

Bunker Hill 10 Bien Hoa Airbase, 3rd Security Police Squadron, TET 1968

By Pete Piazza, *as told to Don Poss*
(With input from several who were there)

The TET 1968 attack upon Bien Hoa Airbase is described in [Chaplain Sheehen's stirring account](#) of Captain Maisey's heroic death, and actions of SSgt. Pete Piazza, Security Police Airmen, and Augmentee at Bunker Hill 10:

"Bunker Hill 10 is a reinforced concrete structure, built many years ago by the French. It is situated on the edge of the east perimeter road, a few hundred yards beyond the end of our runway. Immediately after the rocket attack the morning of the 31st, a large number of well-armed, pajama-clad Viet Cong communist troops, and North Vietnam Army wearing brand new uniforms, penetrated the fence East of Bunker Hill 10. They spilled out into the fields to the left and front of the old French bunker. The enemy subjected Bunker Hill 10 to the most intense fire imaginable, using their automatic weapons, as well as the devastating and destructive RPG-2 and RPG-7 rockets. At the outset of the battle, Bunker Hill 10 was manned by two Security Policemen, Sergeants Neal Tuggle and Marshal Gott, and an Augmentee, A1C Neil Behnke."

SSgt Piazza (Ret SMSgt)

On 30 Jan 1968, I had my resupply teams report to work at **1500 hours** to start picking up vehicles from the motor pool for the midnight shift and 'C' Flight Security. Later, when we came to work, we had two resupply teams: one for the E/S part of Bien Hoa Airbase and one for the W/N part of Bien Hoa Airbase. I was in charge of C-Flight resupply and assigned call-sign Defense 5. The 3rd Security Police Squadron was manning their posts.

At midnight, 30 Jan 1968, When we went in **Red Condition-I**, we had four resupply teams; one for each sector (A, B, C, D), and I had the north sector in the bomb dump area. Each resupply team had a blue USAF pickup truck full of ammo cans for M16, M-60, 40mm, cases of slap flares and hand grenades. There were two SP's in each resupply truck, and three to four Augmentees rode with them. The Augmentees were the one's not assigned to a specific post.

At 0300 hours, as the noncommissioned officer in charge of four resupply teams, I was on the perimeter road in my truck when the first rocket attack began to hit Bien Hoa Airbase. I noticed flashes coming from the flightline area of the base. Then someone called over the radio that we were under rocket attack. I stopped the vehicle and told the three men with me to take cover. We could hear the rockets go over us and see them hit the base. After ten minutes or more the attack stopped, and we had received about 45 rockets and mortars by then.

When it momentarily ceased after about 10 minutes, I got my men together and started back to the main part of base, but only got as far as Q-4 and heard Central Security Control (CSC) radio call for **Defense 6**, an east resupply team, to go to Bunker Hill 10 for resupply. The radio then reported that **Defense 6**, just dispatched to Bunker Hill 10, was pinned down by sniper

fire at the MP Checkpoint and unable to advance.

I believe we had about 25-30 SP's and Augmentees all total around Bunker Hill 10, but I never came up with all the names sad to say for some reason. Inside Bunker Hill 10 were two SP's, Sgt Neal Tuggle and A1C Marshall Gott, and Augmentee A1C Neil Behnke. They had one M-60 machinegun and three M16 rifles all total that I remember.

There were [SAT Teams](#) (three SP's and one QC). The SAT Team had an M-151 jeep, and the QRT had a 1 1/2 ton truck as best as I can remember, with fifteen SP's and Augmentees; Capt. Maisey, the Army Lt., I and Sgt James Lee from my **Defense 6** resupply team. The SAT Team and QRT each had an M-60 machinegun, and all had their M16's as well as a couple of M-79's and XM-148 grenade launchers. The M-60 from Bunker Hill 10 was not in use as it was blown off the top of Bunker Hill 10 and laid on the road in front of the bunker and out of reach due to heavy enemy fire.

We also had one M-113 (it was an Army track that was sitting over in the MAC Terminal that the Army really did not want since it was an older model with a gas engine, but it did not get into the fight that I remember. We did not have any V-100's either.

The "C" Area Supervisor was also there I believe and may have had one or two other SP's with him.

Speeding to the checkpoint, Sergeant Piazza stopped to pick up Sgt. James Lee, the **Defense 6** leader, left his three Augmentees with an Airman 1st Class Simmons, took a case of flares from Lee's truck and headed for Bunker Hill 10. Things were about to heat up.

Jim Lebowitz

[mailto:jlz9107@earthlink.net]

77 **On 30 Jan 1968**, I was at Bien Hoa AB during TET 1968.

78 Although I was not directly involved on the ground at Bunker

79 Hill 10, I had a ringside seat. I was the LE Desk Sergeant and

80 also served as the alternate Comm/Plotter for CSC.

82 **On 31 Jan 1968, at 0300 hours**, we were hit by rockets and

83 mortars and within a minute or so CSC lost all power and I took

over for CSC.

Within about five to 10 minutes, and while still under rocket attack, LTC Kent Miller, 3rd SPS Commander, came running in the back door of the LED building. He was still in the process of getting dressed and took over the radio and told me to continue with the plotting and maps updates and also keeps in contact with the Army on the HT 500 radio we had. *When he got on the radio, he calmed everyone down by talking to them as if sitting across from each SP and Augmentee one on one! He did his radio thing and let his CSC/LED folks do all the controlling and posting of info which helped a lot.* His presence on the radio definitely had a calming effect.

LTC Miller went to CSC but because they were off line he went to the LED (Law Enforcement Desk) and took over the radio. He did not come into the field to direct the fight as he knew he had good officers and NCOs out there that could do the job.

Throughout the attack and into the next morning I was using the HT 500 Radio and in contact with the Tactical Operations Centers (TOC) for the 101st ABN and the Army Liaison at Đồng Nai. *About 30 minutes into the ground attack I was called by the US Army Artillery Battery at Đồng Nai; also in our province N/E of Saigon and just east of the Bien Hoa Airbase. Some LT wanted to know the coordinates of Bunker Hill 10 so they could lie in artillery. Jon Hayes was on Reserve SAT, and A1C Marshal Gott was in Bunker Hill 10, so I told him that everyone was too close in for that and it would not be practical. He screamed, "Who the hell is running that show?" and asked for the officer in charge. I told LTC Miller what was going on and gave him the handset. He listened for a minute or so and his succinct response was "Bullshit." He shook his head and handed the mic back to me and said, "Screw him, Buddha." They never mentioned artillery again.*

After the matter of artillery was settled someone (it may have been Capt. Strones) called in about air support. I contacted the Đồng Nai TOC and shortly thereafter the Army 145th Aviation Battalion was in action with helicopter gunships.

During Tet there was only sporadic fire at both the Main and VNAF Gates. Both gates were manned jointly by USAF Security Police and VNAF QC. However, about two weeks after TET the Main Gate began to receive heavy fire from Bien Hoa City. I contacted the US Liaison officer at Đồng Nai which was adjacent to the base and he had Vietnamese Army sweep in from the town itself. Before dawn all firing stopped. I don't know if the sniper(s) were killed or just blended into the town. No bodies were found. Also, there were no USAF or VNAF injuries there.

Sgt. Luther Wade Young Lutheryoungable10@comcast.net

Bien Hoa AB

TET 1968

Luther Wade Young

January 31, 1968, 3:00am

30 January 1968: The night started out normal, as guardmount was over, and we departed for our posts. I departed for the bomb dump and my post. After the bomb dump opened I took over Able-10, my Tower post, for the balance of my tour. So, everything started out as a routine, normal night and there was no activity around the area of the bomb dump. After midnight that would all change.

0300 hours 31 January 1968: From my tower I was able to spot incoming rockets as they were fired toward the base from the north of our area. I called CSC and alerted them of the incoming impending attack. The incoming rockets stopped exploding on base around ten minutes later.

I heard over the radio that one of our K-9 handler's dog was alerting, and that's when the Viet Cong and NVA ground troops started their attack at the east end of the base. Since our troops in the trucks weren't needed in the bomb dump area, they were sent to other areas as needed. The bomb dump wasn't being attacked but we were all on alert for any activities until the fight ended.

I do not remember how long the fighting went on but I do know that I was on post for an extended period of time. My tower did have a search light on top; however during the early hours of the 31st I didn't use it.

Eventually the base alarm siren was moved to my tower because it would save time if I set off the alarm, then called CSC and let them know about the rockets and where they were coming from. The time saved would allow the base additional critical seconds and time to seek cover before the first impact. During one attack I was able to sound the alarm and a squadron from Ranch Hand was able to get into their bunker before a rocket hit their living quarters which were destroyed, but there were no casualties or injuries. This was a joint effort with all members of the 3rd Security Police Squadron. I did my part as did the others. It took a team effort from enlisted men to Officers to protect the Bien Hoa base.

SSgt Piazza (Ret SMSgt)

At about 0320 hours, one of the K-9 Sentry Dog handlers, A1C Robert (Bob) Press (3rd Security Police Squadron, K-9), was walking his post in front of Bunker Hill 10, called in and said he wanted to pop a flare because his dog Diablo (X313) was alerting. LTC Miller suspected a ground attack would follow the initial barrage and advised the handler to light up the area with a slap flare and see what he could. The handler popped a hand-flare and quickly saw Charlie inside the wire, and after a few seconds shouted over the radio: *"My God, they're everywhere—Charlie's in the wire!"* He was instructed to fire and Release his K-9, which he did. Airman Press was quickly wounded then played dead as Charlie literally passed over and near him. His K-9 Diablo, X313, who had sounded first-alarm, was KIA."

Another K-9 handler, and the men posted inside Bunker Hill 10, an old French-built concrete bunker, confirmed perimeter penetration and that they were then exchanging small arms fire with about 1,500 enemy troops attacking the east side of the base.

Bunker Hill 10 itself was getting slammed by the 274th VC Regiment, with eight companies of about 500 men who were attacking and trying to overrun or bypass it, and then hit the flightline.

About then we also had LP (listening posts) manned and several were reporting the enemy *was swarming all over*.

Later, we asked for help from the Army 145th Aviation Battalion and they responded near day break and finished off many of the enemy. By about 0730 or so the fighting was over.

At about 0320 hours, K-9 Handler A1C Robert (Bob) Press (3rd Security Police Squadron, K-9) was walking his post in front of Bunker Hill 10. He called CSC to report his K-9 was alerting

and wanted to pop a flare. CSC told him to go ahead and pop one flare. He did so and saw Charlie inside the wire. He called out over the radio that Charlie was in the wire and was instructed to fire and Release his K-9, which he did. Airman Press was quickly wounded then played dead as Charlie literally passed over and near him. His K-9 Diablo, X313, who sounded first-alarm, was KIA.”

Captain Maisey, with a SAT team of three men and a QRT of nine men, quickly reinforced the Bunker Hill 10 area. As we started down the road a K-9 unit stopped us and told us that Capt. Maisey did not want any more vehicles up at Bunker Hill 10, so Sgt. Lee and I left our vehicle and started toward Bunker Hill 10 on foot with a case of flares and our M16s.

I had heard **Defense 6** call in and state that they were stopped by sniper fire from the east, up at the MP check point. I headed that direction and as I pulled up to the MP CP, Sgt Lee, **Defense 6** Leader, had his men under cover. I told A1C Simmons, **Defense 6** rider, to take charge of my men and told Sgt Lee to come with me. We transferred a case of flares from his truck to mine and started back toward the west end.

