

**GETTYSBURG COLLEGE & THETA CHI FRATERNITY**

I write this as I turn 72 years old in the year 2018. This serves as my contribution to the Gettysburg College Library Alumni Vietnam Resource project—an archival collection of memoirs, remembrances, and experiences of those students who went on to serve in the military during Vietnam. In fact, this educational component will be accompanied by the dedication of a Vietnam Memorial on 10 November 2018 at the newly-renovated College Union Building (CUB). It will be a large granite plaque with the names of those alumni who died while serving in the armed forces during the Vietnam War period; my Theta Chi (ΘΧ) fraternity brother, Dan Whipps class of 1969, is on that tablet.



**1968 Spectrum  
yearbook photo**

My name is Glenn Joseph Meigel and I am a Gettysburg (GBurg) College alumnus, Class of 1968. I came to the college from Glen Head, Long Island, New York in 1964, pledged and was initiated into ΘΧ fraternity (a significant part of my college experience), and graduated with a B.A., majoring in Psychology and minoring in Philosophy. I have fond memories of my time at GBurg—the “Town” itself, classes, professors, fraternity and brothers, events, socials, activities, etc. I was particularly influenced and guided by Dr. Sam Mudd and Professor Lew Frank, both of the Psychology Department, Professor Norman Richardson, Chairman of the Philosophy Department, Professor Emile O. Schmidt of the English/Drama Department, many of my fraternity brothers over those years, and Dr. Chet Jarvis, Chairman of the Political Science Department who was also our ΘΧ faculty advisor. To this day, I remain in email contact with 48 of my fraternity brothers from those years. My Vietnam recollections follow; words throughout in underlined [blue](#) are hyperlinks to references.



**ARMY**

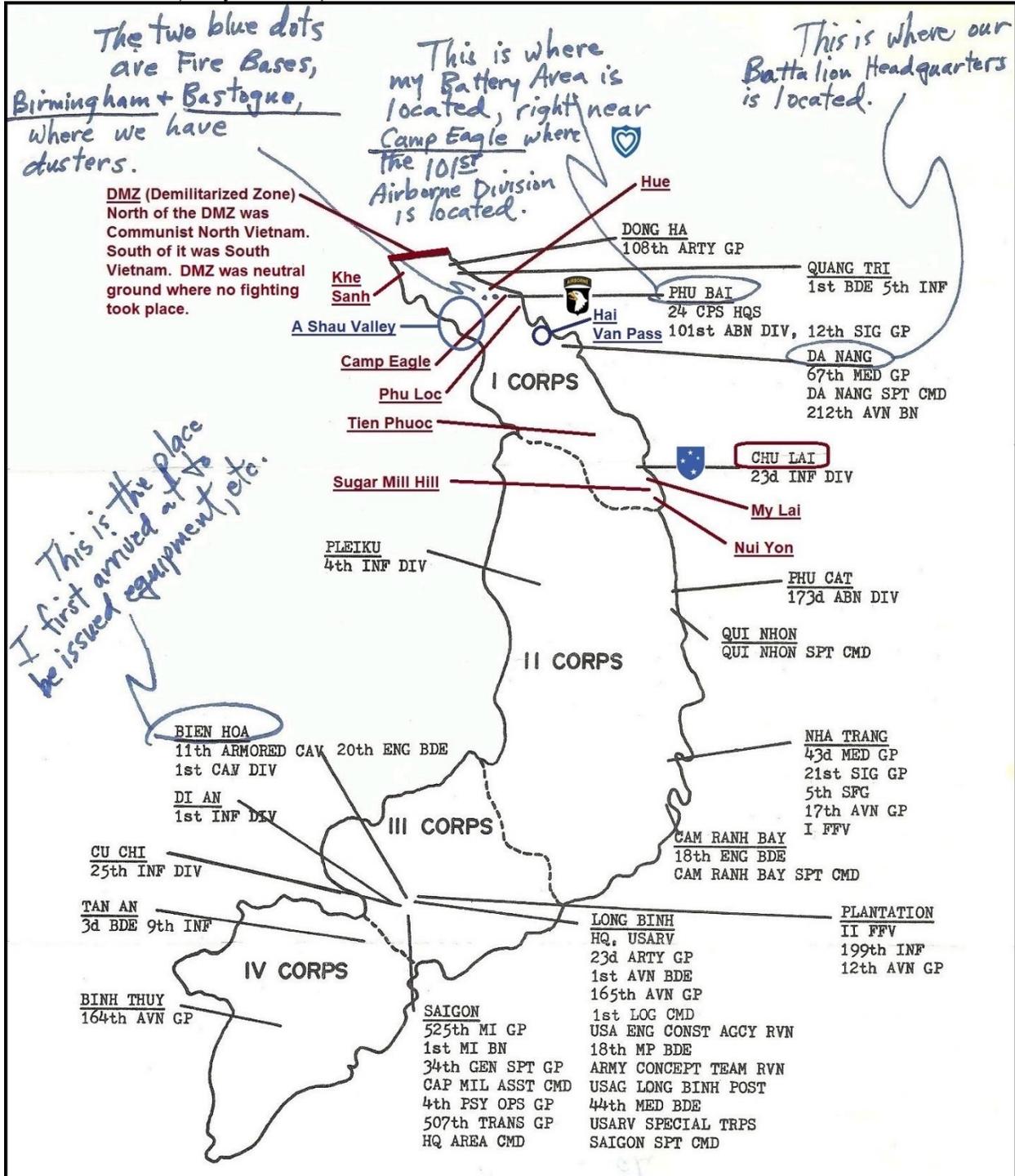
The late 1960s were intense, turbulent, and fast-moving times. Because of the Vietnam War, the draft, and the fact that I had not taken [ROTC](#) in college, I volunteered for the draft right after graduation. I entered the Army’s college option program to become an officer and went directly into Basic Combat Training (Basic) at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and then Advanced Individual Training (AIT) for Field Artillery Fire Direction Control, followed by Officer Candidate School (OCS) both at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I spent the next year as a Second Lieutenant Training Officer for new Basic trainees and, later, was detailed to a Staff Judge Advocate’s office at Fort Benning, Georgia, before receiving orders for Vietnam.

