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**Fort Cu Chi
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I was drafted when I was twenty-one. 1968 to 1970 was my whole Army thing. I went from Fort Huachuca, Arizona to Fort Gordon. Huachuca was radio. If you passed the radio, you went to teletype. Radio, you had to send and receive twenty-five words a minute in Morse Code. It's not easy! And I don't remember any of it. If you didn't pass this, you'd end up having a radio on your back in the Infantry. So I made it through there and went to teletype. You have to send and receive typed twenty-five words a minute. Which is helpful now, I can type pretty fast. When I got out of there, I volunteered to go to NCO school, which was nine or thirteen weeks. It was guaranteed that you would go to Vietnam, but you had rank. I was a PFC at the time. When you went in there you're a Spec 4, and when you came out you were a Sergeant E-5. I figured I was going to Nam anyway, and I might as well get paid for it.

When I was in Basic, for all these companies, in the whole division, I was second highest score in the whole bunch. The first scorer was in my company. The first guy in each company got a pass. But my guy reported for sick call that day, so they let me go instead. Second out of EVERYBODY, and I was going to have to stay there.

When I did my sharpshooter training, you weren't supposed to go look at your scores. I was pretty curious because I shot well, so I was looking. I had a buddy with me. This Second Lieutenant comes over, and I'm older than this little shit. He gave us hell. He took his helmet liner and he bopped my buddy over the head. We were supposed to report to him when we got done with night march that night. Get-

ting back, it's like three or four o'clock in the morning. And I'm dead tired. My buddy said, "You gonna go see him?" "Well, I don't know. I'm going to bed." So I didn't go. A couple of days later it was pay day, and this guy is handing out the money. The guy ahead of me reports, and the Lieutenant says, "Didn't I tell you to come report to me the other night? Drop!" I thought, Oh, shit! If he remembers him, he's gonna remember me! But he didn't. He didn't say anything and he gave me my money. I'm gone!

From Fort Gordon I was headed to Vietnam. I was in the 25th Infantry, Division Artillery, in communications. I was at Fort Cu Chi, Vietnam. My first night there, we got rocketed. But to me it was just fireworks. Everybody else was just running for cover but I wanted to see what was going on. I don't remember there being a lot of attacks. First day there, first night there. I thought, Wow!

The trucks were three-quarter-ton trucks with a radio unit on the back. Everything was top secret, secured. You lock yourself inside, so nobody can get to you. Everything is air conditioned, because all the equipment has to be kept cool. I got carbon monoxidized because the truck's air conditioning was sucking in the fumes. I'm just sleeping. I think somebody finally called me on the land line. "Open the door!" I'm gaga, going "What the hell?" "OPEN THE DOOR!" [Bang, bang, bang] So I finally opened the door. Otherwise, I would have died there in a box. I'm real susceptible to carbon monoxide now.

Every day you had to punch in, rearrange everything with a new code. Then call everybody and

send out a message to see if they got it and that their machine is in the right place before the day starts. But after a while these units were put in a bunker and had commercial power and air conditioning so you didn't have to worry about carbon monoxide. You put a little TV up there, watch TV while you're not doing anything. Everything was sent out over teletype. You punch out a thing, and just feed the tape through, and BRRTT.

I was relaying information. They would send us stuff and we would print it and hand it off. All our guys were out in the boonies and we were at headquarters. They would send us body counts. That's about all the info I remember.

One day I was assigned to take the mail out to one unit out in the boonies. You know these fast little helicopters? No helicopters had doors. You'd buckle up, go right over to the Base Camp, turn the sucker sideways, and you're going straight down inside the fence. They'd come back and pick you up that evening. But they never came and picked me up. I asked, "What's going on?" They said, "Well, our unit's pulling out tomorrow and you can drive one of the trucks." I don't remember much about the trip. I just played follow the leader. I didn't know where I was going. That was about the only time I was in a helicopter over there, other than the times we made deliveries. That was with a big chopper.

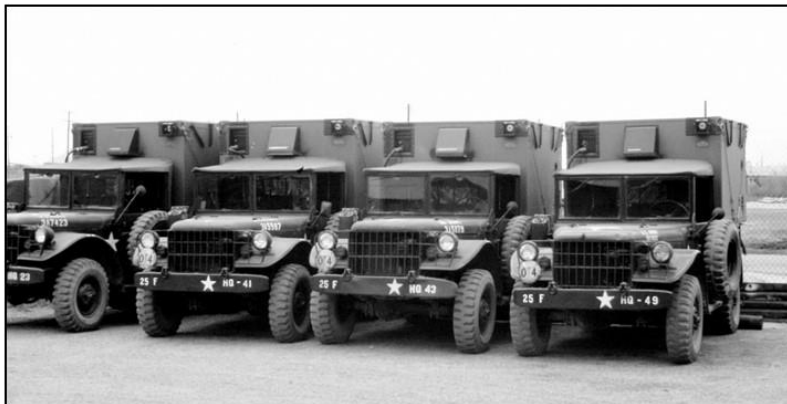
We had a First Sergeant come over there. We all wore hats like sort of bucket hats, and no shirts, or shirt sleeves rolled up. He'd been twenty-seven years as a Basic Training sergeant, and he wanted everybody to go back to baseball caps and the right uniforms. He had a guy whose haircut he didn't like. He told him to get a haircut. Next time he saw him, he

still didn't like his haircut. "Report to me!" The sergeant was right next door to us. Suddenly we hear "Brrrrttt!" The guy just went in there and drilled him. The sergeant was no more. We didn't have any weapons around, and I don't know how he got the one he had. We went outside and he came out. "It's empty." He goes like this, pretending to fire, and it's empty. Everybody started moving, then he drops that magazine and shoves in another. We all bolted! That's as close as I came to action. He went into a bunker and committed suicide.

I was there just short of a year. I scheduled my leave to go someplace a week or two before I was supposed to get out, and they gave me a two-week early out, so I didn't get to go on leave. I had to go home. Didn't get to go to any of the fun places. I heard so much about them, too! Since I sent most of my money home, it took me two weeks to save up enough money to go anywhere.

I didn't talk about Vietnam, I just forgot about it. I don't think about it. I don't remember my dad asking about it. He was upset when I volunteered for the draft. He didn't want me to be just a plain soldier. He was an officer and he had quite a career. But you had to start somewhere.

The medals I got are all listed in my discharge paper. Most guys have it somewhere, to get a break on their taxes. You can get it at Story County, too. As far as the medals are concerned, I don't remember medals. Just The Vietnam stuff. My grandson saw that Bronze Star and said, "What did you get that for?" I don't remember! Just for being there as far as I know.



Radio Trucks



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