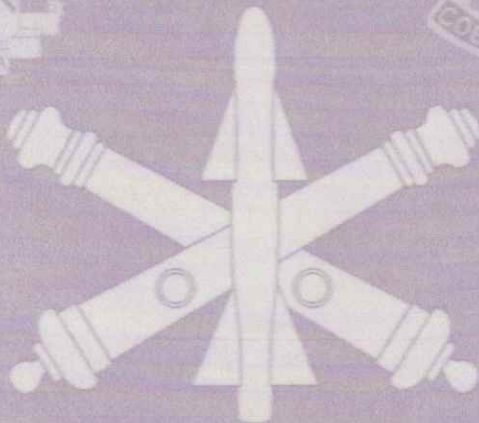


"FIRST TO FIRE"

DUSTERS QUADS

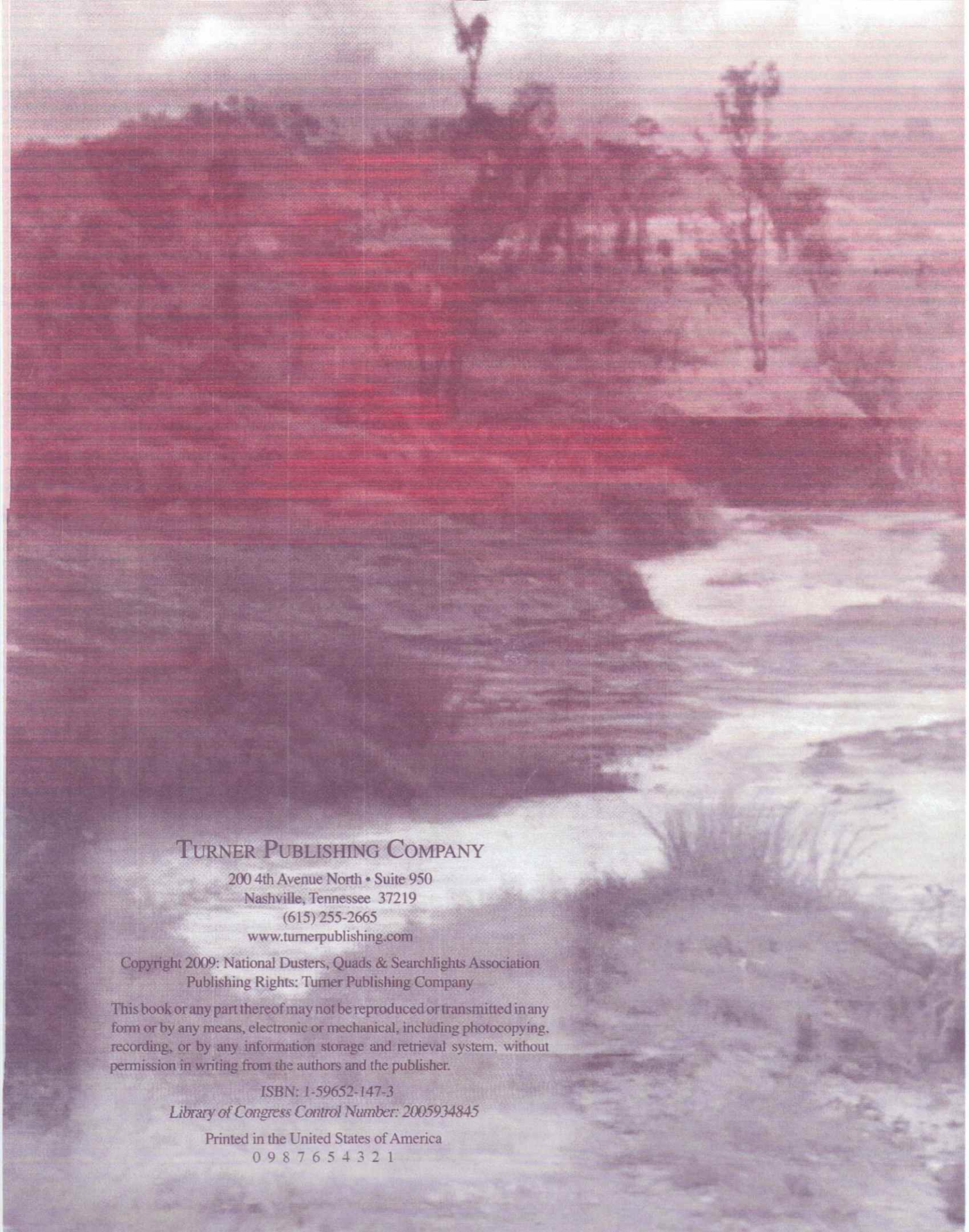


SEARCHLIGHTS



HAWK

AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY IN VIETNAM



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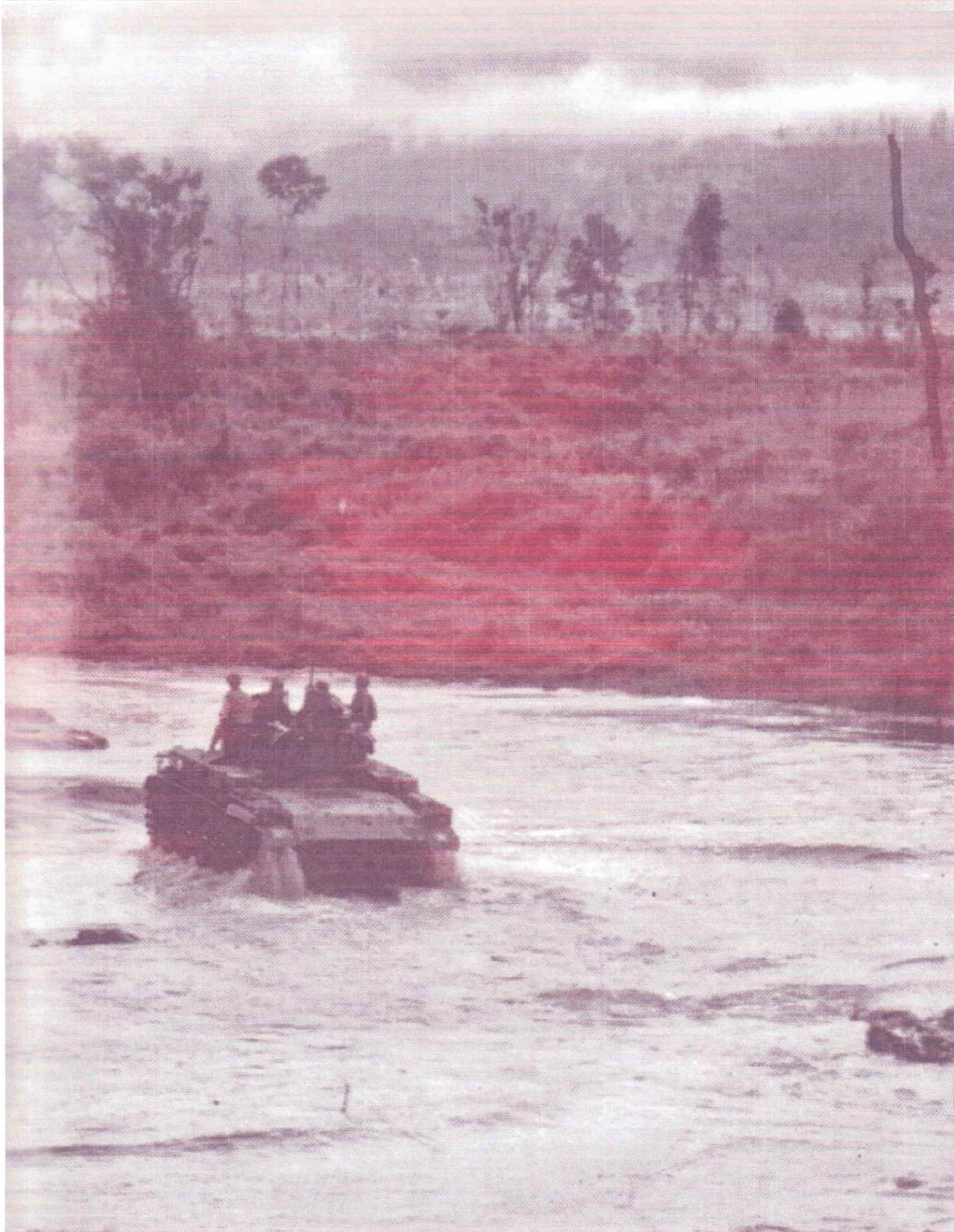
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grenades (RPGs) at the outset of the ambush (their standard technique being to "kill" a couple of vehicles in the middle of the convoy, effectively freezing the entire operation, with those behind unable to move forward and those ahead unwilling to leave their comrades to fend for themselves). What was most fortunate for our troops, on this particular occasion, was that the RPG gunners happened to have picked out an APC right in front of one of the Vulcans, and a second APC right behind it – not realizing that they were ignoring the one vehicle that could ruin their whole day. The Vulcan spun into immediate action, spraying the ambush site with the kind of withering fire that only its Gatling Gun can produce. And the ambush, one clearly designed, manned, and armed to wreck havoc of major proportions, was brought to an abrupt end. Another mission accomplished by your friendly automatic weapons provider. (also see page 23)