**VIETNAM**

Before departing, I was on a short leave (vacation) at home in New York. When no orders were forthcoming either by mail or telephone call, I actually had to call Fort Benning to request movement orders verbally over the phone—the Army forgot me! I departed for Vietnam from McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey, via contracted civilian airplane on 3 June 1970 as a newly-promoted First Lieutenant that very day. We had a stopover at Anchorage, Alaska, where the airport opened the bar in the middle of the

**VIETNAM RESOURCE** — Glenn Meigel

night specifically for us and I had my first taste of Olympia beer. On arrival in-country at Bien Hoa near Saigon, I was issued uniforms and equipment. (The map shows approximate locations I will mention, as well as the array of units throughout South Vietnam in 1970; the blue hand-written notes are mine from when I sent this map home to my parents. Note that a current map would no longer show firebases or fighting positions, and some of the villes (villages/hamlets) and cities have been renamed by North Vietnam.) My first impressions of Vietnam were that the intense heat and



humidity were figuratively like being slapped in the face with a hot, wet towel, and the smell in some populated areas was like a combination of garbage, urine, and excrement. The country was poor, underdeveloped, and generally trashy in many locations.

Because my branch or specialty was Air Defense Artillery, I was assigned by my [Duster](#) Battalion Headquarters in Da Nang as a Platoon Leader in D Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 44<sup>th</sup> Air Defense Artillery “up-country” (way up north) near Hue in Phu Bai, a dreary, overcast place in the I (“Eye”) Corps Tactical Zone. Dusters were assets of [XXIV](#)



[\(24<sup>th</sup>\) Corps](#), the headquarters presiding over

subordinate divisions, and other units and, as such, had a general type support role, meaning they provided

protection of the supported forces where they were tactically positioned but remained under the command and control of their 24<sup>th</sup> Corps parent unit.