About halfway down the old runway we turned off the road and got on the new runway and started back toward the East end until we came to the end of the runway. We then turned south toward the base until we came to the road that comes up behind Bunker Hill 10.

At 0330 hours, after we got there with critical resupply of ammo, I told Capt. Maisey that we had a truck full of ammo and other equipment nearby. About three or four minutes later **I started back toward the truck, which was about 200 yards behind Bunker Hill 10, and drove it to a point just behind Bunker Hill 10.”**

Arriving back at Bunker Hill 10, with the slap flares requested, Capt. Maisey had gathered several of the Bunker Hill 10, SRT Team and QRT Leaders on the west side of the bunker to make his plan for what was going on. While we were standing there a loud boom was heard from the front of Bunker Hill 10, and everyone was looking around to see what it was? We later guessed that was the first of the thirteen RPG rounds to hit Bunker Hill 10, and stuck between the sand bags and concrete bunker.

That RPG struck the sandbags just below the M60, and the explosion caused the M-60 machinegun placed on top of the sand bags to fall onto the road way below, and was not used until we picked it up later. It was not damaged as best as I can remember.

The VC and NVA hit Bunker Hill 10 with RPGs and small arms fire from the east, south, and some from the north. As I began to fire, an Army Lieutenant with Capt. Maisey had a XM-148 on his army issued M16 weapon. The LT said he did not know how to fire a 40 mm (grenade launcher), so I gave him my M16 and took it from him along with its ten rounds of ammo (40mm). I then started firing the 40 mm at Charlie, who was about 75 yards to the east of Bunker Hill 10; covering in a QC sandbag bunker they had along the MLR (main line of resistance). They fired 13 RPG rounds at Bunker Hill 10, and one had killed Capt. Maisey, but at that time no one knew he was hit, as they were engaged in a heavy fire-fight.

It was surreal and like playing in a western movie-like a scene from the western classic High Noon, or even a war movie-VC would fire the first round and once I heard it hit I would step

out and fire my round at them. During the firefight, Sgt Neal Tuggle and I were yelling to each other every time a RPG hit the bunker to see if things were okay inside or outside—we both got horse voices from all the yelling too. It was cover and concealment during the exchange of fire and lasted until someone was knocked off—like *sudden-death* in a sports game; except it wasn't a game and it would be deadly for someone; I was lucky that it was them and not me that morning.

I was firing from the south-side of Bunker Hill 10 at the time and had exactly one 40mm round left. The grenades were the only thing holding the VC at bay for the moment. I fired my 10th round and final grenade, which hit Charlie, and we heard a large explosion. I looked out and I could see three bodies flying up in the air, so I must have hit their ammo as there was a large secondary explosion.

After I had knocked out the VC RPG crew firing at Bunker Hill 10, **I went to get the pickup truck full of ammo as it was now parked about 50 or so yards behind Bunker Hill 10**, and drove it to the bunker. As I drove up to Bunker Hill 10, I saw some troops (about a platoon size) moving outside the wire next to Bunker Hill 10. I called CSC/LED to report this and asked if they knew of any of our troops moving up near Bunker Hill 10, as nothing was reported on the radio at that time. CSC's LED came back and said that no friendly forces were coming towards Bunker Hill 10 at that time.

I did not fire upon those enemy troops at that time since I was all alone and did not have any other SP or Augmentees covering my backside. The enemy had also moved thru the fence and was now moving towards the Aircraft Run Up area of the Flightline. That group of VC seemed to have ignored Bunker Hill 10, and was wearing what looked like brand new uniforms. I reported this info to CSC/LED and told them *we were now surrounded*, and then moved some of our SP's and Augmentees around to cover our rear.

For a while I was the only man outside the bunker and could see the enemy all around us. As choppers were firing overhead at the enemy, I kept shouting to the men inside the bunker and asking if they were okay. It was a miracle they could hear me, as their firing full-auto in such a tight-closed space was literally deafening.

The 145th AVB (145th Combat Aviation Battalion, UH-1 Huey and AH-1 Cobra helicopters) were flying around like rabid-hornets, shooting *danger-close* near and around Bunker Hill 10 at Charlie, their miniguns were feverishly chewing up everything indiscriminately—and *headed my way*—so I moved quickly down the bunker's five steps through a metal door opening inward—I do not think it was ever closed during the battle—and entered into the bottom part of the bunker where I quickly tripped over the body. I still did not know who was dead on the floor so I yelled again, hoping someone may have seen him in flare light or muzzle flash, but neither SP responded, their training by long forgotten sergeants had kicked in and their focus was totally upon killing whatever appeared in their gun ports—anyway, it simply was too dark to see your hand in front of your face.

Apocalypse ruled—white-amber light strobed through gun ports, mussel flashes danced a plague of strobing lights and insane shadows within, parachute flares kicked from an orbiting flare ship added macabre patterns of confusion, M16s firing, RPGs exploding with bone

jarring compressions, and throbbing eardrums threatening to burst—affirmed life was cheaper than ammo—Firing and reloading was the only way to assure life could last a few seconds more. Despite the carnage, someone paused his shooting and yelled that one man was dead—he repeated the phrase a few times, probably uncertain who had asked...or even if anyone had *actually* asked. There was no time for me to consider the body's ID any further—nor mourn a fallen brother—and it was quite possible, even probably, we would all join whoever *it* was within minutes, if not sooner. We were killing the enemy in growing numbers—just not fast enough to include their comrades still piling on.

Bunker Hill 10 was a cramped matchbox at best, an eight-side octagon-coffin at worst, being only ten-twelve feet across from wall to wall, and a tossup as to which it would become for us. We were fighting a determined enemy for our lives and survival—firing...reloading...firing...reloading—we needed immediate room to fight the enemy from inside the bunker, and the body was in the way. I grabbed the body's arms and I believe it was Sgt Marshall Gott who grabbed the ankles, and we picked him up and carried the body just outside the reinforced metal door and placed it on the steps leading up and outside the bunker. We laid *him* (I refused to think of *him* as an *it*) on the steps, with some cover from outside firing and explosions, with his head toward the top of the stairs.

After firing from the inside for a while, I noticed through gun ports there were fewer drifting flares and the sky wasn't lite up as much as before. I went outside the bunker again and could see drifting hazy-smoke columns from burnt out flares, and drifting like retreating soldiers. Stars were actually visible again in some places, so I started popping the rest of the hand-flares that we had, while talking on the PR-25 radio to CSC and trying to direct the fire power around Bunker Hill 10.

I really did not use my radio until after I heard CSC/LED (Command Security Control/Law Enforcement Desk) calling Capt. Maisey repeatedly and getting no response. That point is when I started giving info to them, and they were feeding info back to us as to the movement of Capt. Marty Strones' defense-line so that if we had to fire we would not friendly-fire at them. Although I was running ammo resupply and ended up assuming command at Bunker Hill 10.

CSC/LED did call me at one point and asked me to use the XM-148 to fire on the aircraft run-up pad area, because that was where VC and NVA were forming up. I had several rounds from the truck by then.

Now here is one of those unexplainable parts to this story! I tried to fire two grenades from the XM-148 grenade launcher, and two from the M-79 grenade launcher—neither would fire a 40mm round. I double checked each weapon and they seemed to be in good working order, but still they would not fire *any* 40mm rounds. The firing-pins did put a very small dent in the round, but not hard enough to fire off the round. I told this to CSC/LED, and wondered why this happened.

After the battle and during the debrief I learned that there had been Air Force personnel in the arming-shack hiding on the floor, and this was near the Aircraft Run Up pad area. My thought was someone was really watching over these folks and did not want me to fire on that area

for fear of hitting the shack and killing them! Later, I also talked to our armories and they had never heard of that happening to either of the weapons. We also fired them during the day and they worked okay, when firing off base, for some reason.

After very long six or seven hours of night battle, the growing daylight looked real good. As I looked over the battlefield, I could see a lot of dead—I mean *a lot* of dead Viet Cong and NVA bodies. As the day went on, we had to be very careful of not shooting any US troops making sweeps for enemy outside the base. I had a set of binoculars and could see the 101st Air Cav and the VC and NVA moving back and forth about a quarter mile off the east end of the base.

Capt. Marty Strones made a sweep across the Flightline towards the Aircraft Run Up pad area. Upon getting to the end of the taxiway they found a lot of bodies of the VC/NVA KIA and WIA. Then they began to sweep the aircraft Run Up shack area, and this is when Charlie tossed a grenade at one team of SP's and Augmentees. From what I was told this is when A1C Ed Muse (Edward Grady Muse , **Augmentee: 3rd CBT SPT GRP, 3rd TAC FTR Wing, 7th AF / 3rd Security Police Squadron**) was killed in action when they moved around a culvert; the first SP saw Charlie toss a grenade and shot at him, then went to the ground and yelled "grenade." A second SP, following him, came around the corner and hit the dirt, and then A1C Muse, third in line, came around the corner but for some reason did not hit the ground and walked right into the blast of the grenade and was killed.

I and four Airmen remained at the bunker all day, without food and little water, and helped give cover to Capt. Strones and the men who made two-sweeps with him through the field, just north of Bunker Hill 10. During both sweeps, we were called upon to give them fire-support, plus I would radio information from Capt. Strones to CSC, and vice-versa.

About 2200 hours, 31 Jan 1968, we went back to work with four resupply teams, north, south, east and west. It had been a moonless-starry night before the fighting started, less than 24 hours earlier, and now we all knew who our casualties were. Later we discovered that the body we had carried who was killed in action was Capt. Maisey. Although he had been wounded earlier, he had seemed to be everywhere directing fire and blocking the enemy. I was proud of the 3rd Security Police Squadron—and *still am*—and also sure Captain Maisey is too.

Sgt. Marshall A. Gott (Bronze Star Medal/Valor) <mrshgo@aol.com>

I never had occasioned before to go below Bunker Hill 10 until TET, and it was so dark inside you could not see your hand in front of you. Once someone fired through the portholes I left due to the noise and took up position under the fire truck parked at the back of the bunker. I never, to my recollection, ever saw any other fire truck, other than the one that was parked within 30 feet of the back side (West side) of Bunker Hill #10. Although it was an antique-like old French made fire truck, it was an Air Force and not a Vietnamese fire truck, supposedly there to possibly do weed abatement or removal.

All I recall about the firetruck it sat so low to the ground, possibly running boards, I took my off my equipment belt, and removed cigarettes from my pocket so I could skinny under the truck. When the gunship choppers arrived to give support, I feared they might not know I was there, or think I was a VC. At that time, I was not sure if the men in the bunker were

dead or alive. So I fired several rounds and tracers at the Viet Cong's position closest to me, from under the fire truck; they were on top of the berm S/E of our position and I could see their heads sticking up.

The berm, left from ditching around the end of the base, ran for a long distance. In places, it was as high if not higher than the bunker. On the back side of the berm was Bien Hoa and a bar and we could hear music. It was there I saw heads of VC looking over the berm at us, and they were very close perhaps only half a football field, if that. I then realized if I could see them due to the flares dropped then we were lit up too. It was from the berm they did the most damage with RPGS. But to my knowledge that was the closest they ever got to Bunker Hill 10, but they were able to hit the bunker 12-13 times, so I was told.