Xuan Loc

By way of example as to how our squads performed their very dangerous and important mission, I will cite only one more of the many bloody actions our units were engaged in while I had the honor to serve in the Nickel-Deuce. This action took place in May 1969, at Xuan Loc, where we had a pair of Quads, protecting an artillery battalion headquarters, with its collocated 155mm firing battery and a 105mm howitzer battery also in temporary residence. The NVA attacked that night in force. We later determined that a significant number of them had penetrated the perimeter before the attack began, by crawling through a culvert. The assault was fierce, with the Quads being a major focus of the initial attack – and the major factor in the ultimate success of the defense.

One man in particular was key to the entire operation, the squad leader of the Quads, an outstanding soldier, Staff Sergeant Jeffery Jarman. He had already established himself as one of the premier automatic weapons troop leaders in the Army. He was on his third tour in-country, having worked his way up from private/crewman to staff sergeant/squad leader. I cannot recall all of his many awards for heroism; but I can tell you that he was already something of a legend in his time. And after the battle of Xuan Loc, he became an unqualified legend, certainly in the mind of anyone who was there that frightful night.

Throughout the early part of the fight, he and his crew stayed on their guns, through an unrelenting hail of fire. Sergeant Jarman was wounded early on, as were two of his crewmen. Finally a well-aimed RPG destroyed his Quad, killing two of the crewmen (SP4 Garry Uplinger and PFC Larry Holmes), and seriously wounding Sergeant Jarman and the other crewman (SP4 Richard Turcotte). Whereupon Sergeant Jarman dragged the wounded soldier back to a bunker behind the perimeter. As he did so, he realized that he was in one of the howitzer positions, that the howitzer was already leveled for direct fire, and that a supply of beehive (flechette/direct-fire) ammunition lay beside it – everything needed to take on the advancing NVA was at hand, everything except for cannoners to man the gun. Once he had his comrade in a reasonably protected position, ignoring his own multiple wounds, Sergeant Jarman moved swiftly into action, loading and firing the howitzer, unassisted, until he had driven off all the NVA in his portion of the fire support base.

Only after the area was secured did he finally succumb to his wounds and lose consciousness. He was evacuated that next morning to Japan. But he vowed to return; and I would not be at all surprised to learn that he was back in Viet Nam just as soon as his wounds had healed.

I tried to put him in for the Medal of Honor; however, I was to learn that you need multiple witnesses to all of the action; and he was pretty much alone (or with men who later died) through the great majority of it. The results of his extraordinary heroism were clearly visible the next morning; but sufficient eyewitnesses to the action were not to be found. We eventually got an award of the Distinguished Service Cross through Headquarters, II Field Force; but I had rotated out before the entire process had wound its way through the system higher up. He got a Silver Star impact award for sure; but I have never been able to confirm that the DSC was finally awarded – I surely do hope so; as never was one so richly deserved.

Without question, my tour with the Nickel-Deuce was the highlight of my 27-year Army career, and I will never forget Sergeant Jarman and the other brave soldiers with whom I had the great honor to serve.

I will close with one last reminiscence, one on the lighter side.