The M42 40 mm Self-Propelled Anti-Aircraft Gun itself was nicknamed “Duster” because of the clouds of dust it created both during rapid movement and with its rate and volume of fire “dusting” the enemy with explosive rounds. It was an armored/tank body or “track” powered by a 500 horsepower, 6 cylinder, air-cooled, mogas (gasoline) engine; the many bolts holding the engine together had to be secured to each other with [lacing wire](#) to keep them from loosening from vibration. The track was armed with fully automatic twin 40 mm Bofors “pom-pom” guns with a rate of fire of 120 rounds per minute per barrel (these guns had also been used on WWII ships and on the ground in WWII and Korea). Its 40 mm shell had a deadly high explosive (HE) blast and fragmentation effect from either a sensitive point-detonating fuse or at tracer burn-out ranging from 3,500 to 7,000 meters depending on the type ammunition charge. Ignore the dated video, but this is the distinctive sound of a [Duster firing](#). The crew fired from an enclosed round “tub” atop the track which provided them some protection. By standard operating procedures ([SOP](#)), we never used flash suppressors on the barrels (nicknamed “tubes”) because they would melt during sustained firing, and we normally fired only one tube at a time so we would have an emergency back-up. Each track was manned with a crew of 4 to 6 with a Sergeant (paygrade E-5) in charge and also had an [M60 7.62 mm machine gun](#) and/or [.50 caliber machine gun](#) and [M79 grenade launcher](#) for close protection. Machetes were available for issue but we had little use for them since we were normally not out in or had to hack down dense vegetation. Officers were issued the [.45 caliber pistol](#) but also opted to carry the [M16 rifle](#), the same weapon



**Duster in a fortified firing position at Firebase Birmingham showing twin guns and unpacked ammunition stacked around the circular gunner and crew “tub” up top.**

carried by most soldiers in-country, because of its extended range and rate of fire in the event of an ambush. The M-16 was lightweight but also subject to jam and malfunction in the dusty, humid jungle environment; this meant frequent cleaning and placing a plastic cap over the flash suppressor tip to prevent dirt or water from entering the barrel. Small goodwill spray cans of [WD-40](#) were sent by the manufacturer to Vietnam in bulk to use as a small arms lubricant supplement.

My platoon consisted of 8 Dusters and over 50 men to crew them, their support vehicles (including my jeep), and the platoon headquarters. We provided perimeter defense with 2 Dusters each on the elevated terrain of Firebases [Birmingham](#) and [Bastogne](#) well west of Phu Bai on the way out to the A Shau Valley, 1 each at Camp Eagle (101<sup>st</sup> Airborne [parachutists] Infantry Division headquarters and base camp) and at the adjoining Phu Bai base camp and ville, and 2 at Phu Loc Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam (ARVN) District Headquarters. Dusters in outlying areas were normally deployed in pairs, called a section, for mutual support. Perimeters were delineated by multiple strands of booby-trapped barbed or razor wire and were often manned by Infantry units with various types of weapons plus [field artillery](#), [Quad-50 machine guns](#), [searchlights](#), [claymore mines](#), [foo gas](#), and [napalm](#) to repel any attacks and thwart [sappers](#) with [satchel charges](#).



**Lieutenant Meigel in boonie hat by Phu Bai Officers' hooch.**

A two Dusters section was under the control of a Staff Sergeant, paygrade E-6. Although the Duster was initially designed for a low altitude light air-defense/anti-aircraft role, it was highly successful in Vietnam against ground forces in perimeter defense of firebases and base camps, tactically-significant point security like airfields, convoy escort, and other ground support missions. Occasionally we would receive mislabeled cans of rounds from the Ammunition Supply Point (ASP) that turned out to be Armor Piercing (which we had no use for, but were used as tunnel and bunker “busters” the more southern II, III, and IV Corps Tactical Zones) or would open an old canister of ammo and find it completely corroded which was sent back to the ASP for destruction by [Explosive Ordinance Disposal](#) (EOD). Almost all the shell casings were made of brass but, occasionally, we’d open a can of old WWII ammo with steel casings which could still

be fired safely. The cans the ammo came in were filled with sand, serving as far better protection than sandbags, and were stacked around the track to the height of the guns providing [hull defilade](#) protection. Crews normally guarded and fired at night and slept during the day, but not until the guns were cleaned. Firebases customarily had a “Mad Minute” each night designated randomly at the daily Tactical Operations Center (TOC) briefing; so, for example, all weapons might be simultaneously free-fired between 0305 and 0306 hours (that’s 3:05 am) to test fire them and keep the enemy off-balance. By the Rules of Engagement, most outlying areas were Free Fire Zones with expansive fields of fire and clearance to shoot within them at will without permission, to “blow

