exposed to Agent Orange and that was their response. The GI Bill helped to buy my home in Colorado.



Camp Red Ball




Airlifting a Counter Mortar Radar Unit



**“Puff, the Magic Dragon”
(Douglas AC-47 Spooky)**

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This offer good for only a few months more, as we are planning to transfer our Agency back to the world!

From the Slater News November 1968

**The Halverson-Reinertson
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