Topless

Just after we had cleared the east coast of Viet Nam, on our way home aboard the chartered World Airways "Freedom Bird," a very attractive and well-proportioned airline stewardess got up at the front of the cabin and spoke to us on the intercom. She said that it was a real honor for them to be taking us home from the war and that the entire crew appreciated what we had just gone through over the past year. And by way of showing their appreciation, they were going to serve us our first cup of coffee, topless!



photo by "Red" Sigel, B/5-2 '67

Well, you can imagine the reaction this got from a planeload of war-weary soldiers, who had not seen a good looking American girl, much less one who was topless, in a long, long time. Every man sat bolt upright in his seat, eagerly awaiting the coming treat. With that the lovely stewardess reached up behind her to pull back the curtain that separated the cabin from the galley – and, sure enough, completely topless, out came four of the ugliest male stewards you can imagine.

Some of the Story

by Frank A. Russo, C/5-2, D/71 '71

Now in my 50's and 30+ years after my tour in Vietnam, as I thumb through the dirt-stained diary, notes, and keepsakes, I begin to reminisce. Visions and memories of the past become vivid

and almost real. Like many Vietnam veterans, there is a yearning for re-visitation and expression in some form. The form I have chosen is written. My name is Frank Russo, born in February 1951, and here is "some of the story."

My military excursion begins with the famous "Greeting" letter dated August 1970. As ordered, on September 2, 1970, I reported to Fort Hamilton in New York at 7:00 a.m. After being prodded and scrutinized, I was found to be physically and mentally fit for military service. By 4:00 p.m., I was at Fort Dix in New Jersey, honing my military combat skills as a basic trainee. After graduating from basic training in November 1970, new orders took me to the 1st AIT Brigade (Air Defense) in Fort Bliss, Texas, for advanced training. Air Defense Artillery was my game and "Dusters" and "Quads" were the equipment. At orientation we were told that no one would be headed for Vietnam except for those who had an MOS of 16F. Bingo! I was a winner.

All said and done, my ultimate destination would be RVN, better known as the Republic of Vietnam. It was 1:00 a.m. on February 18, 1971, my 20th birthday, when my plane landed on the tarmac of Bien Hoa airbase. Equipped with a steel pot, flak jacket, and M-16, the SFC boarded the plane and said: "Listen up, there is nothing to worry about, but in case of a mortar or rocket attack while deplaning, do not run." He stressed the "do not run." Was he kidding or what? As we deplaned, we could hear the sounds of distant artillery fire. Were those noises friendly or enemy? The sergeant didn't seem worried but I thought it must be that he's trained not to show fear. My first thought: friendly fire. My second thought: what in the world was I doing here? The nights would be long and days hot, but survival was to be my objective, as was everyone else's.

Next stop was to be the II Field Force HQ in Long Binh, north of Saigon. On March 3, 1971, I was deployed to FSB Heidi. Supporting the 25th Infantry Division with 8-inch and 105mm artillery, Firebase Heidi was, I was told, a relatively safe place. Being new to the field, the first two nights of guard duty was not a solo act.



photo by Frank Rousso C/5-2d

On the third night I was accompanied only by my personal M-16 and a mounted M-60 machine gun. Afraid? Yes. "Just relax," I kept telling myself. I could see up to the edge of the berm and three rows of barbed wire. The white markings of the claymores were visible. That was a good sign. Beyond the claymores was total darkness. I knew what the surroundings looked like in the daytime, but that was no consolation to me. I had the 1:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. shift of guard duty.

It is now 1:45 a.m. The sound of the crickets is suddenly silenced. Trip flares ignite in front of the next guard bunker on my right. M-16 and M-60 gunfire breaks the silence. A red flare illuminates the base. Someone yells the dreadful

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word "Incoming." My motions became reactive. Aiming the M-60 over the berm I begin to fire. By this time the rest of the squad had manned the Duster and was ready to commence firing. The all-clear signal was given. It was only a dog that had tripped the flare. However, three days later, we were hit with RPGs from the VC. They missed. No casualties.

As the months passed, I became more and more acclimated to the environment. Real names became unimportant as friendships with "Doc," "Cowboy," "Country Fred," and "Rookie" were formed. I'm not sure how it got started, but I believe someone mistook my name as Rudy. Since I was always seen filling sandbags, I was tagged with "bags." Thus, I became known as "Rudy Bags." Fire Support Bases (FSB) such as Blackhorse, Heidi, Suzy, Deeble, Wade, and Bu Dop became our homes away from home. Escorting convoys became routine. The sounds of helicopters and artillery missions became secondary, while the distinct sounds of AK-47s and VC mortars would wake you in an instant. Any Vietnam veteran can tell you that the sound of a helicopter is a trigger for Vietnam memories.