I really hoped the chopper pilot would be alerted to the VC position threatening us, and also that at least I was still alive. The 145 gunship opened fired on the VC and shell casings were dropping all around my position—that I will never forget as long as I live!

Days later, I believe they bulldozed the berm so the enemy couldn't sneak up behind it again for cover.

I don't recall if I ever went back to that post after that, and I shipped home in April.

[INSERT crows nest photo] Photo by: Michael Pollock, BH, 3rd SPS. 1968-1969.

Bien Hoa AB View of *Rocket Observation Post* atop water tower.

A long climb—but a great view.

Marshall A. Gott

No story would be complete without mention of Sgt. Luther Wade Young alerting the base to incoming rockets prior to the ground attack. He had a tower, Able-10 (metal crow's nest type) on the North side of the base, which was his regular post because no one else performed the incoming rocket-watch job as he did. He was so good at his at spotting rockets and alerting the base that he sounded the base rocket-alarm siren as soon as launched rockets left the jungle! The sirens' wailing alerted the entire base before the first rocket would explode on the base. Young also perfected his rocket-watch job to the point he was able to pretty much pinpoint the launch area and report that for counter-battery.

Just another AP who served with valor and honor that made our job a success. When rockets and mortars are incoming, seconds count. I am positive Young save lives, considering barrack type hootches and huts were often totally destroyed by rockets, and several KIAs resulted.

Pat Houseworth

"42 years later, [Luther Wade Young received the Bronze Star w/V.](#) At the Security Police Statue on the grounds of the Air Force Museum, Luther Young received his just honor...an honor he did not campaign or ask for. Luther Young, like most of us in the VSPA, was a young one term Airman; he became an unlikely hero, and was honored so in Dayton, Ohio.

In 2008, then Col. Marin "Marty" Strones, remembered the young Sergeant from those days and began a campaign to find Young and see that he got the recognition he deserved...he contacted the 3rd SPS Commander, of that time, LTC Kent Miller, and also Major General Mary

Kay Hertog, who at that time was Commander/Director of the Security Forces in Washington D.C.”

LTC Kent Miller

As the battle raged through the dead of night, Huey and Cobra helicopters, as well as a C-47 “Spooky” gunship lit up the area with flares and fired thousands of rounds in support and opportunity targets. The 145th were absolutely tremendous. Their three or four Hueys and Cobras were firing close up and nasty within maybe 30 yards just outside the Bunker Hill 10, and at times some of our troops had to run inside the bunker because they were definitely danger-close and right on target! All I can say is the 145th AVB choppers did their job real well and cut up Charlie outside the wire (MLR) so that helped us out a lot too. The Charlie's that did get inside the MLR by the Aircraft Run Up pad area got shot up too by the choppers and saved Capt. Marty Strones and the other guys from getting shot up crossing the open flightline too! They did a great job.” Later, when the helicopters began running out of flares, Sergeant Piazza left the bunker and “started popping the rest of the hand-flares that we had and also kept on talking on the radio to CSC (central security control), plus trying to direct the fire power around Bunker Hill 10.”

US Army's dawn arrival

Finally after the sun came up and if I remember right, it was about 0900 hours or so. The 101st AB Division, 2nd Btl, 506th Infantry Reg., came out with one M60 Patton main battle tank (MBT) and a platoon from the MP Check Point. They started down the road towards Bunker Hill 10 but stopped about 30 yards from the QC house that Charlie had taken over. Fighting was intense and they lost two APCs and the lone M60 Tank took 19 hits and lost two crewmembers, but remained in the battle. Then, in the confusion of VC running, darkness, smoke, and explosions, the tank turned its 105mm gun towards Bunker Hill 10 as if they were going to fire at us. *That did not go over well with us*, and I was called CSC/LED to report this, and tell them to contact the Army and have them go back into their area. After what seemed like a very long time the Army troops and tank moved back into the 101st AB DIV base camp area, and did not come out again to support us, thank God.

Chaplain (Capt.) Donald J. Sheehan's report posted at VSPA.com related:

When the enemy attack started, Captain Maisey was at the western end of the base. He immediately sped in his jeep to the Central Security Command Post. Realizing how critical holding Bunker Hill 10 was, Captain Maisey volunteered to go there to direct the defense of that area. Shortly thereafter, he arrived at the bunker and took charge of the men from the 3rd SPS in the vicinity of Bunker Hill 10.

The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army attacked the bunker with a vengeance. They knew it was the key to overrunning the east end of the field and the maintenance hangers, and other vital areas of the Air Base. The enemy hit Bunker Hill 10 with everything they had; about 12 direct rocket hits at point-blank range were recorded from the enemy. On top of the bunker, one rocket put Sergeant Tuggle's machine gun out of action. He went below, grabbed another weapon, and continued to fight from within the bunker. At that time, Sgt. Marshall A. Gott remained on top of the bunker, and continued to fire his M16 at the enemy trying to destroy the bunker. Captain Maisey continued directing and amassing the fire power of the 30 or so Security Policemen, in the general area of the bunker, on the enemy

within 75 yards of the bunker. Captain Maisey had to leave the bunker and expose himself to enemy fire in order to communicate by radio with Central Security Command (CSC). He did this throughout the battle while verbally yelling orders and directions to his SP Airmen around him, even when they were at times surrounded by VC.

Captain Maisey and the other men continued firing and kept the enemy pinned down not too far from their original point of penetration. No one knows how many enemies were killed by the men defending Bunker Hill 10, but after the battle more than 60 dead VC were found nearby.

Colonel Miller said in his post at VSPA.com that Captain Maisey "...was out on the perimeter probably five or six nights a week from 10 o'clock to 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. ." ." ." He was very brave about the whole thing. "Captain Maisey had asked Chaplain Sheehan if he would come along with him one night, saying, "The men are a bit jumpy. They'll appreciate seeing a chaplain."

Staff Sgt. William "Pete" Piazza: Silver Star recipient

As the chaplain observed, Captain Maisey's bravery was "uncommon and contagious" and other figures were also instrumental in the victory, perhaps none more than Staff Sgt. William Pete Piazza who earned a Silver Star for his gallantry under fire. In a phone interview from Oklahoma City, Piazza, 64, a retired senior master sergeant and secretary of the Oklahoma Heartland Chapter of the Air Force Security Police Association, recalled that night with clarity, providing details that shed more light on Captain Maisey's final moments.

Sergeant Piazza's report was a mundane portrayal of the heroism that earned him the nation's third highest award for valor. His inherent modesty and professionalism must have prevented him from saying more than he felt necessary about the chaos and death surrounding him and the small band of 3rd SPS defenders at Bunker Hill 10.

In a story headlined, "Bien Hoa Defense Likened to Famed Fight at Alamo" in the March 30, 1968, edition of the New York Daily News, Capt. Marty E. Strones, who also earned a Silver Star for his heroics at Bien Hoa, said, "The bunker would have started running out of ammunition, but one of our ammunition drivers, SSgt. William Piazza, heard they were in trouble and drove through enemy positions to supply the beleaguered bunker. This made it possible for them to hold out.

Chaplain Sheehan, in his VSPA article cited earlier, wrote "The bravery of the men in Bunker Hill 10 was matched by the incredible valor of other men of the 3rd SPS. Sergeants William Piazza and James Lee did the impossible and through a withering field of enemy fire drove a truck ... across what would seem an impassable field—a field alive with VC. The men dauntlessly drove right up to the besieged Bunker Hill 10, and under constant enemy fire resupplied the defenders of the bunker with enough ammunition to enable them to continue the fight. When one knows the terrain these men passed through, and remembers the confusion at the time, and the danger of their cargo, he stands in awe at their courageous feat. It seems impossible. But brave men made the impossible possible."

Howard G. Yates,

(**Augmentee:** 12th Air Commando Squadron / 3rd Security Police Squadron),
Bien Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam, 1967 – 1968

[Remembering TET and Bunker Hill 10](#) (full story and photos)

[For readers' convenience, Howard Yates' outstanding account of TET 1968 at Bien Hoa, including Bunker Hill 10, is presented in full. I encourage you to visit his story and photos as posted at [VSPA.com](#) and [War-Stories.com](#)]

Finally I can lay my head back and try to get some shut eye, but I doubt that I will. I'm too keyed up to sleep. This little bit of "home away from home" we call a hooch is quiet enough, except for some muffled conversation in the day room, but my mind is in overdrive rehashing the events of the last 24 hours and wondering what the next 24 will bring.

What the heck was I thinking when I volunteered to join the Security Police Augmentees (reserves) with those other guys from my outfit? That's just it—I wasn't thinking—I did it instinctively. I'd often thought about being a cop and even tried to enlist into the law enforcement field but my recruiter said I couldn't get in—he said I wasn't tall enough, or they didn't have any openings, or some other contrived reason. I think he just needed to fill a mechanic's slot and I was the lucky winner.

Anyway I was being offered a chance to hang out with the "Sky Cops" and get away from the flightline for a while, so they didn't have to twist my arm. Besides, what harm could come from spending some time with the Security Police? At least I'd get to carry an M16 instead of a tool bag and I wouldn't be getting all dirty and greasy. It sure seemed like a great idea to me. Little did I realize the gravity of my decision.

It seems like just a few short hours ago that several of us, including my buddy Larry Wasserman, were returning to Bien Hoa Airbase from the bustling little town of Bien Hoa. As we walked past the guard shack, the sentry asked, "Hey, aren't you guys Augmentees?"

I thought his recognizing us was so cool that I blurted out, "Yeah, we are."

"Well, you better get your gear and report to the SP armory, ASAP!"

"Why...what's up?" Larry inquired. The Security Policeman just glanced up with this "we're in a world of hurt" expression on his face and pointed to the security placard over the door—it was red. Now, we knew darn well what that meant. "Condition Red" means attack is imminent. Even so, we convinced ourselves that this was probably just a readiness drill.

We hustled to our hooch, grabbed our web belts, helmets and whatever else we thought we might need and made tracks to the SP squadron armory.

By the time we arrived, preparations for the defense of Bien Hoa Airbase were well underway. Weapons and ammunition were being issued at the supply window in a hurried

but very orderly manner. Security Police and Augmentees already equipped gathered in small groups, talking amongst themselves. Some were busy checking and rechecking their weapons while others were stuffing ammo bandoleers and every available pocket with extra ammo magazines.

The air was filled with an undertone of anxious chatter and an occasional plume of cigarette smoke. When it came my turn at the armory window, I was handed an M16 and told to grab some ammunition. I asked, "How much can I take?" Now, I don't remember this guy's rank or what he looked like, for that matter, but I do remember his overly accommodating reply: "Partner, you can take as much as you think you'll need." That comment dashed any thought I had of this exercise being a drill. I stuffed every pocket so full that I clanked when I walked.

No sooner did we get our ammo, when someone yelled, "Ten-hut!" An officer, later identified to me as Lt. Colonel Kent Miller, commander of the 3rd Security Police Squadron, walked hastily into our midst and began, "We don't have time for that," (meaning the proper protocol) and immediately told all present to sit down and listen up. He began his briefing by pointing to an aerial infrared photo map that had just been rolled out and made particular reference to the area shaded in red. (The Colonel's briefing was a long time ago so I will paraphrase his comments.) That big red blob you see to the east of Bien Hoa Airbase is what military intelligence believes to be a battalion-size concentration of North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers.

