

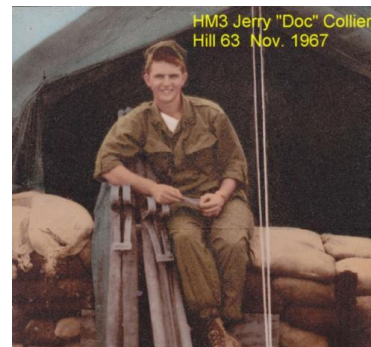
“The Ditch”

A Heroic Fight to the Bitter End!
Swede’s Truck - “B” Co Marines

The Convoy was stopped, probably because the lead truck had struck a mine a little less than a mile up the road. Sgt Hedlund’s truck followed by “Tail End Charlie” (the rear security Ontos) had closed up and stopped just west of the bypass ramp, when the fight started. In the truck, Sgt Robins was riding in the cab with Sgt Hedlund (Swede) while HM3 Jerry Collier and PFC Lenard Lindquist were riding security in the bed. The Ontos was commanded by Sgt Prather, crewed by PFCs Beierly and Stuart.

The fight as described below by PFC Lindquist (sole survivor from Swede’s truck) was particularly violent and furious.

We had just stopped on the main road and had not turned right, down onto the bypass when I looked to my left – I could see many NVA soldiers moving in and around the hooches next to the road. They were running about grabbing rifles and moving to attack our vehicle. I hollered at “Doc” (HM3 Collier, 9th Eng corpsman) to jump, and I opened fire on the NVA. Doc jumped from the right side of the truck and moved into the deep ditch next to the road. There was a hell of a lot of rifle and automatic weapons fire coming from the north side of the road. I delayed in the truck bed for a moment to return fire then jumped behind “Doc”, just as I landed, the Ontos behind us exploded and I picked up some shrapnel in my legs. I then joined “Doc” in the ditch. Sgt Robins was at bottom of the ditch, it appeared that he was wounded in the stomach. As Doc was attempting to dress my leg wounds, we were receiving a lot of fire from across the road passing under the truck. I could see muzzle flashes and enemy movement so I continued to return fire. The shape of the ditch did offer us some cover from enemy fire coming from north of the road but we were beginning to receive some fire from the east and up the ditch, this made our position much less secure. While engaged in our desperate fight for survival in the ditch, I could hear explosions, much rifle fire and the furious firing of the 30 cal machine gun on Sgt Prather’s Ontos about 30 yards to my left. Just then there was a large explosion on the driver’s side of “Swede’s” truck, moments later the Swede stumbled around the rear of the truck and fell into the ditch, dazed and very badly wounded. Unfortunately he fell on the opposite side of the ditch where he was exposed to enemy fire. Doc immediately moved across the ditch to render aid to Swede, and of course, this move placed Doc in jeopardy from enemy fire and was probably the cause of Doc’s imminent death.



In an effort to suppress the enemy fire coming up the ditch, I worked my way down the ditch and out into the rice paddy returning fire until I was ultimately seriously wounded in both arms and ran out of ammunition. Unfortunately that was the last I saw of my friends that remained in the ditch. I survived only by playing dead in the rice paddy water. My wounds were bleeding so much and the rice paddy water was completely bloody that I guess it made a believable scene. The NVA took my watch and my ring and left me for dead. I have lived this terrible day over every single day of my life since.

Semper Fi ... Lenard Lindquist, PFC USMC

It was a horrible and sad scene that was presented to the Rock Crusher reaction force Marines as they arrived at the Bypass about three hours later. After pushing the NVA forces from the “Bypass” and while securing the site, the reaction force Marines came upon the destroyed A-13, Sgt Prather’s Ontos, and the bodies of it’s dead crewmembers. A few yards up the road there was Sgt Hedlund’s battle damaged five ton dump truck, the



bodies of HM3 Collier, Sgt Robins and the mortally wounded unconscious Sgt Hedlund, all laying in the dirty ditch where they fell. The entire panorama was stark evidence of the extreme ferocity of the fight and the heroic final efforts made by the trapped Marines.

In all of this terrible carnage there was one small moment of joy when PFC Lenard Lindquist was discovered, badly wounded in both arms but still alive! Even though in severe pain, “Link” was conscious and able to relate his incredible story of survival, as well as some of what had happened in “The Ditch”.

After the NVA soldiers had passed him up for dead “Link” took cover in the wood line at the edge of the rice paddy, about 30 yards south of the bypass road, there he had remained hidden until the reaction force Marines arrived.

Well Done and Semper Fi