March called for numerous convoy escorts. It also called for moving from one firebase to another. Firebase Blackhorse was to become my next home. Because this was still the dry season, the road leading to Blackhorse was topped with very fine reddish dirt. If you were not the first vehicle in the convoy, and usually our Duster was not, you were in for a dusty treat. On the night of March 27th, a platoon of VC was spotted near our base. A contact fire mission that would be recorded on my cassette recorder by sheer coincidence ensued. The night was to be long.

By the beginning of April, our Duster units began to stand down. After we left Blackhorse and a short stay at Camp Price, I was re-assigned to Quads: D Battery 71st Artillery. Convoy escorts to FSBs Mace, Jones and Deeble were frequent. We spent the night of April 11th, Easter Sunday, sleeping on cots next to or under our Quad. On April 17th, it was decided that FSB Deeble was to be our next home away from home. But on April 28th, only about a week after we finished building and sprucing up our hootches, we were ordered to tear down everything. This could not be, we thought, but it certainly was.

The next stop was to be FSB Bu Dop, right off the Cambodian border. Occasionally we would see the flares from action around Snoul, located in Cambodia. This was now the monsoon season, and Bu Dop was a mesa of mud. The hootches were built somewhat below grade. Why, I wasn't sure. I remember rolling off my cot and stepping into a foot of water and mud. Walking to and from our makeshift showers was also a chore. By the time you got back you needed to re-shower. Bu Dop was also the place where I would contract Malaria or whatever bug reigned in that region. I was medevaced to Phu Loi with a 104° temperature. Left on the tarmac, I was picked up by an ARVN jeep and rushed to the first aid station, where I took a back seat for a little Vietnamese boy, about 10 or 11, with a gaping hole in his stomach. My ailment could wait, I thought. I was in recovery at Phu Loi for eight days. Having no personal weapon, flak jacket, or helmet caused a problem when the compound was attacked on May 27th. I took cover in some sort of underground bunker, along with another GI who was leaving to return back to the States the next day. I recovered and returned to my unit at Bu Dop on May 30th. By June 9th, as NVA approached, we evacuated Bu Dop.

My next and final home was FSB Michelle. There I would be based for the next six months before being returned to the States. Numerous convoy escorts to and from FSBs Nancy, Suzy, Mace, and others were made. Memories continued to be formed. Convoy escorts requiring two or three nights with very little sleep; a volunteered night run to search for three missing GIs; the beginning of units returning back to the States; establishing a bond with the 8-year-old Cub Scout pen pal, Roger Barber, from Conesus, New York; the sad death of our mail courier (Philip Wagner, WI) when he had such little time left in Vietnam; anti-war protests back in the States; card games with SGT Holly; and the middle of the night DUSTOFF to save a pregnant Vietnamese woman's life. The emotions that these incidents created became part of my memory always to be triggered by certain sounds or smells. All these years later, the triggers still work.

My year's tour of duty was coming to an end. No longer with the Dusters, I was now "timing" my 50s on the Quads of D Battery, 71st Artillery. I was a short-timer, and word had come down that my tour might even be shorter than I thought. Yes indeed, I would be going home for Christmas.

