

Fight at the Bypass
Cpl Ed Krayniewski, 11th Motor Transport

At the Rock Crusher before we departed for the return trip to Phu Bai, Capt Brown gathered us all together for a convoy briefing, during which he said we probably will see some action on the way back because of what was going on in Hue City. Decker, Huss and I knew the situation because we were listening to Armed Forces Radio all morning. After the brief we all mounted our vehicles, formed up the convoy and moved out with our two Tractor Trailers from 11th Motors near the rear. PFC Decker was driving the Tractor Trailer that I was riding in, and L/Cpl Huss was driving solo in the Tractor Trailer behind us. As we pulled out several engineer five ton dump trucks fell in behind us.

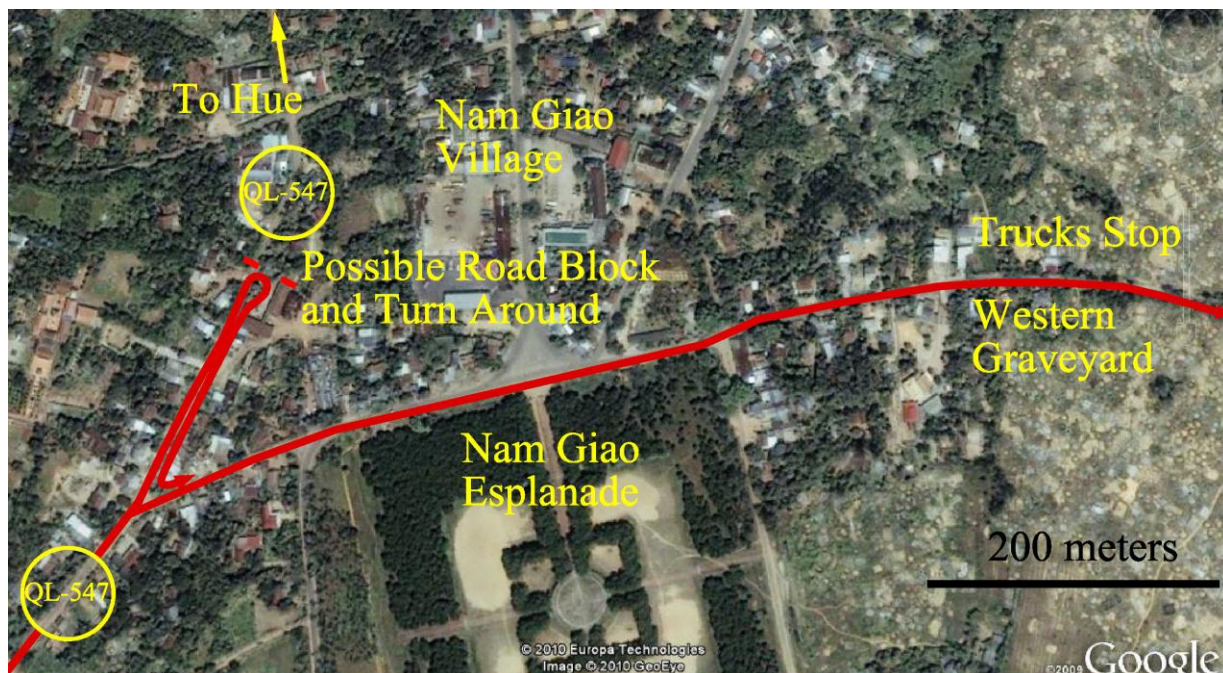


We drove several miles down the road and came to a halt, stopping at a small ville where there was an VC flag flying on a pole. L/Cpl Huss's truck was stopped right beside the flag pole. Our truck was stopped a little before Huss at a clearing that opened into the ville. We all dismounted our vehicles waiting for the convoy to continue. We didn't know why we were stopped, until word came down a short time later that a truck hit a land mine up ahead. While we were dismounted, myself, Decker and two Marines from the truck in front of us, gathered on the right of our truck and were watching the ville. In the mean time L/Cpl Huss was taking down the VC flag and then brought it over to show us. While watching the Ville, I noticed someone peeking around one of the hootches with something brown on his head (in hind sight, probably an NVA pith helmet). I yelled to the other Marines that someone is watching us from the corner of that hootch. He peeked around again, we all aimed in and we didn't see him again. About a minute later the strangest thing happened, an old man holding a baby walked right into the middle of the road in front of his house, he wouldn't look at us, he just looked back in the direction he came from. He stayed in the street holding that baby, staring in the direction of the hootch until we left, which was only a couple of minutes later. The total time that we were stopped in that area was about 10 minutes or so. As the trucks started to move again, we quickly mounted up and moved out with the convoy. As I went to get into my truck, I looked to the rear and I saw that L/Cpl Huss had the VC flag draped over the opened driver's door of his truck.

Once we started rolling, about a minute or so later, all hell broke loose. Heavy firing started and I didn't know from what direction it was coming from. I started laying down suppressive fire from my side of the truck on full automatic with my M16, hosing down every hootch, and into

the tree line as we drove down the road. Decker was driving the truck and firing at the same time out his window. I remember one hootch in particular that sticks in my mind that had pigs and chickens out in front, and the pigs were squalling and chickens feathers were flying as I was firing into that hootch. As we continued down the road, I had just finished firing a magazine, turned to my left to reload and then I bounced up into the roof canvas, at that instance, I thought we hit a hole in the road. Decker started yelling he was hit and at the same instant my left thigh was burning and my left hand was numb. A round came thru the driver's door, about two inches down from the top of the door and blasted both of us with shrapnel. Decker had his hand on the gear shift and it tore into his right hand and hit me in the left arm, hand, and thigh. I actually thought the bullet hit me in the left thigh because it was burning and kind of numb, but at the 2nd ambush site when we dismounted and I started reloading my magazines, I discovered the bullet actually hit me in the lower left side ricocheting off one of two M16 magazine bandoleers I was wearing.

After the round came thru the driver's door, I started returning fire past Decker and out of the driver's window. Decker had his head as far back as he could get it and still drive the truck while I was firing out his window, after the first magazine I fired, Decker was deaf, he was yelling he couldn't hear anything. I was firing on full auto and the muzzle was about 15 inches from his face. Shortly we came to another complete stop.



The third truck in front of us had stopped because it was shot up and disabled, the driver may also have been wounded. The damaged truck was quickly abandoned, the driver climbed on the truck behind him and we continued on. The short time we were stopped, (less than a minute or so) the convoy continued on and was out of site when we started moving again. The new lead

driver came to a split in the road, he went left when we should have turned right. We went down the wrong road (now I know it to be QL 547) a short distance and came to a road block, there was a large built up area behind the road block which was the southern outskirts of Hue city. At the road block the lead truck, badly shot up, shut down and we had to abandon another vehicle. The driver of the next six-by recognized where we were, turned us around and led us about a half a mile to the western edge of the Graveyard.

Semper Fi Ed Krayniewski, 11th Motor Transport