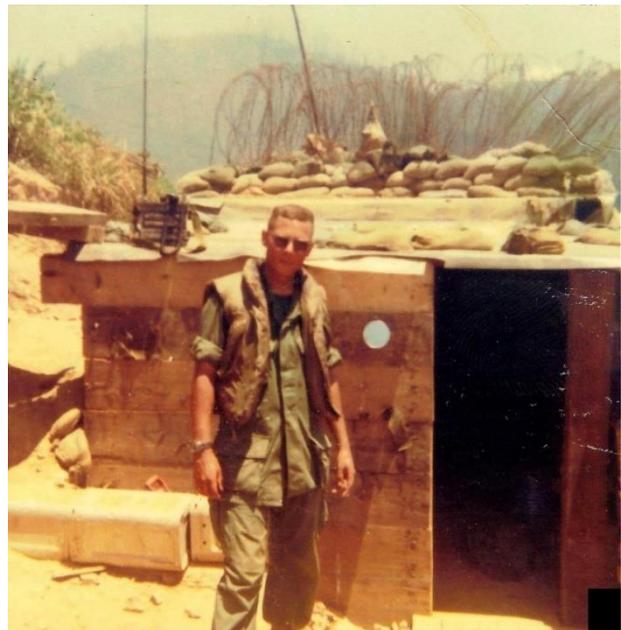


**Typical base camp hooches/buildings with surrounding ammo can protection and sandbags to hold tin roofs down.**

away” anyone or anything therein. Some areas, like populated villes were designated No Fire Zones. Regardless of designation, the Self-Defense Rule was always in effect: we could fire back/return fire if fired upon. The enemy consisted of well-trained North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars and, more commonly in my experience and activities, [Viet Cong](#) (VC) guerillas and NVA sympathizers. These were not as well trained as NVA but were just as deadly and could be anyone or anywhere in South Vietnam—a merchant or laborer by day might be VC at night, a situation

which eroded American trust in Vietnamese in general. VC, nicknamed *Victor Charlie* or just plain *Charlie*, sometimes wore black trousers that looked like silk pajamas, dress by which they came to be recognized. Moreover, all North and South Vietnamese—military and civilian alike—were frequently referred to by the derogatory term “[gook](#).”

The crews (all draftees back then) out on site performed their defense mission day and night. I had almost no training on Dusters but found crewmen very eager to show and teach me absolutely anything I asked about if I was willing to listen and learn. They lived in either small, cramped in-ground bunkers built into the side of firebase slopes or in plywood structures with tin roofs call “hooches” on base camps. By support agreements, they would get their meals at the closest mess halls. I and my support crew working out of Phu Bai base camp provided each position with ammunition, repair parts, mail, ice, ammo, and other requests on a daily basis except, usually, Sundays which would change in an emergency situation. We would also get a situation report (SITREP) on the current state of affairs and any problems at each location daily. Sometimes operational or logistical circumstances dictated that we eat infamous canned rations or [C-Rats](#), occasionally supplemented by a Sundries Pack ([SP Pack](#)) with various comfort items. Rations could be heated very quickly on the rear vented armor of a Duster above a running engine. Canned food was so bland that [Tabasco sauce](#) was commonly added to spice up meals. Incidentally, on base camps we usually had beer available after



