

The Fight at the Bypass  
Where the 2-7-68 Ambush Began  
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I was told, after the convoy that came through to the Rock Crusher on the morning of the 2-7-68, that B Co was going to put some trucks on the end of the convoy for the return trip to Phu Bai. Sgt Moore ( of B Co ) I believe came by and ask if my truck was fueled up and ready to go, I told him yes and he said "saddle up, you are going on the convoy when it returns". I got my gear together and pulled my truck out alongside of the road to wait for the other vehicles as did some other trucks from B Co 9th Eng. When the return trucks started to roll past us, Master Sgt Gosse from our Co climbed up into the passenger side of my truck and two guys climbed in back. We pulled out after Sam



Chellino who was driving the truck in front of me. I thought the truck behind me was driven by a guy we called 'Ski, as it was assigned to him and he had said earlier he was going to be on the convoy. I didn't find out until we got back to the Rock Crusher that 'Ski missed the movement and the truck was actually being driven by Sgt. Hedlund, "Swede".

We crossed the pontoon bridge across the Perfume River and turned left or North and proceeded for a short distance then made a right hand turn and proceeded a short distance before we came to a ville on the right side of the road. As we approached the ville I saw a VC flag flying from a pole in the ville and I remember saying to out loud but to no one "Oh shit, this isn't good". As I went past the ville I looked at the flag again and was able to see it out of the passenger side window. A very short distance past the ville the road had an old bridge that crossed some rice paddies and the bridge wouldn't support the weight of the trucks and other military equipment that was using that road so there was a bypass made that dropped off of the right side of the road and went down into the rice paddies. The bypass in the middle had a couple of steel culverts that had been installed. When we approached the bridge I dropped off the road onto the bypass and had just reached the bottom when I heard an explosion and what I thought was some small arms fire. The sounds were coming from up front and then the convoy came to a stop. After what seemed like a few minutes, no more than two or three, a Jeep that had been in the rear of the convoy came flying past me on my side with a driver and a passenger headed towards the front of the convoy. In just a few seconds later we started taking small arms fire from the North side of the road and from under the old bridge. I got my rifle up and out of the driver side window and

started to return fire at points where I could see muzzle flashes and figures running or ducking. Just at that point a round came through my passenger side of the front window and I turned my head and reached for Master Sgt Gosse that was sitting there to see if he had been hit. At that exact moment I heard a round come through the driver side of the front windshield. I remember still to this day 42 years later of seeing the small flakes of glass laminate kind of floating in the air from where the bullet passed through the windshield. I turned my head back forward and when I did, I was looking straight at the bullet hole. If I had not reached over to check the passenger it would have hit me in the forehead. As it was, I later found out that it had continued on through the back of the cab and hit my GI issue down sleeping bag that we all carried rolled up behind our cabs on top of a tool box and tore it up. Just at that point Chellino, in front of me started to pull out, as we were always trained to drive like hell to get out of the kill zone of an ambush, so we pulled out as fast as possible. I still had my rifle up in the driver window but wasn't able to shoot much as I was busy trying to drive and shift gears at the same time.



At that point I thought the truck behind me was following, as I wasn't able to see because of the dust, visibility to the rear was very limited. It wasn't until we were stopped at the second ambush site did I realize that Swede's truck and the Ontos were not following. To this day, after I found out what happened back at the Bypass, I have problems about leaving them there. But, orders are orders and we were trained to "push" ahead as hard as possible no matter what. It was not until we were stopped at the Graveyard and engaged in our own fierce firefight that that I knew they had not made it.

I later found out that the rear Ontos was knocked out by what I think was a recoilless rifle and the track commander had continued to return fire with the 30 cal machine gun even after both crewmen were KIA. He was also killed shortly. Also the 9th Eng truck following me was knocked out and of the three Marines and one Corpsman, aboard there were three KIAs and one WIA. The only survivor, being Len Lindquist, better known to us as "Link".

We lost some very close friends that day at the first ambush site we call the Bypass. We all suffered some type of loss then and I still to this day don't know why I made it through and others didn't. I know that we use to say, "your number just wasn't up" and since that day I truly believe that to be a fact.

Semper Fi Don Grant, B Company 9<sup>th</sup> Eng Bn