

MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND VIETNAM
SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP (MACV SOG)
DANIEL BOONE EMERGENCY

23 October 1967

By: Jim Burns, USAF (Retired)

I was flying as a Flight Mechanic/Door Gunner on a U.S. Air Force UH-1F (Huey) helicopter, assigned to the 20th Helicopter Squadron known as the “Green Hornets”. We had inserted a seven man MACV SOG Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol team into a landing zone (LZ) along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia, led by Sergeant First Class (SFC) Jerry (mad dog) Shriver.



The code name for these missions into Cambodia was “Daniel Boone”. We all knew this was a very bad area with a lot of enemy forces. Our mission package for this day included two UH-1P Huey “gunships”, three UH-1F Huey “slicks” and our 0-1 Bird Dog Forward Air Controller (“FAC”). My bird was the designated “low bird” slick, which meant we were the bird to insert the team for that day and the bird to pick them up if necessary.

After we inserted a team, and until fuel got low, we usually orbited a short distance away from the LZ to be nearby in case the team ran into trouble just after the insertion. We received word that SFC Shriver’s team was o.k. and we were released to proceed to a secure camp in South Viet Nam (SVN) to refuel and remain on standby for the rest of the day. We always refueled our gunship’s first so they would be ready as soon as possible to take off and provide fire support to the teams in case they got into trouble. Just as the gunships finished refueling and were shutting down we got a call that Jerry’s team had been discovered and was under attack by a large enemy force. The team was on the run and trying to break contact, but they needed an emergency extraction.

Shortly after the insert, SFC Shriver’s team was spotted by a small enemy element. He attempted to trick them into approaching, trying to capture a prisoner. Unfortunately another enemy soldier came from another direction and recognized the reconnaissance team for what it was, and not friendly guerrillas. Sounding the alarm, the enemy soldier opened fire and the others followed suit. SFC Shriver ordered his team members to throw hand grenades so as not too completely disclose their position and then he and his team attempted to break contact with the, now platoon size, enemy force. The team suddenly found itself backed up against a large lake, boxed in on three sides, making further movement impossible. At that moment SFC Shriver contacted the FAC, declared a ‘Daniel Boone Emergency’ (this is the code name for “team in trouble in Cambodia”) and told him of their now desperate situation informing him that he was in contact with an estimated enemy platoon, with the enemy yelling that the rest of the company would join them soon. At the same time, SFC Shriver knew from the FAC that the “Green Hornet” gunships were about to arrive and he was yelling back at the enemy telling them to surrender or they would be the ones to be wiped out.

Our gunship's cranked back up and headed for the LZ while we finished refueling our "slicks". As soon as we were done refueling we headed out to make the pick up. As I said, my bird was the "low bird" for the day and we would be the one attempting the extraction of the team. We could hear the radio chatter and they were saying that the team was pinned down in the low grass at the edge of a lake and were receiving heavy enemy fire from the tree line along three sides of the LZ. At about this time our "Green Hornet" gunship's arrived and set up a figure 8 firing pattern, to provide continuous fire cover over the team. This helped get the bad guy's heads down so we could try the extraction. The FAC committed our two UH-1P gunships for support, and SFC Shriver coolly directed their rocket and mini-gun fire into the enemy ranks, now only thirty yards away and forming for an on-line assault. In the midst of the furious engagement SFC Shriver calmly adjusted the supporting fire to within twenty yards of his position until the enemy began falling back. SFC Shriver was shouting to the bad guys to surrender because they were surrounded, at the same time he was radioing to us that his team was down to one clip of ammo each and three or four grenades and were about to be overrun.

As we approached the pickup LZ, Jerry radioed that he would pop a smoke grenade to mark their location and wanted us to land with nose pointed at the grenade. He had a seven-man team (normally he had a six man team) that day because he was training a new Montagnard for his team. He said that as we landed he would split the team apart and four of them would jump up and run to the right side to get in and the other three would run to the left side. On our approach my pilot told Jerry not to pop the smoke because we could clearly see them lying in the short grass. After we had cleared the tree line on the far edge of the lake, this was an LZ to dream about, big and clear, level ground with short grass, and we didn't have to worry about trees in the LZ. We only had to clear the tree line on the team's side of the lake as we took off. The only thing bad about it was the enemy forces were firing at us all the time; during the approach, while we were on the ground, and as we took off. On the approach our gunships gave us a little room to get in and then they resumed their pattern above us.