My thoughts were running wild as I waited to board United Airlines flight U2B4 from Bien Hoa, headed for a pit stop in Japan and then to Oakland, CA. It was only the night before that "Charlie" attempted to disable the runway with mortars. They were unsuccessful. I peered out onto the runway and could see the plane. I could also see the gun jeeps that would escort the plane down the runway, just in case "Charlie" had any more ideas. I had done well, I thought. After all, I had made SP/4 rank in 15 months. My thoughts turned to my pen pal Roger Barber. We had exchanged letters, and I wanted to thank him. How would I let my parents know of my homecoming? They were not expecting me. Then my thoughts were interrupted. We were ready to board. "No brass, no ammo sir," was my reply as we passed the checkpoint. We were all on board. The engines roared. There was an eerie silence. You could hear a pin drop. We could see the gun jeeps on both sides of the plane. "Charlie, don't even think of it," I thought as the plane sped down the runway, 12:20 am, December 22, 1971. Lift off! The silence was broken with applause, handshakes, and yes, tears of joy. "Leaving on a Jet Plane" was a distant memory. It was now to the tune of "I'm coming home-I've done my time" and "I'll be home for Christmas." The stewardess (that's what they were called at that time) made an announcement. She welcomed us on board and thanked us for our sacrifice. With tears streaming down her face she said that it was a privilege and honor for her to return us home. That was to be one of the last "Thank You" statements that I would hear for quite a long time. We were to stop first in Japan and then onto Oakland, California. Stateside was only 13 hours away. Finally, at 12:10 am, December 22, 1971, we landed in the good old US of A. Funny, I thought, isn't that the same time we left from Vietnam? Indeed it was. We had gained back the day we lost over the International Date Line on our trip to Nam. Now was time to kiss the ground.

My mom answered the phone. She thought I was calling from Vietnam. She was screaming into the phone as if I couldn't hear anything on the other end. "When are you coming home?" she asked. "You had better get someone to pick me up at Kennedy airport in about six hours," was my reply. There was silence on the other end.

I hopped into a cab to take me from Oakland to San Francisco. "Where you coming from," asked the driver. "Vietnam," I replied. "You should have gone to Canada like everyone else," he shot back. No thank you, no how are you, no welcome home. Then and there I knew what I was up against.

This was not a military flight, with only two or three military personnel on the flight. As I approached the wall of people waiting for a friend, a relative, or maybe one of us soldiers, I quickly glanced to see if I recognized anyone. After being in flight for about 18 hours since leaving Vietnam, I was sort of "Jet Lagged." There she was, my mom. Then I saw my dad, my uncle, and my cousin, Terry. My cousin wrote me many letters, always supportive, always concerned. I never expressed my gratitude for that support. If I never said it before, I will say it now. "Thanks Terry, you were more of an inspiration than you could ever imagine." Apprehension and fear was written all over their faces. Was I intact? Did I have all my limbs? Was I hooked on drugs? Was I a baby killer? After all, this is mostly what they heard. This is how the Vietnam vet was portrayed.

My pen pal, Roger Barber, his mom, and I still keep in touch. He is now married with a family. His letters are forever etched on the Vietnam War Memorial in New York City and published in the book "Dear America."

I went on to marry Maria, a wonderful woman, who is still my wife, friend, soul mate, and mother to our beautiful daughter Denise. We make our home in Staten Island, New York. These are my true rewards, I earned them!

My Father and War

by David & Richard Chavez, H/29 '68

The following is an essay written by David Chavez for his high school English class in 1989.

My father, Richard Chavez of Puerto De Luna, New Mexico, is a veteran of the Vietnam War. Upon graduating from Santa Rosa High School in the year 1967, he joined the US Army doing his basic training at Fort Bliss, Texas. After graduation from AIT in Communications, he was given his orders for Germany, where he then took part in airborne training.

At the time he was in Germany, there was a campaign called the 1968 TET Offensive taking place in South Vietnam. According to my father, this offensive involved very many casualties, forcing the military planners to pull some American troops out of Germany to be involved in the war. My father was included as a volunteer. After a 30-day leave in the States, he departed for Vietnam to serve a tour of duty. He goes into detail about how stunned he was when he arrived in South Vietnam. He says the high humidity hit him immediately, but just as sudden was the pain and suffering he immediately began to see as he rode the truck to the Long Binh replacement station.

My father says they all stayed in the replacement station, waiting to find out their new unit assignment. He ended up in the Second Field Forces, in 2nd Platoon of H-Battery, 29th Artillery (Searchlights), located down south in the Mekong Delta. His searchlight unit was an infrared and white light platoon, meaning they did most of their fighting at night. They would search for the enemy, using infrared. Once the enemy was spotted the white light would then be switched on, blinding them by blowing their night vision. At this time they would proceed to

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person and was not ashamed to show that affection to his siblings and parents. He enjoyed practical jokes and having fun.

Joe was always honest growing up knowing many times that telling the truth would bring on discipline. He was proud to serve his country and considered it a great honor.