When I heard the word "battalion" I had no inkling of what that meant in terms of numbers (The Air Force had "squadrons" not "battalions"), but having seen most of John Wayne's war movies I figured that a battalion was more folks than we wanted to trying to get on base—uninvited!

I was assigned with Larry and a young fellow named Terry, whose last name escapes me, to ride with SP (Security Police) Sergeant Richard Lee and Airman First Class Simmons. Our call sign was "**Defense 6**" and our duties that night consisted of traveling the entire circumference of Bien Hoa Airbase, along what was appropriately called "Perimeter Road," delivering hot coffee, sandwiches, and ammunition to the various guard posts.

It was somewhere around 0200 hours (2 a.m. for you civilians) that we pulled up next to Bunker Hill 10 (an old French concrete fortification that was somewhat modified with sandbags and lumber to meet Air Force base defense needs). Simmons and Lee chatted briefly with a couple of the occupants and while I don't remember the exact conversation I do remember the exchange of several one-liners meant to fend off the anxious tension we all felt. As we pulled away Simmons told them we would see them on our next trip around.

We drove north along Perimeter Road and passed some 8 to 10 Augmentees, who had taken up a defensive-position, just south of the Army's Military Police Check Point. We exchanged some rather earthy salutations with them, also meant to ease the tension, and drove on to the MP Check Point. Even though the MPs at the check point were Army we did the Air Force thing and offered them some coffee. They told us they were good to go, so we moved on. We drove around to the west side of the Check Point and Simmons parked the truck. He told us we might want to grab a bite from our box lunches while we had the chance. In retrospect

the timing of his statement was perfect; eerie, but perfect.

I ate my sandwich and drank some coffee but saved my apple for later. I lit my C-rat cigarette and pushed my helmet back on my head. Almost immediately I heard this “crackling and whooshing” noise right over my head. My first thought was, “What the hell was that?” Within seconds I found out: It was the first of many 122mm rockets to slam into Bien Hoa AB in those early morning hours. It hit southwest of our position with a gut-wrenching explosion that plumed into a bright orange and red mushroom cloud. From our vantage point it looked as if our own squadron area (the 12th Air Commandos) had been blown to bits. I remember thinking, Oh, God, they’re all dead.

I’m not sure if it was Lee or Simmons but somebody yelled “Get out!” I didn’t have to think about it, I just reacted. We all hit the ditch alongside the road about the time the second or third rocket hit the ground. For a moment I thought I had swallowed an earthquake. My insides shook uncontrollably from the concussion shockwave. I kept telling myself, “You’re okay man, settle down,” but my stomach said, “Screw you, I’m scared.” Rockets cratered in for what seemed like fifteen or twenty minutes, and then all fell quite. This reprieve was to be short-lived.

Capt. Maisey had requested pop flares, and CSC/LED radioed **Defense 6** (that was us) to deliver some flares to Bunker Hill 10. Sergeant Lee promptly advised that sniper fire from outside the perimeter was keeping us pinned down.

Staff Sergeant Pete Piazza, **Defense 5**, supervisor of the re-supply teams, pulled up from the west and collected some flares from our truck. He put his three Augmentees under the control of A1C Simmons and had Sgt Richards accompany him back the way he came to find another route to Bunker Hill 10.

Not long after they left, a static filled transmission came over Simmons’ radio. It was a Windy unit (Security Police K-9 handler), Airman Robert (Bob) Press, calling **Defense 6** to advise that his dog Diablo was alerting strongly on the fence line and he requested permission to pop a hand flare. “Permission granted” came the reply. We could see the hand pop-flare streaking into the dark night. Pop! It burst into a glow bright enough to light up a football field and then began its slow wobbly descent. Almost immediately we heard a brief but distinct-intense sound of small arms fire. The Windy unit, we learned later, had stirred a covey of VC just outside the wire.

Then we heard “Pop-whoosh” noises on the perimeter and the darkness was illuminated by what looked like gigantic 4th of July sparklers. Simmons broke the news. “Trip flares—they’re coming across the wire!”

Oh, this is not going to be a good night, I thought.

I remember saying, more out of apprehension than curiosity, “I wonder how many are out there.” Without taking his eyes off the trip flares, Simmons came back with, “Hard telling.” Well, that sure didn’t make me feel any better. Then it started: small arms and machinegun fire erupted all over the east perimeter.

Simmons led us down a slope to a knoll about 15 or 20 yards from where we had left the truck. We ran, crouched and crawled through patches of burned elephant grass. The Air Force periodically burned the thick tall grass to provide a better field of fire for defenders to eliminate potential hiding places for Charlie (Viet Cong). The ash from burnt grass was like black talcum powder—it stuck to everything—and got up our noses, ears and eyes. If there was an upside to the stuff, I guess it was nature's way of blacking out our faces.

The VC attacking forces were making their way from the perimeter towards the interior of the base, in a westerly direction. Their path was to our south and took them directly into the unrelenting hail of fire from various Security Police positions, including Bunker Hill 10. The fighting was intense on both sides. We listened to the **Defense 6** radio to keep track of what was going on. The radio voices from the midst of battle were those of determination, and courage, but we could tell they were having a tough time of it.

Our direction from Simmons was fairly straight forward and simple—we were to hold this position because, "When they try to get out of here, they'll be coming right this way!" I dropped my head down and thought, "Damn, he had to say that."

Weapons' firing was intense and deafening. As I lay there peering over the top of the knoll, with my M16 poised for the inevitable, I suddenly felt the gravity of our situation. I was pretty sure that I wasn't going to make it home. I made my peace with the Almighty, asking Him for courage in the face of the enemy and to take care of my loved ones back home.

During the heaviest fighting we could see silhouettes running around the aircraft run-up pad, but due to darkness we were uncertain if they were enemy infiltrators or Security Police defenders. Not wanting to hit any Americans we held our fire until we were absolutely certain about our target. We could also see and hear the blistering fire power coming from Bunker Hill 10—the Little Alamo—as it would come to be known. We could see and feel explosions after explosions as VC and NVA hand-held RPG rockets blasted the bunker, but their defensive fire never stopped! I remember thinking, "Those poor guys are taking a pounding. I hope they can hold on."

Puff the Magic Dragon, an old C-47 aircraft left over from WWII and capable of turning the jungle into tossed salad with its 7.62 mm Gatling guns, droned overhead and began kicking flares—what a welcome sight. As the first couple of million-candle parachute flares drifted toward earth we were suddenly confronted by staggering dark figures, arms outstretched, looming out of the darkness. Three of us opened fire but the bullets ricocheted. Simmons looked at us and calmly and said, "Grave markers." It seemed we had parked ourselves right on the edge of an old French cemetery. Man did I feel relieved—stupid—but relieved.

About that time Simmons left to retrieve some hand-flares from the truck, but he must have gotten pinned down. It seemed like forever before we saw him again.

Tracers had been zipping all around but for some reason the fighting seemed to subside momentarily. Having been out there for what seem a lifetime (for some it was), but in actuality was only three or four hours, I had a hankering for a smoke, by this time our ears

were ringing and talking in a normal voice just wouldn't cut it. I got Larry's attention and motioned that I wanted a cigarette. He mouthed, "*I don't have any.*"

"*You don't have any—what happened to them?*" I shouted; smoking a cigarette was now a greater necessity than noise-discipline.

"I dropped the pack—if you want one, they're out there somewhere," and with that he pointed to the open field where the tracers had once again had begun to fly. I considered the field with a bug-storm of red and green tracers and thought "*Nah...never mind.*" So I took out my two cigars and tossed him one. I motioned that I needed a light by mimicking the use of a cigarette lighter. Larry looked at me, grinned and pointed to the open field. It was probably a bad time to light up anyway.

We knew from the radio-chatter that Tan Son Nhut Airbase was also under heavy rocket and ground attack. What we didn't know was—so was every other major US installation in South Vietnam.

As the SP Defense Forces began making progress in repelling invaders, we could see the enemy had apparently gathered in and around a drainage ditch east of the runway. We figured they were either regrouping for another try or preparing to get out of Dodge. We prepared ourselves for the onslaught of their retreat, but it never came in our direction.

Sometime before dawn I heard that familiar whup, whup, whup of Hueys and Cobra gunships rotors overhead. It was an Army Huey gunship. I don't remember if I just thought, "Hot damn. We got'em now!" or if I actually yelled it out. The Huey's dared a pass at the Aircraft Run Up pad and drainage ditch area and cut loose with a couple of rockets. Oh, that was so awesome! Then he circled around and hit'em again. On about his third pass he came way too close to us so Larry grabbed the radio and called **Defense 6**, yelling, "Break, Break!" He had to yell to clear the channel. "**Defense 6 to Defense Control.**"

"Go ahead **Defense 6**," came the reply.

"**Defense 6**, we are in an unmarked position, on the east perimeter near the old graveyard and the gunship is firing almost on top of us."

Control came back with an answer that we really didn't want to hear. "We don't have direct communications with the Army choppers; just try to let them know you're friendlies."

Oh great! I'm gonna die here, I thought. As the gunship made another pass overhead, Larry, in an attempt to signal the pilot, waved his hands and "shot him a bird." The door gunner, observing Larry's gesture, returned his salute and the pilot redirected his fury in the other direction.

The fighting continued well into the morning, but the resilience of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong was apparently running out of steam. Their small arms fire had but for an occasional burst fallen silent. We took stock of our situation and discovered that our ammunition had nearly been exhausted.

By the time afternoon rolled around, teams of Security Police, Augmentees and a handful of Army troops (from whence they came I have no idea) had begun forming up to perform security-sweeps to detect, apprehend, or neutralize any strangling VC or NVA. There were also reports of snipers on base which didn't do anything for my comfort level. On the other hand—maybe I'll find that missing pack of cigs.

Side-by-side we began a slow, methodical and very cautious sweep from the perimeter to the runway. As we neared the drainage ditch, which ran perpendicular to the runway, someone shouted, "Hold up!" I stopped and looked towards my left and saw a Security Police member (I think he was an NCO, maybe a Staff Sergeant) standing in the open, confronting a subject. There was a loud "pop" and the Sergeant went down. What ensued was a brief but devastating report from at least ten nearby defenders. Another VC had gone to the "Big Rice Paddy in the Sky."

As we conducted our search along the drainage ditch I was walking behind one of those army soldiers who showed up to give us a hand. He looked like he had been in the field for six weeks. He was dirty, smelly, grungy and unshaven but he was also loaded for bear and I for one was glad he was there.

Ahead of us and to the left, down in the ditch, was a clump of brush wherein several VC had set up a machinegun position. The VC machine gunner and a couple of his buddies were floating, motionless, on top of the bloody water. Suddenly the ground pounder in front of me let loose with a long burst from his Tommy gun. He killed them all—again. Then he turned towards me, spit a mouthful of tobacco juice on the ground and said, "I thought I saw one move."

Larry taped me on the back and commented, "That boy's been in-country way too long."

Rounding the corner of the maintenance shack on the east end of the runway, and still very vigilant for enemy snipers, I was confronted by a picture that will be forever etched in my memory: A Viet Cong guerilla fighter lay dead under a portable power unit (a big tractor) which he had mistakenly used for cover during the night. One of his arms had been peeled back at the shoulder and everything above his eyebrows was gone, the obvious result of intense fire power from the Security Police bunker on the air field. Somehow I overcame the urge to heave my guts out.

