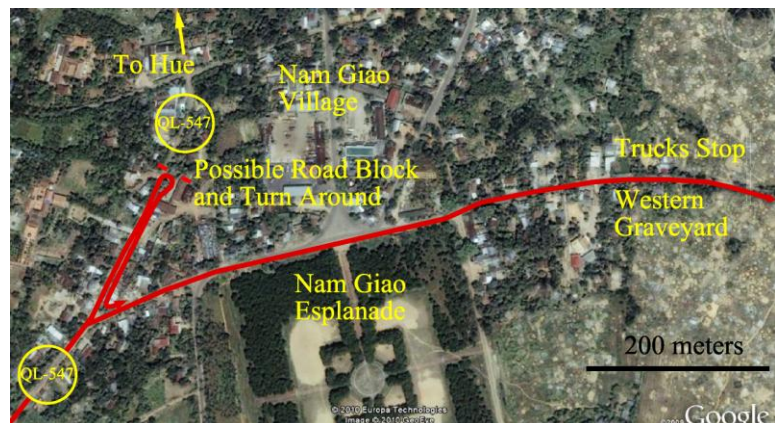


The Fight in the Bypass and Graveyard
Cpl R.G. Watkins, B Co 9th Eng

I was in the back, riding shotgun in the first of the “B” Co trucks, fourth from the last in the convoy. LCpl Campbell was driving. I remember crossing the pontoon bridge at the Rock Crusher and heading north along the river for a while and then the convoy was stopped for a short time at this culvert bypass, didn’t know why we were stopped, but found out later that the lead truck had hit a mine about a quarter mile down the road. We had been stopped for only a few minutes when all hell broke loose. Very heavy rifle and automatic weapons fire coming from all around, I saw my right wrist explode and was then also hit in the left forearm. As I returned fire at the enemy I looked to the rear and remember seeing some of the Marines from the last truck dismounted, I think I saw one get hit. Campbell pulled off and was driving like hell trying to catch up with the rest of the convoy while I was shooting at everything.

In a short distance we stopped in some village at some sort of a road block, I remember concertina wire and bamboo. An old Vietnamese man was sitting at his hooch smiling looking straight at me. I was dismounted on the ground, wounded and bleeding when I saw him and thought that he was mocking me, but later I realized that he was just as scared as I was.

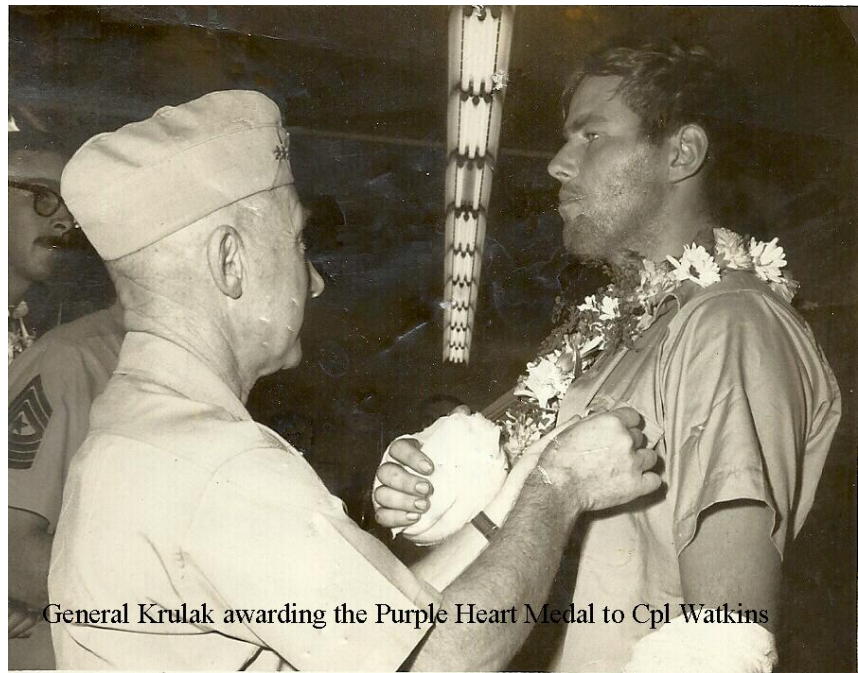
We had followed the trucks in front into a wrong turn, had to turn around to get back to the convoy route. I think that was when I climbed into the cab of the truck. Campbell got back on the correct road and drove like hell for about a half mile, past several stalled trucks through gunfire right into the thick of the ambush site at the graveyard, stopping only when we could go no more. Heavy small arms, machine gun fire, grenades, RPGs everything going on all around. So much confusion I don’t remember even dismounting



the truck nor do I remember making my way back to Grant's and Chellino's trucks where I know I ended up at.

The next thing that I remember was being with Chellino and several other Marines in a defensive perimeter and seeing 1st Sgt Gosse with his shotgun. A Corpsman leaned me against a truck wheel, bandaged my wrist and arm and I think he gave me some morphine.

I am sure that I owe my life to Chellino and the other Marines that were still able to fight and I know that we all owe our lives to the decision to take Grant's and



General Krulak awarding the Purple Heart Medal to Cpl Watkins

Chellino's trucks, load up the dead, wounded and able bodies and to fight our way out back through the Bypass.

The return trip back through the Bypass is pretty much a blur, a lot of pain, returning fire by cradling my rifle in the crook of my right arm, all the hot brass going down my open utility shirt and a hell of a lot of firing from everybody else. I do remember clearly what a wonderful relief it was to see Daly and the Rock Crusher reaction force Marines at the Bypass, the most beautiful Marines in the world.

Over all the years since I would just say a prayer for Corpsman Collier and "Link" Lindquist who I was told had died in the first ambush. So, Lindquist, you've had a lot of prayers for you over the years. Looking at this site made me realize the bravery of all of us and how we gave each other courage and strength to fight through that horrific day and the true meaning of the Esprit de Corps and being a Marine.

Semper Fi, R.G. "Fred" Watkins B Co 9th Eng