He left behind his wife, three sons and a daughter. The oldest boy, Ricky, was only 6. The children do not remember much about him and have missed a father figure in their lives. They lost their mother Bonnie in 1979. Joe's family has tried to keep his memory alive for them. The youngest son, Troy Michael, lives in Martin, TN and resembles his father. Duane also lives in Martin and Michelle lives in Green Bay, WI.

We will forever remember his cheerful disposition and the precious memories. Submitted by his brother, Dale Royster, Martin, TN.

MICHAEL T. RUNDLE, born Jul '46, in Harve de Grace, MD. He was commissioned in January 1969 out of Murray State University, Murray, KY.



Assignments: 1969, launch area platoon leader, Cincinnati, OH; March 1970-71, platoon leader, XO, A-Btry/1st-44th ADA, Dong Ha, Vietnam; 1971-72, S4/Motor Officer, Fort Bliss, TX; 1972-73, Company Commander, Alpha Btry, Fort Bliss, TX.

Memorable experience was re-occupying earlier location of Khe Sanh in 1971. Discharged Oct. 1, 1973 with the rank captain. His awards include the Bronze Star w/OLC.

Civilian activity as partner in large regional CPA firm for 30 years. Married Jan Hayden Sept. 7, 1969. They live in Paducah, KY and have a daughter Camille Marie Rundle. His hobbies are golfing, fishing and hunting.

KENNETH RUSSELL, was born in Feb '48 in Knoxville, TN. He enlisted with Basic at Ft. Campbell, AIT: Homestead AFB. Was on HAWK as a crew chief 16D at Ft. Bliss. Then to Korea A-Btry/8th Bn 15th ADA, back to Homestead, then to Germany, and then volunteered for Vietnam.

He served in 2nd Platoon B-Btry/4-60th under SSG Brown "Browns Raiders." Stationed at Plei Mrong, spent six months at Dak To where his hand was injured by a mortar (Not recorded). Once 40mm gun breech broke and had to be repaired under fire. Later went to 1st Platoon at Weigt-Davis.

Mates include: SSG Ed Gallaway, SGT Leon Kruhalski, SP4 Charlie Naylor, SP4 Ed Addison.

Ken has a daughter named Autumn and he still lives in the Knoxville area.

EDWARD CARL RUSSIAN, born Mar '46 in Brownsville, PA. Graduated from Redstone High School, Republic, PA in June 1964. Inducted into the US Army Dec. 3, 1965. Took basic training at Fort Jackson, Columbia, SC and AIT at Fort Bliss and Biggs AFB, El Paso, TX. Trained on



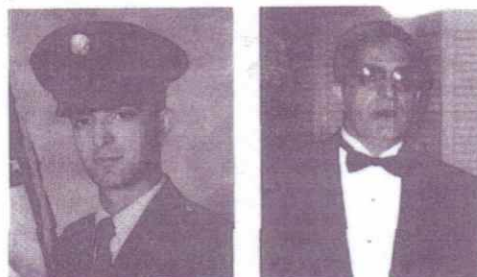
M42A1 Duster and Quad 50 mount 13F.

Served in Vietnam from November 1966-October 1967 with D-Battery/5th Bn., 2nd ADA, Dusters. Served tour in Long Binh, Tay Ninh, Cu Chi, Dau Tieng, Prek Klok, Ben Luc, and numerous Fire Support bases.

Responsibilities of the 5th Bn., 2nd ADA, D-Btry included providing perimeter and security for artillery units and convoy escort. Provided direct support for infantry operations. Unit was attached to the 25th Inf. Div. He was Sergeant E-5 Squad Leader of M42A1 Duster D-42.

Upon returning to the States, he entered the workforce at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. After 35 years of government service, and rising to the position of research specialist, he retired in 2001. He married and lives in Manassas, VA. They have two sons, Ken and Chris, one daughter Samantha, and will soon become grandparents. He is currently involved with teaching pitching and hitting techniques to young ladies for fast pitch softball.

FRANK ANGELO RUSSO, born Feb '51 in southern Italy. At age six months he immigrated to the United States, with the help of his parents.