We completed our part of the sweep and were told to gather up near the end of the runway. The officer in charge dismissed several of us, "Men, go get some chow and some sleep. We will no doubt need you again tonight." Larry and I just looked at each other. I know what he was thinking, but I won't repeat it.

We turned to leave but lingered just long enough to watch the Quan Canh, South Vietnamese Air Force Police, interrogate a few prisoners, who were sitting on a log with their hands restrained. In a sudden fit of rage one of the Quan Canh rifle butted a restrained prisoner on the side of the head and knocked him to the ground. Now what he did was probably not in keeping with the rules of the Geneva Convention but I just grinned and thought, "Whoops—

wrong answer.”

The black-dust from the scorched elephant grass was smeared on my sweaty and greasy face. In fact we were all filthy, exhausted, and hungry. Our first priority was to head in the direction of the chow hall. As we approached the control tower on the way we notice a couple of officers surveying the damage to a shiny blue and bullet-riddled staff car. Suddenly one of the officers, a colonel, saw us walking toward him. We simultaneously rendered the best salute we could, given our condition. The Colonel snapped to attention whipped his hand through the air and popped one of the finest salutes I have ever seen on us. He asked us if we doing okay and I said, “Fine Sir, thank you.” He came back with “Oh, no, it is I who should be thanking you. You guys saved our butts last night.” As he dropped his salute he said something like, I’ll bet you men are tired and hungry. We agreed, and went on our way.

I had a suspicion that the cook wasn’t feeling very hospitable as we shuffled up to the serving line. He barely made eye contact but continued to wipe down the grill. “I just cleaned this thing so nothing till dinner,” he grumbled. We stood there in disbelief staring at him. When he did look up he got an eyeful. He saw four scruffy looking airmen, weapons slung over shoulders and the look of hungry puppies on their faces. He stared for a moment and then stammered, “Were you out there...on the perimeter...all night? Damn man—why didn’t you say something?” That was the best hot breakfast I’ve had in a long time.

I made a quick trip to the officer’s showers (they had hot water), washed off two layers of grime and then shuffled back to the hooch. I crawled into my bunk and laid my head back.

“Finally, I can get some shut eye.” I didn't think it worth the energy to find a cigarette.

Gary K. Hille

BUNKER HILL-10, Sat leader East end of Bien Hoa AB

[For readers’ convenience, [Gary K. Hille’s outstanding account of TET 1968 at Bien Hoa, including Bunker Hill 10, is presented in full. I encourage you to visit his story and photos as posted at VSPA.com and War-Stories.com](#)]

TET: Jan 31, 1968, I was assigned as Sat leader East end of Bien Hoa AB, My team consisted of (1) M-60 gunner, (1) grenade launcher, (1) 40 mm rifleman, and (1) rifleman. Our patrol area was the East perimeter from Bunker Hill-10 to the entrance to the airborne base, where the perimeter turned back to the west. My responsibilities included the care and feeding of the "windy" units (sentry dogs) and Bunker Hill-10.

At approximately 0250 hours, we were told to "stand down" from our alert, and preceded on our normal routine. We had run out of coffee and requested permission to go for coffee. As we left the chow hall we saw 122mm rockets start to impact on the perimeter and at the same time the base siren sounded. As we were already adjacent to the motor pool, we took refuge in their bunker. My fire team was first back on the air after the rockets walked past us.

We were dispatched to a point 30 yards to the North of Bunker Hill-10. Upon arrival, we left the Jeep, went across the drainage ditch, and set up our defense line: Gunner and Riflemen

together, 40mm to the right, and I to the left.

At that time, CSC called and said they had a wounded Airman at a Listening Post South of



Bunker Hill-10, and dispatched my team to pick him up. We returned to the Jeep, only to discover the clutch pedal was lying flat on the floor. I informed CSC of the situation and they dispatched the S.E. Sat Team to pick up the wounded man.

We went back across the ditch and setup positions again. Just as we got setup, a trip flare went off on the perimeter and I saw Viet Cong and NVA running from the perimeter fence and across the field where we had setup before going for more coffee resupply. I opened fire immediately and informed CSC that I was doing so—we really unloaded on the area of the trip-flare.

At that time I was the ranking NCO (SSgt) on the East perimeter. I therefore took it on myself to pull back all Windy (K-9) units, so they would not get caught in crossfire, and also coordinated our fire with the North perimeter

patrol, which kept Charlie from going too far north, and helped funnel them toward the M-60 bunker at the revetment. After they pulled back I coordinated the East perimeter defense until Capt. Maisey arrived.

(Luther Wade Young, I need to locate him as well)

James Cox jscscox@aol.com K-9 Pete, 5F40

My name is James Cox and my dog's name was Pete, 5F40. We worked together from May of 1967 to May of 1968. The night of the attack we were on post on the north east side of the bomb dump. There were no ground attacks in our area but lots of rocket and mortar explosion to our south. We had a small round bunker to take cover. We continued our patrol until the mortars and rockets began to explode to the south of us, at which time we took to the bunker until daylight. Around noon the next day we returned to the kennels. That was when we learned that the east end had been penetrated. We were then assigned to go and assist in locating KIA on the east end of the runway. There was a large pit dug at that end of the runway and that night we were placed at that post close to where the pit was and bodies still exposed, and had not been covered. I believe they were burned before the trench was covered. The thing that is still with me is the smell of the dead bodies all night on patrol that night.

I will send you some of the photos I took when I first arrived at Bien Hoa. There had been a rocket attack a couple of nights before in the K-9 & Base Police hut.





From: jcscxaol [mailto:jcscxaol@aol.com]

If you were standing with back to the taxiway it would be the K-9 lined parallel to the taxiway. These are on west end of row. Sorry I do not remember their numbers. I more photos of landmarks that everyone would recognize. The photo above is my dog Pete's military records. Some of the dates are wrong.

From: tizi82@aol.com [mailto:tizi82@aol.com]

Subject: TET 1968

The story of those 2 bases are well known by many skycops and also in books but is overlooked by the general public and also by other military Services, I've seen many articles on Bunker Hill 10 even in Squadron /Signal publication (color photos and drawing) and in the book of Battle of Saigon. No one seems to understand the role of the Security Police; skycops were used in Vietnam and Thailand and in attempt to rescue a ship crew. You did not have to be or train in safe side program to be in combat. The above 2 bases went through the largest attacks but I had friends who were at Nha Trang and they went through hell, Skycops went all over the Country during Tet some of the guys went to places like Con Thien, Dong Ha and other Marine bases near the DMZ to help in security for the radar stations that the Air Force operated. Those radar sites were targets that the NVA and Viet Cong did not over-look and like bases saw sappers' attacks, mortars and rocket attacks. Even Cam Ranh which got on Stars @ Stripes with it rocket attack on March 4,1968, 27 rockets and was a stand-off on VSPA it is never mentioned. I think it is great you are talking about these bases but what happen at Danang, Qui Nhon, Pleiku, Nha Trang and others bases, plus in Laos during this time I believe a radar site was over run (were there any skycops there?). How many skycops left the bases for such assignments as village sweeps with ARVN soldiers in middle of the night, convoy duty? A lot of skycops never left the base grounds other than OP's and LP's. Working with Allied Police with other military services and the QC's, National Police and Korean MP's and did jeep patrol on Highway-1 again in the middle of the night and 24-7 , Can you expand the areas you are writing about or researching?

Conrad Gomez

Cam Ranh Bay AB, 1967-1968

LTC Kent Miller

3rd Security Police Squadron Commander
Bien Hoa Airbase
Tet 1968

Victory in battle can be measured in a variety of ways. Territory captured or defended and casualty losses verses enemy losses are probably the two most frequent measures of success in battle. Using these criteria, the battle won by the 3rd SPS during TET, 1968, can only be measured as a stirring victory. The battle took place in Bien Hoa AB, Republic of Vietnam, during the North Vietnam TET offensive, January/February 1968 . The 3rd SPS killed and captured 160 enemies while losing two of their own, for a kill/capture ratio of 80-1.

The battle started with a long rocket-mortar barrage. Undercover of the barrage, the enemy maneuvered undetected through the mined double-chain-link perimeter fence line until detected by a sentry dog [Diablo X313, KIA] and his handler Robert (Bob) Press. The combined VC/NVA (North Vietnam Army) force fought their way on base as far as the aircraft engine buildup area, approximately 50/60 yards from the reveted F-100 aircraft with the SP's taking them under fire all the way. The enemy's initial thrust was impeded by sentry dogs and their handlers, bunkers manned by SP machine gunners and riflemen, Sabotage Alert Teams (SAT) with jeeps-mounted M-60 machine guns and Quick Reaction Forces (QRF)

riflemen. The enemy advance was halted at the engine buildup with a counter attack led by an NCO. Bunkers were bypassed and in some cases surrounded, but none were overrun.

One of the SP KIA's (the squadron Operations Officer [Capt. Maisey]), received a direct hit by a shoulder-fired rocket launcher (RPG), while directing the defense of an old French bunker [Bunker Hill 10] on the perimeter. The other SP lost was an Augmentee [A1C Muse, KIA] (about 50 Augmentees had been trained by the SP's to help defend the base) KIA by a grenade during the fight at the engine buildup area. Fighting continued until dawn when the flight commander formed a skirmish line and drove the enemy, not already killed or wounded, back across the base perimeter. The perimeter fence line was 10 miles in length and although the ground attack only came from the east side, sniper fire was received from other directions most notably from north perimeter which was adjacent to the city of Bien Hoa. US Army ground force did not arrive until after day break when only enemy wounded and stragglers were left on the base. No Army of South Vietnam (ARVN) personnel were present during any part of the battle. The US Army unit pursued the enemy outside the perimeter and drove them back into the jungle.

The SP Squadron had no crew-serviced weapons, the M-60 machine gun being the heaviest weapons authorized. Fortunately, the Army 145 Aviation Battalion was stationed on the base and throughout the battle gave unwavering air-support to the SP's; without the 145th's support undoubtedly the squadron would have taken additional casualties. At one point during the battle the squadron borrowed a recoilless rifle team from the QC (South Vietnamese Security Police), to dislodge some enemy holdup in a shack. In addition to no crew-serviced weapons, no armored vests, no perimeter lighting, gasoline filled drums, claymore mines or searchlights to cover enemy approach routes. We had no armored vehicles, only jeeps, pickup trucks and stake trucks borrowed from the motor pool for QRT's.

Fortunately 7th AF placed the squadron on maximum alert that afternoon prior to the attack but we were not told why, so many of us thought this were just a prolonging of the many false intelligence reports received in the past.

After Action reports listed the enemy forces at two battalions and a reinforced CO [1600-2000 VC/NVA]. This meant the squadron was outnumbered 4 or 5 to one as our Present for Duty (PFD), including Augmentees were around 400.

The Security Police were prohibited from operating outside the perimeter. The Army was responsible for security outside the perimeter. The official scenario was that we would never be attacked by more than a platoon. On previous occasions when the Squadron had conducted night ambushes or perimeter sweeps the Squadron Commander was called in and told to halt such operations as the Army had everything outside the perimeter under control. Prior to the attack, higher authorities were notified that the majority of the time no Army was securing the perimeter. The Squadron Commander was told otherwise and to keep the squadron inside the perimeter. The only official exception was that 50 squadron members were granted permission to attend the 173rd Airborne Brigade's week long training they gave all of their new troops. The training climaxed with a helicopter assault into the base, a night defensive perimeter and a search mission back to the base. The 173rd main base was tied into the Air Base and was also attacked during TET. The Division replaced the 173rd earlier

but they only had a rifle CO and MP's at their base camp and were hard pressed to defend their area.