**Author in a flak jacket, outside one of my crew’s bunkers where they lived and slept on Firebase Bastogne.**

the duty day at ~15 cents a can; I clearly remember Miller in cans where the rims around the tops and bottoms was mildly corroded (the beer was OK) and they had to be opened with a sharp, pointy metal can opener called a “[church key](#).” Cigarettes cost 25 cents a pack/\$2.50 a carton; small boxes of 4 cigarettes were packaged with each C-Rat meal along with a [P-38](#) can opener. Also, you would write “free” in place of a stamp on outgoing mail. Duty uniform daily was jungle fatigues with jungle boots and D Battery was authorized to wear the jungle “boonie” hat (pictured in earlier photo). The jungle boots were reinforced with a metal plate running through the sole to mitigate penetration by [punji stakes](#). These booby traps were sharpened pieces of bamboo stuck in the ground and camouflaged. The enemy frequently urinated on the tips so that if a soldier unknowingly stepped on one, he would not only suffer a wound but an infection *to boot* (excuse the poor pun). The officers’ “hooch” (barracks) in Phu Bai compound as well as all other buildings on the compound (orderly room, supply, motor pool, etc.) were temporary buildings constructed of wooden support beams, plywood, screening, and tin roofs weighted down with sandbags to hold them in place during high winds. Empty Duster ammo cans were, just like at fighting positions, filled with sand and placed around each structure for protection from “in-coming” [mortars](#) and rockets (Rocket-Propelled Grenades-[RPGs](#)). If you didn’t like the living accommodations, you could always transfer to the Infantry and live out in the “bush” of the jungle. Those hooches, most particularly the ones used for food storage or cooking, were constantly the object of pest control to avoid infestation of cockroaches and rats. We slept under mosquito nets and were also required to take one pill daily and another one weekly to prevent malaria. As a side note, drug use (particularly marijuana) by some was certainly something to contend with but not an overriding concern.

During one period, the dirt road to Firebases Birmingham and Bastogne was closed to [defoliate](#) jungle on both sides of the road with [Agent Orange](#) to increase visibility into the dense vegetation. In fact, a small [Montagnard](#) village had to be relocated out of the area before that operation proceeded. I saw firsthand days later when the road reopened the devastating (but totally effective) outcome the poison herbicide had on destroying jungle, forest, and undergrowth by turning everything from green to sagging, rotting brown waste.

One morning I was ordered to report to 101<sup>st</sup> Division’s Criminal Investigation Division (CID) on Camp Eagle. One of my Dusters defending its perimeter was accused of having errantly fired striking an old Vietnamese woman. My investigation



**Duster with ammo around the “tub” guarding Phu Bai perimeter with crew hooch and Infantry guard tower in rear.**

revealed my Duster had fired the night in question but into a Free Fire Zone; the crew was adamant about the facts. I returned to CID, requested to see the shell fragment the old woman had brought in, and was shown a small ½ centimeter shell fragment which actually had rust on it. The fragment could have been from any weapon and the rust certainly revealed its age—investigation over and end of incident. I suspect the old woman was looking for some sort of U.S. government [solacium payment](#) for her injury. Such payments were made for wrongful civilian or animal deaths (and sometimes for injuries), and were calculated based on, among other things, the worth of the victim in terms of number of offspring that he/she/it would have produced in the future.



**Duster in firing position south of Phu Bai at Phu Loc guarding a bridge (at left) with both water and road enemy avenues of approach. Note all the dirty water puddles and mud after a monsoon deluge.**

In late October into November 1970 the [monsoon](#) (rainy) season took place. After months of intense humidity and heat, the rain was a cool blessing from above and it continued to be so for a few days. Then it became evident that the constant rain would not stop and, in fact, continued for weeks turning dusty dirt into thick mud and muck. Even wearing [ponchos](#) and although they were rotated, we continued to function with damp uniforms and boots that never completely dried out from the daily soaking until the monsoons ended.

With the exception of this season, Vietnam remained generally hot, dusty, and dirty. So dusty, in fact, that dirt on frequently traveled roads was ground down as fine a talcum powder (extremely slick when wet). To keep the dust down, sometimes roads were covered with a temporary oily substance called [Peneprime](#) while [Perforated Steel Planking](#) (PSP) was laid for helicopter pads and airfield runways as a more permanent solution.

Bob Hope appeared at Camp Eagle on a small outdoor stage around Christmas 1970 performing one of his typical [USO shows](#), featuring celebrities and lots of girls. I was told that the audience was packed and the show was greatly appreciated. I personally didn't see it; I went to Firebase Bastogne to pull Duster crewman duty, freeing up one of my troops to see the show.

