



Ricardo's

Semper Fidelis - Always Faithful

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Operation Medina

Was conducted under the control
Of the 3rd Marine Division.
With units of the 1st Marine Division;

1st Battalion 1st Marines.
Bravo Company
Charlie Company
Delta Company
Alpha Company had security of the base.
Outside of Quang Tri
For 1st Battalion 1st Marines

2nd Battalion 1st Marines.
Echo Company
Golf Company
Hotel Company
Foxtrot Company had security of the base.
Outside of Quang Tri
For 2nd Battalion 1st Marines

1st Battalion 3rd Marines
Also took part.
As Special Landing Force (SLF).
Or a blocking force,
For the two battalions of the 1st Marines

Much has been written
About Charlie Company 1st Battalion 1st Marines.
And Hotel Company 2nd Battalion 1st Marines.
On Operation Medina
This is an attempt to tell the side and role.
One of mercy and caring for our wounded.
Also our dead on Operation Medina.
By Golf Company 2nd Battalion 1st Marines.

Memories

Of Staff Sergeant Ricardo (Richard) Jacques USMC
Platoon Sergeant
In Golf Company 2nd Battalion 1st Marines
I'm writing this in May of 2007.
About forty years removed.
From what took place on 17-18 October 1967.
My mind has block a lot.
So it's hard to recall a lot of what occurred.
I think we were heli-lifted to a Landing Zone (LZ).
In the Hai Lang National Forest.
In the Republic of South Vietnam.
My company with my platoon as the point.
We moving to a near-by hill to set up for the night.
After digging in the military crest.

We had set our watches for the night.
At 0000 or mid-night, I had just taken over the watch.
And was manning the radio.
I wasn't able to see or hear.
With my helmet on, as I was in a fighting hole.
So I decided to take it off.
At that moment an artillery round went.
Over our position and exploded in the valley below.
Well, with that my platoon leader jumps up.
He had an illumination round in a cannister, in a side pocket.
That flew out and hit me dead square on my uncovered head.
I started cursing a storm, when it dawned on me, who I was cursing.
At dawn of the 18 October, we started getting ready to move.
After eating our c-ration breakfast.
My platoon still had the point.
A little while later, we came on a VC/NVA base camp.
It appeared about company to battalion size.
They had everything we had back in the United States.
But all their was made out of bamboo and mud.
There was class rooms, a galley or kitchen.
Some of their packs were still there, which we searched.
We also found a good number of weapons.
The kitchen, I went in to investigate.
It was dark, and I had a flashlight, as I was going back out.
I happen to glances at the entrance, where I had came in.
There was a booby-trap hand-grenade.
Which they must have forgot to arm.
When they left, on our approach.
I just had a thought go through my mind;
"What If",
I had been too stupid for going in the first place.
After doing some more searching.
The Captain or our Battalion Commanding Officer.
Lt. Colonel Archie Van Winkle must have decided to blow up.
Everything we could not carry out.
After we did that, we left.
With my platoon still on the point.
We were on this trail that led us to Highway 1.
Where some trucks were to pick us up.
Somewhere we made contact.
With Hotel Company of our battalion.
Our two companies were suppose to march out in column.
I was reconning by fire.
Because the vegetation on either side was really thick.
You couldn't see less than ten feet off that trail.
After a while the Captain passes the word to cut it out.
And to get to Highway 1 as fast as possible.
Than I get the word to go over this ridge on our left.
That would take us close to this river.
I was saying to myself.
"They won't booby-trap this trail;
But they surely will booby-trap along the river."
It was so thick, we had several Marines with machetes.
Trying to cut their way up towards the ridge.
But it was taking too long.
Next I hear, come back down to the trail.
At that very moment, all hell broke loose.
There was fire from AK-47 towards the rear of our column.
And mortar rounds were being shot in our direction.
But those mortar rounds were way out of range.
One moment my platoon was together!
The next moment I look, there only six Marines close to me.

I had everybody get in a good size circle.
With everybody feet pointing towards the center.
That way, everybody had inter-locking fire towards the front.
Something told me;
"Do something!"
"Even if it appears stupid."
Next thing I hear my platoon-commander yelling.
"How many do you have with you?"
I answer six, he than tells me.
To come down towards his location.
That he had five and the right guide had about another six.
After our platoon got together.
We were ordered to go back and pick-up.
The most serious wounded first than the dead.
While we were going back.
Towards the rear of our two-companies column.
Some Marines were starting to clear.
An area for a medvac landing zone.
My memory of the first Marine.
That we were bring up to the LZ.
His lips and ears started turning blue.
I knew we were or had lost him.
That was confirmed.
When we got to the LZ.
They told us to put him in the area.
For the dead to be medvac after the wounded.
Even in times such as these.
Some funny thing stands out in your mind.
As we were getting close to the area.
Set aside to care for our wounded.
Somebody yells out.
"Is he alive or is he dead?"
The group after us,
The Marine they were carrying.
Sits up and yells back;
"I'm a Live!"
They than yelled back;
"Get his ass up here."
We all wanted to laugh.
But things were too serious.
For any laughter.
I can't remember how many trips we made.
Possibly four.
Only one other Marine.
Stands out on my mind.
Because he was a Mexican, like myself.
Also he was the last Marine that we carried.
He had taken so many rounds.
They almost shot off one of his legs.
It was just hanging or it was bended to the side.
When the chopter landed and we got him onboard.
The poncho he was covered with, came off.
And the crew-chief just about froze.
That got me to cursing.
There was nothing we or they could do.
I yell "just get the hell out of here!"
Because as soon a chopter landed.
We started taking incoming rifle-fire.
After we got everybody out.
We made it to Highway 1.
Where the trucks were waiting for us.
They took us back to where we were staying close to Quang Tri.

The name of the Operation was Medina.

To me it was hell on earth!

Epilogue

Sometime after we got everybody out.
Either alive or dead.
I started shaking like a leave.
Caught in some strong wind.
I think it was just the nerves.
Telling me how close we came.
To dying that day.

A Perspective

Of Operation Medina

October 1967

From a perspective years removed from Operation Medina.
There was no way there could be security on our flanks.
Due to the heavy under-growth and the trees of that natural forest.
Where we were conducting Operation Medina.
They had inserted our two companies with the aid of helicopters.
Of that Marine Air squadron that was in support.
But the planners made no plans of how we would leave the area.
Other than us just walking out.
We had to use the trails the Vietnamese had cut.
Or had used since time began, without any flank security.
All we could do was recon by fire, hoping it would draw a response.
Or they would give away their positions if they had planned to ambush us.
Than an order came to cease the firing.
My sixth sense told me that the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) were close by.
I could almost feel them.
I don't know if it was luck or a higher being.
That allowed us to walk past the killing zone of their ambush.
They hit the last platoon of Hotel Company 2nd Battalion 1st Marines hard.
That were following my infantry company Golf Company 2nd Battalion 1st Marines.
They had about 19 dead and 14 wounded, that was most of that infantry platoon.

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