TET was not the squadron's first encounter with the enemy. During 1967 numerous enemy sapper teams (sabotage team), were stopped at the perimeter sometimes in brisk fire fights. In August 1967, the squadron captured their first prisoner in one of these firefights.

Numerous decorations were awarded squadron personnel as a result of the TET battle, including Air Force Cross, Silver Stars, and Bronze Stars with the Valor devise. I do not know the total number of decorations awarded as I rotated prior to any being awarded. Also, I do not know the disposition of the 10 or 12 wounded as the most critical were evacuated off base immediately after the battle.

I am aware that due to the bravery, ability and devotion to duty of the Junior Officers, NCO's and Airmen, the 3rd SPS were not out fought. Although out-gunned and out-numbered they were ready and willing when called upon to do their duty. They thought they were the best and proved it.

Article by **Mike Campbell**

Read the full article: [Maisey Building rededication honors fallen hero of Bien Hoa](#)

As the battle raged through the dead of night, Huey and Cobra helicopters, as well as a C-47 "Spooky" gunship from "somewhere off base," according to Colonel Miller, illuminated the landscape with flares and sprayed covering fire from above.

"They were tremendous. There were three or four Hueys and Cobras. They were firing maybe 30 yards outside the bunker, and at times some of our troops had to run inside the bunker. They did a great job. " Later, when the helicopters began running out of flares, Sergeant Piazza left the bunker and "started popping the rest of the hand-flares that we had and also kept on talking on the radio to CSC (central security control), plus trying to direct the fire power around Bunker Hill 1."

Though the bunker was besieged from nearly all directions, one area in particular concerned Sergeant Piazza, who took command after realizing Captain Maisey had been killed. On their left flank lay a meadow of the thick elephant grass indigenous to Southeast Asia, offering excellent cover their enemy tried to exploit. "It's very thick, very high and you can hardly see anything," Piazza recalled. "But you can move through it very quietly. That's where Charlie was moving through.

"Our guys got most of them, the guys behind us," he continued. "Captain Stones had set up a defensive line along the area from Bunker Hill 9 to the runway, so that anybody that tried to come across the parking ramp from the run-up pad toward the aircraft that were parked there, they would have been shot because there's no cover or protection. They got most of them in a little drop-off area behind it, and that's where most of the bodies were found except for those we got out of the elephant grass area."

Two different enemy body-count totals have been published, 139 and 153, with 25 taken prisoner. Captain Maisey (SP) and A1C Muse (Augmentee) were the U. S. fatalities, plus handler Robert (Bob) Press, the K-9 dog handler who was caught out in the open in the first moments of the assault, was wounded, and his K-9 Diablo X313 shot dead. Fourteen Americans were injured in the Battle of Bunker Hill 10.

Barry Lyons

From: Barry Lyons [mailto:barlyons@aol.com]
Subject: Re: Bunker Hill 10 TET

Vietnam TET 1968

Bien Hoa Airbase

An Air Force Security Police Augmentee Story

3rd Security Police Squadrons

© 2015 by, Barry W. Lyons (Major, Ret.)

3rd TAC fighter wing, Air Maintenance Squadron (Electronics)

I enlisted in the Air force in February 1966, and went through basic training at Lackland AFB, TX followed by a couple weeks on hold at Amarillo AFB, Texas, and then sent to Chanute AFB, IL for technical training as an Automatic Flight Control System Technician (AFCST). I graduated from Tech School in November 1966 and was sent to Luke AFB, AZ for phase-2 of my training. My training at Chanute was pretty broad based covering a majority of AF aircraft, however, when I got to Luke my field training was focused on the F-100 which had a fairly simple system on it. I was told I would likely spend six months in training at Luke and then be sent to Vietnam.

I arrived at Bien Hoa AB, RVN, on a TWA Boeing 707 at noon on August 2, 1967, and departed Bien Hoa on a TWA Boeing 707 at 1:00pm on August 2, 1968 – a little unusual, but exactly one year. Sometime around October 1967 several of us were sitting in the office and began talking about how we really didn't know what happened once our planes left the ground. We were even allowed to go downtown Bien Hoa during the daytime and see the marketplace, river, and bars. At night we could see AC47 Gunship tracers and flares from various sources, and hear the sounds, but didn't really see much evidence of a real fight going on. One of the guys, kind of a cowboy type that was nearing the end of his tour, said that you could just go over to the Army Helicopter area and bum a ride on a Huey Gunship. He said it may take several tries, but he had managed to get several rides during his tour. While this sounded intriguing it was a little more risk than I was up for and I knew if I got caught by my boss I'd probably get an Article 15 and be busted (reduced in rank). I was also turning 21 in mid-Oct which provided me with enough additional mature brain cells to realize that this wasn't the best idea in the world.

However, he also said that the Air Force 3rd Security Police Squadron on base had backup augmentees that were drawn from the Avionics and other shops and that the current bunch would be going home between then and Christmas. So I asked how I might become an Augmentee and he said he'd take care of it. The next thing I knew I got a call to come over to the SP area and go through training to be an augmentee to help support the SPs when needed. I was excited because I thought I'd now get a chance to observe some of the action from an SP perimeter guard station. On the other hand, my boss wasn't near as excited or at least in the same way I was! Actually my direct boss was a Technical Sergeant responsible for the AFCS shop. Although stern about doing things the right way he was fair and taught us how to do a good job which at the bottom line kept the planes flying. The Captain on the other hand liked to yell at those reporting to him so

my Boss took the brunt of the yelling when the shop received the memo assigning me to this extra duty role. Needless to say neither were very happy and for good reason because if I was off on extra duty then that left the shop shorthanded. Fortunately the workload was light during that period and they were able to juggle things and cover the work. Looking back not only was this a dumb move (what was it that my Dad advised when talking over the fence at home with some of the other local WWII vets? – oh yes, don't volunteer for anything!) but also selfish on my part for my workmates. Oh well, what else was there to do?

So we got trained as SP Augmentees. Most of us didn't know each other because we had been picked (or volunteered) from different shops so as not to short-man any one area. From what I remember the training wasn't very in-depth to be honest. I expect all of us had M16 training before leaving the states. But now we went thru it again. I always thought it was fun (we shot at nonmoving targets with the M16 trigger set on semiautomatic so you only fired as fast as you could pull the trigger). We also had to dismantle, clean and reassemble our weapon. I did well enough to get the Small Arms Expert Marksmanship ribbon. We were generally told not to use fully automatic mode because it used too much ammo too fast and if you weren't experienced it was easy to let the end of the barrel climb up toward the roof with the trigger set on fully automatic. Holes in the ceiling were not appreciated by the trainers. When it came to the M60 they showed us how to load and fire but the actual demonstration was done by a couple SPs. Oh well I wouldn't need to know how to use a M60 anyway.

We were taught how to say "halt" or "hands up" or something like that when we got close enough to communicate with the enemy – we were just out there to observe and support the SPs, weren't we? They also told us not to shoot if the enemy was in a surrender position. Did I say "observe?" As you can tell these lessons were not something I remember well and hadn't planned to use anyway.

So, we were loaded onto trucks and began our familiarization tour by going from the SP area west toward the end of the runway and around to the South side. The runway ran east-west for a length of 10,000 feet (about 2 miles) with a taxiway/ramp running parallel on the south side. We were told sometime during 1968 that we were the busiest airport in the world, including fixed wing aircraft and helicopters. It was said that we were just ahead of Chicago O'Hare. I can't verify that claim, but it certainly was a busy place. We drove on a side road on the north side of the runway which included going by the ammo dump, firing range, fuel storage and other logistic support areas. As we passed these areas I noticed that most had some level of sandbag protection. Riding along trying to take it all in I also noticed there were a few individual circular sandbag barriers about six foot in diameter and 3 foot high – big enough for 2-4 guys to "jump in" if an attack occurred. I assumed that the SPs had built those there to provide a safe holding area if attacks occurred. We continued east down along the north side to the east end of the runway. I was told the 101st Airborne was headquartered off to the north-east but we didn't go that far over. I assumed they thought they had things well covered from their direction. We went around the corner and across the East end of the runway/taxiway where a road split off to the east and slightly to the south. We went a little farther south and intersected with a road coming out from the aircraft ramp area with five or six F-102s on interceptor alert in case the NVA made a bombing run at us from Cambodia (as far as I know this never happened). And finally another road came out going east from the ramp area that included about ninety F-100s. The three roads came out going east from the ramp area and all merged *into* a single road that went east, past a cement structure called *Bunker Hill 10* (not sure how it got that name) about 100 yards through some swamp/rice patty area and turned north to the 101st area. From the beginning of the F-102 ramp several paths could be taken either along the north or south side of the F-100 ramp on across to our A-37 and F-5 ramp and on over to the Vietnamese A-1E ramp. Then the ramp went by the control tower (I still remember the sign on the control tower that said "Bien Hoa 34 feet ASL), and down to the parking area for C-123 defoliation aircraft and then to the parking ramp for freedom-birds personnel and cargo loading and offloading ramp for the other aircraft that came to visit.

The afternoon of January 30, 1968 the SPs and augmentees were ordered to report for duty at the SP area. We were issued helmets, flak jackets, M16s and ammo. Some of the SPs also got M60 machine guns and grenade launchers and more ammo – *this was starting to sound serious!* The SP leadership gathered up everyone and told us there were rumors that the VC were going to launch a series of attacks across the country sometime during the Vietnamese New Year – TET. That meant possibly tonight! I was directed to join a group of about fifteen Augmentees and five SPs. We were taken out to one of those sandbag barriers between the runway and taxiway about a one quarter of the distance from the East end, and were in position prior to dark with nothing to do but speculate on what might happen, and eat some C-rations and drink coffee. Most of us came from different units/shops so didn't know each other. (So far I have yet to make contact with anyone sharing this same experience or even more of what comes next.)

The SP truck came around again about 2:30am to check on us and brought something to munch on and more coffee. Time passed and the coffee was not the best but helped dull the chill, when suddenly over toward the control tower there was an extremely bright flash of light and sharp crack of vibration in the air – it was 3:30am! I threw my tin coffee cup I know not where and jumped into the bunker with at least one other guy right on top of me. I wiggled around to get my “partner's shoe” out of my face and so I could see a little bit as there were more explosions impacting – some were mortars and some more larger rockets (records vary but...?). Fortunately for us the VC's aim was for the base buildings and aircraft and not at us out in the middle of the taxiway/runway. That quickly changed as the impacts seemed to have tapered off, and we could hear small arms fire everywhere. We were ordered to load in the truck as it started heading over toward the F-102 area and then on east and north toward the perimeter fence.