In late December/early January, I became Executive Officer (XO, second in command of the battery). One of my responsibilities was to pay our hooch maids (who did our laundry, shined boots, and cleaned our hooches) and "papa san the shit-burner" who tended to the outhouses by burning feces in diesel fuel. I collected money from each hooch, converted it to [Piasters](#) commonly called "P's," and paid them in this

currency of their country. Americans used [Military Pay Certificates](#) (MPC) of various denominations, colors, and designs—kind of like Monopoly game play money. Periodically, and it did happen in 1970, the Army would hold an unannounced C (Currency)-Day in which all units/soldiers were restricted to their bases and Finance units would exchange old MPC for a new color and design MPC. After that exchange day, old MPC, such as that being used in the black market, became worthless. We could also hire temporary Vietnamese workers for clean-ups, simple construction of fortifications, etc. for the equivalent of \$1 a day. Incidentally, I made about \$500 a month as a Lieutenant plus \$65 combat pay, most of which was deducted from my pay voucher and banked in the Soldiers' and Sailors' Savings Deposit Program paying 10% interest (true!) back then. There was little to spend money on although Phu Bai and, on a later assignment, Chu Lai each had a small Post Exchange (PX).



**Duster in fortified firing position showing twin guns and unpacked, clipped ammunition stacked around the “tub” up top. Sand-filled ammo can protection is visible, with concertina wire on top of hooch to dissuade sappers and disperse any incoming mortars.**

In late January 1971, D Battery was deactivated in the interest of [Vietnamization](#). This is where the U.S.A. turned over a bigger share of combat operations and their support to the Vietnamese, and greater emphasis was placed on pacification and winning a war of attrition. Military jargon was also toned down and, for examples, firebases were renamed fire *support* bases and search and destroy missions were to be called *reconnaissance in force*. I was reassigned to C Battery based in Chu Lai and traveled south down the [winding Hai Van Pass](#) to this sunnier location at lower altitude. As Platoon Leader I controlled two each Dusters defending the Chu Lai perimeter, at Observation Post (OP) Sugar Mill Hill, on Nui Yon hill, and at air-accessible only

 Firebase Tien Phuoc. This was all now in the area of operations of the 23<sup>rd</sup> (Americal) Infantry Division but platoon procedures were very much the same as in Phu Bai. C Battery was authorized to wear the “cowboy” hat based on past combat performance. Chu Lai perimeter was very stable and secure like the Phu Bai perimeter had been. Soon after, I took these 2 perimeter Dusters on an Artillery Raid south of Chu Lai (we were to defend a field artillery battery which was moving forward temporarily to extend its range). After we set up a position, we received a mission cancelled over the radio. Several of my troops observed by map that we were very close to My Lai, site of the 1968 [massacre](#), so we drove through that ville and back again just to see the well-known location for ourselves. There was nothing of particular interest but a few dirt crossroads, primitive wooden buildings, hooches, and shacks...except that it was like a ghost town; although inhabited, there was not a single

human or animal to be seen anywhere the whole time we passed. I suspect the fears of the earlier incident caused everyone to hide or be hidden.

The Dusters on OP Sugar Mill Hill, supplemented by tall guard towers, provided observation and monitoring of fire sectors covering tactically important road intersections, the Song Tra Khuc river and its [sampan](#) traffic, and a bridge spanning the river.

Dusters on Nui Yon hill occupied one hump of [saddle](#) with a platoon of ARVN Infantry and 4 U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) advisors on the other hump. We defended the ARVN position also but they were advised and guided by the MACV personnel. The primary ARVN duty was patrolling outlying areas and flushing out and killing VC. The MACV detachment had 2 medics comprising a Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) team with equipment and supplies to provide limited treatment to the local population.

