

## Chapter 8 ; Combat Assault

Mar 12, 72 SHORT! 124 days and a wake up.

Everybody is eligible for a week of R&R. Some go to Bangkok, Australia, Japan, or Hawaii.

The transportation is free, but you have to pay for room board and entertainment while you're at location. I am saving money for a new engine for my 1966 Chevelle. I have paid most of my debts, but I really don't have much extra cash. I have a couple other reasons to stick around Lane.



One, I don't want somebody messing with Snow Snake, and more importantly I want to spend all the time I can with Linh. We are getting serious now and I want to spend as much time with her as I can. Usually it's just bits and pieces of time when I'm not flying. Many times when she is done with work she will sit in my room brushing her hair which is long to the middle of her back. It is jet black and

silky.

I was able to spend one day with her at the USO club beach at Qui Nhon. I was not able to pick her up, but arranged to meet her there. They had a radio telephone link and Linh was able to call her sister in the U.S.

It was really nice to spend some time away from Lane with her. We have talked about God. She is a Catholic and I am Protestant. We have also talked about us spending our lives together. The language issues make it difficult to understand the nuances of each others thoughts. With the increased enemy activity, all drops have been frozen, so I won't be going home early. That is not a real problem now. I am starting to work on paperwork to get Linh to the U.S. This is not something that the military encourages. It looks like this could be a long process, and I am looking into extensions which I've been told are also not going to happen. While getting short is an event greatly anticipated by most GIs, to me it is a clock ticking to point where the future is very murky.

When we went to the beach, Tom had gone without swim trunks, so he cut the legs off his pants. We are required to come back on base with full uniform. This caused a bit of a



problem for Tom, so he just held up the cut off bottoms with his hands. That presented problems of it's own since we had to be frisked on entry as well.

Things have really picked up on the flight line. Snow Snake is performing regular missions as well as the maintenance missions to cover for aircraft down for maintenance or battle damage. The regular missions are usually hauling rice and water to the ROK troops in the field. That is a grind. Usually if there is a CA

(combat assault) going on, we are standing by for recoveries.

The company has a trailer mounted machine shop. A frequent Huey maintenance item is replacing bearings in the main rotor control system. To accomplish this, you have to remove the entire balance bar and take it to the shop to press out the old bearings, press in the new ones and then reassemble the whole thing. If bad bearings are discovered on a preflight, the bird is probably scrubbed for the mission. I made a portable screw operated press specially for that application so the bearings could be changed while the balance bar is installed on the helicopter in minutes instead of hours.

Normally the M60 has a slotted flash suppressor. This looked like a good candidate for modification so I found a hunk of aluminum and made a dandy flared tip. Not that it did any thing useful, but you have to accessorize your stuff, you know, make it pretty. Nothing says high fashion like a well accessorized M60.



Today is a Sunday. Snow Snake is pressed into service taking part of a Combat Assault. We are the AMC (air mission controller) we have an American Colonel, some Korean commanders, and an Air Force forward Air Controller. Our mission is to mark the LZ's and coordinate air strikes and troop insertions from the air.

After we mark the LZ, the

area is bombed and strafed to discourage bad guys near by. The area we were working had never been penetrated with friendly troops, so we did not know what to expect. There were reports of an NVA regiment. Things went fairly smooth on the insertion until one of the cobras spotted a Tank. We called in an air strike on it. Afterwards we checked it out, and confirmed it was a tank. A water tank! Rest assured that this tank will give no one any problems.

We were just finishing up the last LZ insertion when we got word that a couple of Koreans had stepped on a land mine. We were the only ship close at the time so we went in to pick them up. One had a leg blown off, and the other had shrapnel wounds all over the front. Both guys were conscious, but in pretty poor shape. We got them to the field hospital at the Korean compound. I never heard if they lived or died.

When we got back to Lane that evening, we spent a long time washing out the blood. I was really whipped. I worked till 12:30 the night before, got up at 4am, and flew 10 hours, plus the post flight and cleaning.

After the combat assault, the troops have to be re-supplied with food, water, ammo and the other things troops need in the field. These usually are 8-9 flying hours with many hot refuelings. A hot refueling is filling fuel from the rubber fuel bladder "blivots".

We would fuel ourselves and write down the gallons on our own paperwork. No



stopping to process a credit card.