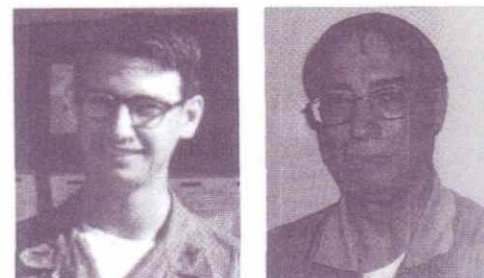
He was inducted in the US Army Sep70 taking basic training at Fort Dix, NJ followed by AIT, Fort Bliss, TX. (16F20) on Dusters and Quads. Ironically, he arrived in RVN on his 20th birthday 2/18/71.

He served in IIFFV near Long Binh; his units included the Dusters of C-Btry/5th Bn, 2nd ADA and the Quads of D-Btry/71st ADA. Its hard to forget some of the friends - some remembered only as Rookie, Doc, Country Fred, Cowboy, or just by their first or last names like Gary or Yoder. He left Vietnam in Dec71 and was honorably discharged in Mar72.

Frank met his soul mate, Maria, who was to become, and still is, his lovely wife. They, along with their wonderful daughter Denise, currently reside in New York. He graduated from the College of Staten Island with a degree in computer science led him to a career in engineering and computer technology. He works in the nuclear industry within the IT Department with the focus on software quality assurance and software project management.

DENNIS RAY RUTH, born Mar '44 in Great Falls, MT. Graduated from University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, March 1969, BS in aerospace

sciences and commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army ADA. Active service began with an assignment to the ADA School and Center at Fort Bliss, TX.

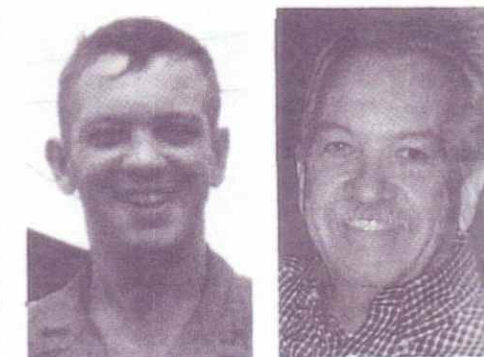


Dennis volunteered for duty in Vietnam and reported to E-Btry/41st Arty (Quads) headquartered at An Khe. He served with a platoon supporting the 173rd Abn. at LZ English. Just before mid-tour he took over as battery executive officer and oversaw the Bn move to Tuy Hoa, Nov '70.

After his Vietnam tour Dennis returned to Fort Bliss. Later his branch transferred to the Adjutant General Corps with a specialization in computer systems. His assignments include the Army Military Personnel Center, 26th Support Group, Germany, the Department of Defense Computer Institute, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Information Systems Engineering Command, Pacific, and the Defense Information Systems Agency. Dennis retired in September 1992 in the grade of Lieutenant Colonel. He continued in federal service with this agency.

Dennis married Deborah Smith in 1969 and has three daughters: Penny Ruth, Tammy (Gabriel, Alexia, Chole) Jonathan Jarvis; and Stacey (Tyler and Joshua) Matthew Skywalker. Dennis and Debi currently reside in Springfield, VA.

JOHN R. "JACK" RYAN, born Aug '47 in Floral Park NY; hometown was Queens Village NY. Drafted in 1968 and did Basic at Ft. Gordon GA, AIT at Ft. Sill and OCS at Ft. Sill OK. Completed Artillery & Missile School at Ft. Bliss in 1969 and was sent to RVN in Mar '70.



Spent entire tour as a 1LT with A-Btry/5th-2nd Dusters. Firebases include: Ft. Defiance, Bu Dop, Phuoc Vinh, Quan Loi, An Loc, Tay Ninh, Phu Loi, Nui Ba Den, Song Be, Xuan Loc, and the Cambodian Invasion of Spring 1970. DEROS: Feb '71 awarded: Bronze Star "V", Purple Heart, ARCOM 1st OLC and others. Carrying 80% disability from service actions.

Presently divorced, one son: Robert J. Ryan is USMC MP stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC - married to the beautiful Christie Jo. Career in telecommunications and currently resides in Biscayne Park FL.

JOHN RYSWICK, born Dec '46 in Fremont, MI. He was drafted into the Army on Feb. 2,