Tien Phuoc was a small firebase out in the middle of nowhere accessible only by air. To get there, I would go Chu Lai Flight Operations early morning and literally hitchhike a ride on any chopper (helicopter) going there or in that direction. Sometimes getting back to Chu Lai became a “milk run” of taking any ride heading to any base east and then picking up another ride at that base going east again. One trip back was from a base that had only one Chinook (nicknamed “[shithook](#)” although I never did see or hear of one crashing) from the “[Box Cars](#)” Helicopter Company heading to Chu Lai before nightfall. I took it and was the sole “cargo” in back. Even with earplugs, the engine noise was overwhelming and my ears were ringing for the rest of the night. It is



**With “cowboy” hat in my “hooch” room at Chu Lai Base Camp.**



**Duster on OP Sugar Mill Hill with firing sector covering river in the distance.**

important to note that [helicopters](#) were absolutely essential to all operations in Vietnam—with missions including observation and reconnaissance, command and control, artillery observation, medevac, transport of weaponry, supplies, and troops, search and rescue, and attack/assault. Chinooks, Kiowas, Cobras, and Loaches were widespread with Hueys,

and their distinctive *whop-whop-whop* prop wash sound, being the most prevalent and workhorse of the bunch. Without protruding armament, the Huey was called a “slick.” (See [helicopters](#) for those I previously named.) Since there was no air threat in South Vietnam, Dusters reverted to the ground support role and helicopters operated at will during the day. A few months later Tien Phuoc was (thankfully) deemed no longer tactically significant and was closed. All units packed up, the Engineers cleared an old trail of mines in front of us, and we all convoyed back to Chu Lai. That is until one of my two Dusters developed a vapor lock somewhere in its gas line (probably due to the daytime heat, temperature of the engine, and very slow rate of convoy movement) so we were left there about 2/3 of the way back to Chu Lai. Checking a map, we found a very small stream paralleling the trail roughly 100 meters to our north. We filled up every vessel we could find including our own steel pots (helmets) to cool down the gas line, the engine responded to this, and we were quickly on our way again to safety. Speaking of this, a common crew prank was to send a new guy replacement or “cherry” to the Motor Pool to ask for a *key* to the vapor *lock*.



**Duster on Nui Yon hill showing northern firing sector. We had several fire fights with VC in the distant tree lines.**

Shortly thereafter, this section of two Dusters was designated to join in the second operation at Khe Sanh which had been named Dewey Canyon II but was quickly Vietnamized to Lam Son 719 in hopes and expectations that South Vietnam’s Army, government, and citizens would “step-up” and take control of this large scale operation. I took my Dusters and a deuce-and-a-half (2½ ton truck) from Chu Lai up QL1 (main two-lane paved road following the country’s eastern coast through Da Nang, Phu Bai,

Hue, Quang Tri, into Dong Ha close to the [Demilitarized Zone](#) (DMZ) and then several kilometers (“clicks”) west on to an assembly area to join a convoy. My Dusters were to provide convoy security for 40+ other vehicles going forward on QL9 to resupply Khe Sanh. The convoy commander was a Major who spent most of the day repositioning vehicles, taking suggestions and directives from his higher headquarters, and making constant changes to his convoy plan. At one point he wanted to put one of my Dusters as lead vehicle until I convinced him that first, by doctrine they are positioned at the 1/3 and 2/3 points in any convoy to provide mutual support of each other, overlapping fires, and optimum coverage of the entire convoy and secondly, if a Duster on point out front hit a road mine and threw a track, he’d then have a 25 ton steel obstacle blocking and halting the entire convoy thereby giving the enemy superb conditions to ambush us like fish in a barrel. The remainder of the day continued to be disorganized like this until he

was told, at dusk, he would proceed with this convoy that should have already moved out by mid-morning. This is one of the most ill-advised operations I experienced in Vietnam—a *night* convoy on a narrow trail winding through forest and jungle, moving at a snail's pace into known hostile territory. That night there was no radio talk, just predetermined breaks in radio squelch to keep in contact and serve as commo (communications) checks, and I definitely did not have to remind my troops to zip up their flak jackets or keep their steel pots on. By the grace of God, we completed this road march without incident in spite of the reckless decisions of those in charge. After spending the remainder of the night in an old [B-52 bomb crater](#) for protection, we moved farther west after being ordered to defend a Field Artillery Battalion Headquarters with its Fire Direction Control Center which provided indirect fires in support of Army Infantry and Marines deployed even farther west. That Duster section made it back to Chu Lai safe and sound weeks later.