The truck stopped and we were told get off and establish a line to guard the fence. Easier said than done because I couldn't see anything, the grass was three feet or so high and there was gunfire supported by tracers everywhere. I remember remarking to the guy next to me that this wasn't like the movies where you could see everything going on. We moved to our left until we came to the road that ran down East from the F-102 area past a 6- 8 foot high old French cement bunker (later learned this was designated *Bunker Hill 10* and was where Capt. Masie was killed by a RPG—I do not know at what point Capt. Masie was killed). The VC were trying to capture the bunker and were firing mortars, rockets, RPGs, and small arms at it. There were three or four guys in the bunker so the rest of us (15 or so) were directed across the road to the west bank of a drainage ditch running north from our position. Two SPs and myself and another augmentee were directed to move forward (east) across the dry drainage ditch such that we could cover that side of the ditch. This made us nearly parallel to the Bunker Hill 10. The SPs had a M60 and were shooting East with lots of red-tracer fire. I was facing more North down along the drainage ditch and toward the 101st AB. We were starting to get flare support from C-47s, I think, and it allowed us to see the VC crossing the ditch between us on their way toward the aircraft ramp. When the parachute-flares went out it was incredibly dark. By watching closely I learned the VC response to the flares as they lit up and then went out and I started concentrating my fire in coordination with those movements. The SP with us asked what I was aiming at, but was satisfied when I quickly explained.

Along about this time I started wondering what my wife, parents, sisters, schoolmates and others were going to say at my funeral. How could I be a part of this big sophisticated country supported by incredibly sophisticated and powerful weapons and still be so close to losing my life? I never got an answer. My thoughts were interrupted by the head SP who told me to go back west across the ditch and get some more M60 ammo that someone had managed to drive down in a truck or something. So I went down the four foot face of the ditch, climbed up the other side and over to where they were passing out the ammo. I was told to kneel while someone put several “lays” of ammo belts around my neck till it was all I could carry. I turned and clawed my way back down the side of the ditch, across and up the other bank only to find out that I had had the safety off the entire time I had ran over and back. That realization still scares me about as much as anything, but fortunately I didn't accidentally pull the trigger. I just about threw up thinking what

could have happened, but I didn't have time. It still scares me. And while I'm not making excuses in hindsight this looks like one of several safety training deficiencies – *make sure you know your Safety setting*. I also discovered that I had been given M60 instead of M16 ammo. Pete Piazza and I have recently discussed this and apparently the M16 magazines were packed in wrappers and what I got instead were M60 bandoliers of loaded shells.

We were doing ok with the M60 ammo the SPs had, so I and the other augmentee used the M16 ammo and we were all just careful to conserve for a while. This seemed like another area of weak training – *double check actions that depend on others and yourself*.

All at once I got a tap on my shoulder and the M60 boys were headed back across the drainage ditch. We hadn't totally stopped nor seen all of the VC from coming along our side of the drainage ditch toward us from the 101st AB area. They had gotten within about 30 yards of us and in our sight! As the 4-5 of us ran back to the other side and climbed up the four foot bank, the 12-15 SPs and Augmentees that had been holding that position made room for us and provided a blanket of cover fire. This left us all laying on the top ridge of the ditch, but it was starting to get light – a blessing and a risk. Who could see who first!

We maneuvered into position on the top edge of the drainage ditch, hugging as close to the ground as possible, while watching for movement across the side of the drainage ditch near where we came from. A SP was behind me with a radio, which was being drowned out with constant chatter, when there was a sudden brilliant flash and very loud explosion. The VC had fired a B40 rocket, or something similar that hit on the face of the ditch right in front of us. Fortunately, it had hit down near the bottom of the ditch wall and the concussion only blew the helmet off of the guy next to me, but at least temporarily left several of us without hearing except for a loud ringing in our ears.

Things really heated up and everyone started firing in the direction the rocket had come from. A SP a couple positions away had a grenade but apparently had never thrown one because he was looking for volunteers. I took it from him and was shocked at how heavy it was – aircraft mechanics don't usually throw or even touch a grenade—so I gave it back to him and asked that he keep it away from us so we didn't have any accidents. Then the guy next to me pointed to the end of his M16. The four pronged fire suppressor at the very end of the rifle's barrel had been grazed by what looked like was probably an outgoing slug – possibly even one from my M16. I looked at it (who put me in charge) and suggested that he not fire it unless we were down to a situation that we really needed to fire. Right then we had enough men returning fire that it wasn't necessary for him to risk the rifle blowing in his face if he fired it – looks like another training issue “formation” firing.

A few times when I was firing I felt something hit my boots. I checked for damage but didn't see any blood and my boots were in one piece. It happened a couple more times and I finally figured out what it was—empty shells that were ejected from mine or my neighbor's weapon and bounced off of my boots. Guess I hadn't fired in such close quarters before – more real-time training.

One of our guys thought he saw some movement on the other side of the cement bunker. He went after the VC but neglected to ask for covering fire from us. Instead I think he took one in the chest and had to be dragged back behind us to where they got him in an ambulance and taken back to the base medical facility (As far as I know this airman survived ok. It was not Capt. Masie.) .

We were near the AP with a radio but could hear nothing but chatter—a lot of “break 6” calls and scared airmen. Finally whoever was on the other end of the radio [LTC Miller] got everyone on the network to settle down and communicate. Soon after the B40 attack on us someone got a Huey Gunship from the Army helo area up by the main base entrance and sent him our way – we now pretty well had the enemy pinned down everywhere, but as evidenced by the rocket fired at us there were still pockets of enemy capable of doing deadly damage. However we were finally going to get rescued.

Most of us were watching the SP guys start to sweep the field from the east end of the runway between the 101st AB and toward us when all at once the Huey came up from behind us about 40 feet off the ground

firing their M60 and launching several rockets at the location where the rocket fired at us had come from. As happy as we were for the support it literally scared the hell out of us by firing so close overhead. Our radio operator figured we now had enough help, with the field sweep continuing to get closer, and that we could now take it from there. It was time for at least one more scare—coming from the opposite end of the runway—as a series of loud pops kept getting louder and louder and closer. It was obscured by streams of smoke and flashes, but when it got closer it turned out to be a RF4 photo reconnaissance aircraft taking a series of photos directly down the length of the runway. The cavalry had finally arrived and we got documented!

Now for the real scary part: Several of us went back across the drainage ditch (again) so we could back up the sweep team as the VC positions were captured and cleared one by one. One of our folks knew (or paid attention to our training enough) that 5-6 VC were starting to surrender right in front of us. They were being told to stand with hands in the air and move out of the trench along the ditch they were hiding in. Suddenly there was a burst of gunfire (why I'm not sure) as the VC twisted and fell back into their holes. I had my M16 aimed at them, but didn't pull the trigger as I saw them trying to surrender. Our sweep leader got everyone calmed down and again talked the VC into coming back out in the open. They were told to remove their clothes, what little they had, so we could confirm they didn't have any concealed explosives or weapons on them.

The VC were all bloody from various wounds, but the one I remember the most was a fairly tall enemy who had his foot mostly shot off and several other wounds. I couldn't imagine how much it must have hurt! I also looked at several places where the helo rockets had exploded, and saw that they didn't really do a lot of damage as they had hit in some high grass area which buffered the impact and damage—but I still wouldn't want one in my lap.

Our group started to split apart, and several of us worked thru the rice/grass field east of our night position to where the road turned to the left up to the 101st AB area. We were in a couple feet of water most of the way and I could just picture a cowboy movie where the guy hides in the water while breathing through a straw until all at once he jumps up right in front of the other guy and shoots him. Fortunately I didn't have that happen but I did come across a VC body on a small rise. As others noted, it looked like he had possibly shot himself in the head, probably when it had started to get light, and like us was scared he would be captured. Who knows what they had been told would happen to them if captured.

I finally was released and walked from the Bunker up the road to near the F-102 area. When I got there I sat down on the edge of the ramp, and in the warm sun fell asleep—exhausted. I don't know how long I dozed off, but I woke to the sound of voices and a vehicle pulling a wagon nearby—it was the captured enemy loading their dead. The wagon was pretty full—maybe 40 bodies with numerous wounds from head to toe. I stood there a few moments wondering what their story was and whether their families would ever know what had happened to them. I suddenly realized that I was totally exhausted and turned and headed for the SP compound to turn in my weapon. Part way back someone with a vehicle gave me a ride to the SP area. After cleaning and turning in my weapon and ammunition I got a ride to my work shop. When I walked into the shop I heard several gasps as they saw my condition—covered from head to toe with dirt and charcoal from burnt grass. I told everyone there—maybe several times—what had happened to me and they told what had happened on the base. One thing was that several water lines had been broken and there was nothing to drink but warm beer. I was exhausted and dying for a drink but spent the night in the shop bunker. I got something to drink the next day. Several of my work buddies helped me get through that night in the hot stifling bunker.

I was an A2C during TET 1968 and an A1C around May 1968. Before I left Vietnam I went over to the SP area and talked to a Captain. I asked him if there was a list for awards, and he said there would be. I never heard anything after that.

As an SP Augmentee with the 3rd Security Police Squadron, it was an *incredible and unbelievable* period in my life that I'll never forget. So far, nearly 50 years later, most of what happened to me is quite clear as evidenced by this writing.

I stayed in the Air Force and was accepted into the Air Force Education and Commissioning Program (AFCEP), received my engineering degree and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant. I spent 20 years in the AF, spent another remote tour on Shemya, AK, retired as a Major, and worked another 20 Years for several defense contractors until I fully retired in 2010. For me the AF was an outstanding experience.

Follow Up QUESTIONS:

What is your name: Barry Lyons barlyons@aol.com

What was your regular unit? 3rd TAC fighter wing, Air Maintenance Sqd. (electronics)

What was your rank then? A2C then A1C in May of 1968.

Were you at Bunker Hill 10 during the attack? In the area and saw it. I was an Augmentee that ended up with a couple SPs near Bunker Hill 10 on 31 Jan 1968.

What happened where you were at? (see notes below)

What was the most impressive thing you saw? Just the fact that it was happening. I was laying there on a flat piece of ground a part of this country and hoped they could do something to keep me from getting killed.

What was the scariest thing you saw and did? When the Sgt. tapped me on the back and we ran back across the water ditch and lay down and they fired that RPG and they could see us and we them and I thought we are at the most vulnerable.

Did your 'group' participate in searching out KIA WIA in the tall grass near the runway, Run Up area, or Bunker Hill 10? We saw them (see notes).

What names, if any, do you remember? I don't remember a soul...except Pete's name but didn't know him then.

Did you know Augmentee Edward Muse? No

Did you volunteer as an Augmentee: Yes. My dad told me never to volunteer for anything. :)

End impression of the 3rd SPS after it was over. I can answer a couple of ways. Most of the answers are multiple. My opinion was everything was screwed up and there was a lot of confusion in TET 1968. SPS seemed greatly underfunded and under trained and they did not have enough funding; their Intel predictions were not seemingly accurate. For an Augmentee I felt—*not so much during the preliminary training, but when involved in the Bunker Hill 10 thing*—I felt pretty much left out of things. I didn't know what needed to be done to make it safe. I grew up a farm boy and was used to hunting...but there were a couple near me who were scared. I felt like a duck out of water then.