By now I was "[short](#)" and very close to my DEROS (date of expected return from overseas...the day all soldiers in Vietnam waited for since it meant the end of our tours). Because of operational commitments preventing otherwise, I was finally able to take my rest and recuperation ([R&R](#)) in Australia and experienced a truly relaxing week in that fine county. I left Vietnam on another contracted civilian airplane ("freedom bird") to return to "the world" as the U.S.A. was called after my year tour on 3 June 1971, the very day I was on orders to be promoted to Captain. So I did the ceremony myself and pinned on my new rank on the airplane flight home. Exactly one year earlier on 3 June 1970 on the flight over, I had promoted myself from Second to First Lieutenant in a similar pinning ceremony. And, I was very fortunate to be able to celebrate on *both* occasions with my two good buddies, Rum and Coke. I was also able to bring back with me two expended Duster rounds with shell casings certified inert by EOD and an old pair of jungle boots I had worn. When my platoon soldiers presented the ordnance to me at my end of tour, they calmly explained that they had had the empty shells engraved, soaked the rounds in mogas, and then chipped out the explosive, tracers, and fuse with a bayonet and knife!



**My jungle boots with XXIV Corps combat patches, inert Duster rounds (armor piercing left with high explosive on right), and shadow box with Vietnam and Army memorabilia.**

**EPILOGUE**

In that single year tour, I experienced firefights, mortar attacks, medevacs, destruction, wounded in action (WIA), and killed in action (KIA, both combat and non-combat/accident) including some of my own soldiers; these are not the focus of this paper and I will not elaborate here. There were no battlefield front lines and booby traps, mines, unseen or vanishing enemies, and mortar/RPG attacks with indiscriminate shrapnel might occur anywhere, at any time, or be from any direction. We learned to mourn losses briefly and just keep moving on.

We also learned never to approach or touch anything that was not known to be friendly lest it be booby-trapped, a lesson still being learned in the Middle East wars of today. I came home to a non-welcoming country but had no misgivings about having served it. I do not experience any regret, anxiety, depression, or related [Posttraumatic Stress](#)



**Actual time-lapse night firing of Duster at Firebase Birmingham.**



[Disorder](#) (PTSD) because of the Vietnam War. Baring a few who did not measure up to standards, most of the soldiers, Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs/Sergeants), and officers with whom I served were dedicated, conscientious, and willing to do any assigned task to the best of their abilities. Additionally, I make absolutely no mistake about it...regardless of whatever hardships or dangers I or my unit endured, Infantry soldiers (grunts) and units which withstood extended deployments in the jungle “boonies” braving enemy patrols, ambushes, firefights, and worse bore the brunt of the war and were the true heroes of Vietnam if any are to be recognized. Also high on this list were Huey pilots who performed daring drop-offs, extractions from hot Landing Zones (LZs with enemy present/ firing), and lifesaving medevacs (also called “dust-offs”), and Combat Engineers who cleared trails, built roads, and constructed bridges with little or no accompanying security forces for protection.

**My plastic scale model of a Duster—  
*one mean, green fighting machine!***

Although the confusing politics and blurred military strategy of the time were echelons above our ranks, the opinion of many younger military serving, myself included, was that the South Vietnamese, military and civilian, seemed disinterested, undedicated, and uncommitted to what was going on in their own country or with the prolonged American efforts to preserve their freedom. Moreover, many of us believed that Vietnam would fold when Americans left because Vietnamese people had unclear loyalties and lacked the resolve to carry on their own cause; and, of course, that happened. Having said that, I repeat that I have the highest regard for most of the soldiers with whom I served—subordinates, peers, and superiors alike. This was probably the strongest factor in my decision to make the Army a career, and I have never regretted that choice. I stayed in the Army as a “lifer” for 24 years and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, in large part based on the commitment, perseverance, and camaraderie of those soldiers with whom I lived and fought in Vietnam, not because of Vietnam the country, its Army, or its people. I understand that Vietnam nowadays is a travel destination with very fine restaurants and hotels, scenic tours and attractions, etc. I’ll pass.

Glenn Meigel  
El Paso, TX  
9 July 2018

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### SOME ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

- Glossary of Vietnam Military Terms & Slang.  
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- Google. One can “Google” most words and terms in this paper and find much more in-depth information.
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