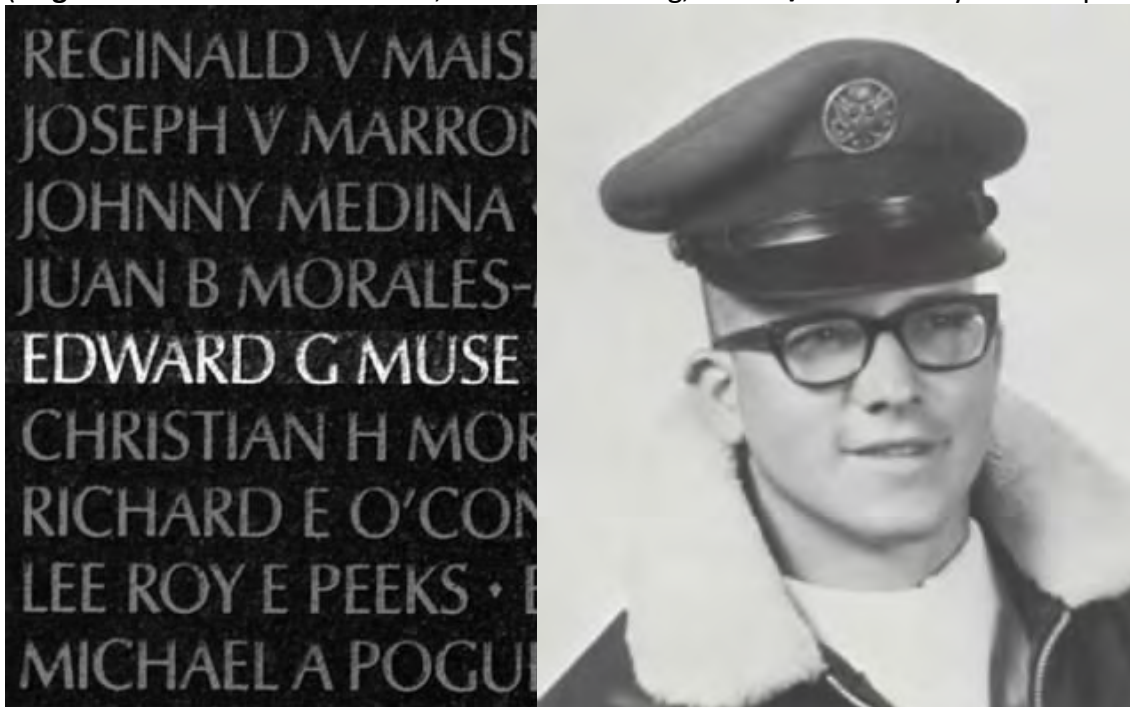
Don Poss
Sent from my iPad

On Mar 16, 2015, at 7:41 AM, barlyons@aol.com <barlyons@aol.com> wrote:

KIA Photos

A1C Edward Grady Muse

(**Augmentee:** 3rd CBT SPT GROUP, 3rd TAC FTR Wing, 7th AF / 3rd Security Police Squadron)



Bien Hoa ...**TDY****Six Weeks TDY to Hell****by Carl Tripp, WS LM-38**

Bien Hoa Air Base was located north of Saigon and near the infamous LBJ (Long Bien Jail), which was the in-country military prison compound and also a huge munitions storage area. The base itself was upgraded from an old French post, and still had many of the old French buildings and small concrete forts scattered around the perimeter. In addition to the 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, Army aviation (Chopper) units, ARVN units, and various MACV components were on hand.

The actual town of Bien Hoa was situated adjacent to the front gate but was so infested with Viet Cong that we were not allowed to visit the town at all. We, the lucky 24 were put up in a long hootch- like building with typical bunk beds. The facilities were fairly primitive in that we had to use our helmets as a wash bowl for shaving and bathing. The bathrooms consisted of a two-hole honey bucket outhouse---and that was it. We slept fully clothed with our M16s by our sides.

Many of you remember the TV series M*A*S*H and the episodes about a crazy North Korean pilot who kept trying to bomb the post. The pilot was called *12 O'clock Charlie*. Well, we had our own version of him named *11 O'clock Charlie* at Bien Hoa. Every night at 11:00 P.M., give or take a few minutes, he would fire off about 5 rockets at the base. But, as opposed to the TV version, 11 O'clock hit things such as warehouses, barracks, bunkers, and planes.

11 O'clock was joined many nights, during that fun-loving festival the Vietnamese call Tet, by friends of his who lobbed mortars at us. They would fire off around 30 rounds and then disappear into the dense jungle surrounding the base, only to appear the next night at a completely different location. Yet other Charlies would fire their AK-47s at anything that moved.

Well, this night he was back with a vengeance shooting rockets seemingly everywhere. One hit about 200 feet from me this night and I felt a severe stinging feeling in my left leg below the knee. It was too dark to see and I didn't want to chance using my flashlight so I waited until I got to the 3rd Air Force dispensary before asking for help. When I got there, the ground was covered with body bags and with stretchers of wounded people. I helped move bodies into body bags and assisted as much as I could with the wounded. This turned into a full night of holding their hands and talking to them. Anyhow, around daybreak an overworked medic finally looked at me and said, Did you know that you've got blood dripping off your boots? With that I took off my boots and rolled my pants legs up. There were **three shrapnel wounds** on my lower leg, none very deep and definitely not life threatening. So, the medic coats me with some iodine (?), applies a couple of bandages, and tells me to take it easy.

Later on, at Bien Hoa, **I was wounded again**. Once more it wasn't serious, and I simply used my bandage pack to wrap it up and proceeded to forget about the little scratch on my left arm.

One of the most distinct memories I have of that time was what happened the morning following the long night whenever a hootch or barracks was hit. Bulldozers and trucks would appear and within a span of a few hours, wah-lah---we had a new parking lot. When I finally returned to Phan Rang in mid-March, I think there

were more parking lots than there were hootches or vehicles left.

We were being shelled particularly heavy one night about 0300 hours, and I was walking a beat near the Officer's trailers. A rocket landed fairly nearby, and being afraid (if you weren't, you had to be nuts) I ran for the nearest bunker situated next to some hootches. The bunker (which basically was four-walls of overlapping sandbags and PSP roof with more sandbags stacked on top) was crammed full, and so I stepped back and peered around for another one. A nice guy, whom I'd never met, said, "Come on in here, well make room for you." The place was so packed, however, that I decided to take my chance down the road, about 50 yards, to the next bunker.

I ran about 30 yards or so when a huge explosion behind me lifted me off my feet and slammed me to the ground. When I was able to stand, ***I looked around and the bunker I had just left had literally disappeared.*** I ran back to the spot---which is exactly what it was---and the only thing left was a **hole in the ground about 4 feet deep**. Next to where the bunker had been, I noticed an individual lying in the top bunk of the hootch. The wall had been surgically removed by the blast, but the bunk bed and person lying in it looked unharmed. Going around the crater, I tapped the heavy sleeper on the shoulder. Getting no response, I shoved him trying to awaken him but to no avail. He had died from shock, so the medics told me later, and had probably never felt a thing. Death and destruction were our fellow travelers at Bien Hoa.

A few nights later, I was at the main gate, near Highway 1 that ran to Saigon, when we started taking incoming fire from outside the gate. That night I had about eight ARVN police (we usually called them the White Mice in deference to their white helmet liners, white armbands and stature---but also to their notorious heroism). After the first few shots, I started firing back where I saw muzzle flashes. The white mice ABANDONED me! They ran back into the base's interior and I never saw them again that night.

My frantic walkie-talkie calls about being deserted and under-fire finally brought some help, from the Army. They sent two helicopters, one with a huge spotlight mounted underneath and the other, much smaller one, with no lights and painted black. They moved much as you would expect ballet dancers to move---graceful and with purpose. While the big chopper with the spotlight drew enemy fire, the little chopper would dance in and out of the shadows pulverizing areas where enemy muzzle flashes could be seen. This cleanup operation took place over my head and seemed to last forever. My Duty Officer later told me that it had been about ten minutes from the time I first called for help.

Next morning, the daytime Flight (Platoon) never did recover any bodies, but a lot of blood pools were found.

I mentioned the old French Forts, the kind everyone saw all over South Vietnam. In a way, those things were stark contrasts of national-wills. The French colonialists built permanent concrete fortresses to-stay, and we were building out of wood and tents. Anyway, one of my absolute Worst Nights of All was in motion.

I think all of us who were in country and in positions to get shot at have one or two of those memories that you can recall with ease, and still bothers you 30 years later. Mine started with an assignment that night to one of the old French mini forts at the South end of the base. Due to some Intel from a Green Beret unit up-country, we had seven of us ***Air Policemen*** types on hand. The little forts were round concrete buildings, roughly ten feet in diameter, with a place for a machine gun in the metal turret at the top of the fort. There was an open doorway and several firing slits in the walls. Unfortunately, the doorway faced outward to the

coffee and ammo when all hell broke loose.

Bullets started whizzing around us---the roar of Bangalore torpedoes cutting up the concertina barbwire in front of us was deafening. We all dropped whatever we were doing and started returning fire as fast as we could. The rest is a mis-mash of memories about seeing comrades and enemy fall and blood and guts everywhere. We were finally assisted by army helicopter gunships. The next morning 144 enemy bodies were found, some as close as three feet from the fort. We lost two men, with 4 others wounded. And me? Not a scratch. The Stars and Stripes newspaper titled a piece about this action, The Battle of Bien Hoa.

We were assigned TDY to Bien Hoa almost six weeks. During that time, I do not remember a single night that didn't go by without mortars or rockets dropping on us, or bullets winging by. The good part of all of this was that we all returned to Phan Rang intact and with a much better understanding of what the grunts out in the field were experiencing all the time.

Patrick O'Malley [mailto:omalley238@gmail.com]

Sent: Saturday, March 28, 2015 1:25 PM

To: DonPoss-lm37@vspa.com

Subject: Been ha 67'

Patrick O'Malley : I was in and trained with the 173rd airborne ! Was there during TET and went home on Feb 10th, had to take buses to Saigon to catch plane home. I was stationed on the chopper pad, in the *alert pilot's* compound! I called in the first rounds as they started impacting in the choppers' area. Next morning requested chopper for Nova spotters on water tower. Pat O'Malley

- 1) Not Army, **Air Force, 3rd SPS** SPs that volunteered for and trained with Army 173rd airborne to chopper out behind enemy positions and set up defense against enemy mortar and 122m rockets as they retreated.
- 2) Jan 30th During the TET offensive the first rounds came in on the 173rd AB chopper pads, where I was posted; coordinated with ground attack to destroy or slow choppers from getting off ground!
- 3) Jan 31st. Main gate: My position at approx. 0930 and received sniper fire from Water Tower Faust, outside main gate. Requested chopper gun ship to counter. Chopper came in and three NVA enemy were silenced, found that they called in the mortar, rocket rounds in initial attack the night before.
- 4) I volunteered to go out w/army EOD to cover for on picking dead enemy. One was Booby trapped so they ended up burning them. My first two weeks was on days for indoctrination, then went swing on May 12th he was killed when that hootch was hit by 122m rocket.

5) **From: James Porter** [mailto:sporter1952@cox.net]

Sent: Saturday, April 11, 2015 8:23 PM

To: DonPoss-LM37@vspa.com

Subject: BROKEN LINK (<http://www.vspa.com/tsn-o51-bunker-tet-coggins-to-the-last-man-1968.htm>): I am Reporting a Broken Link or Photo on this page.

- 6) I was with USARV AMMC, a supply battalion, and we were also at the line with bunker 51 in our front. We were called out at the beginning of the attack. Our ammo truck was hit with a mortar round which caused some men to be wounded. We remained there until about noon at which time we were assigned to remove VC bodies littering around bunker 051. I commend the members of the air police who fought that night.