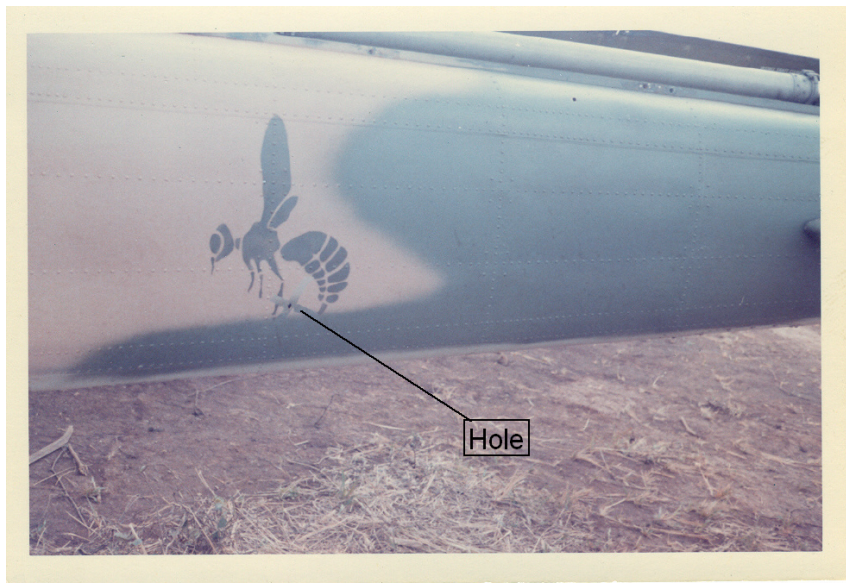
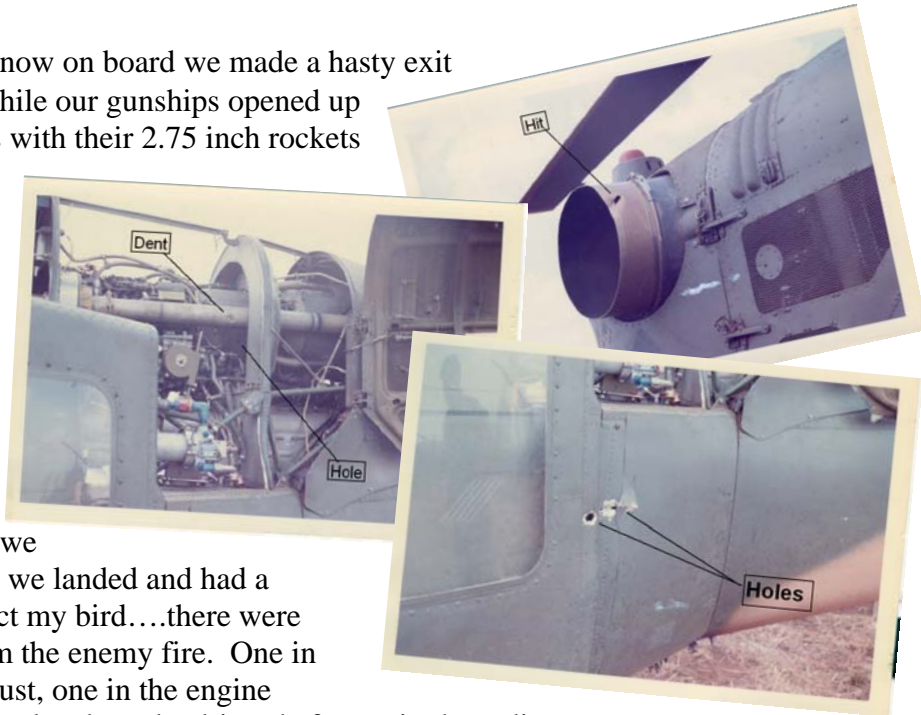
I remember the most beautiful sound in the world that day was that of our UH-1P gunship's 7.62mm mini-guns firing from above us, at 4-6 thousand rounds a minute, into the tree lines around the LZ. The 'hum' of those mini-guns and the sound of the spent shell casings "raining" down through our rotor blades and hitting the skin of our bird was beautiful. Both the left side gunner and I were standing in the open cabin doorway, raking the tree line with our M-60 machine guns the entire time we were on the approach, while on the ground and as we took off from of the LZ.

As if this was not enough excitement, when we landed the team jumped up and ran for our bird, with three of the team and the Montagnard trainee running for the left side. Two others team members with SFC Shriver, bringing up the rear, running for my door on the right side. One thing you must know about SFC Shriver, is that when he gave his team members instruction...he insisted that they follow them exactly. In this situation he had instructed three...men on his team to get in the left side of our bird, with the 'trainee', the other two and him getting in the right side. They were all about too

the doors when SFC Shriver noticed the 'trainee' not following his instructions and heading for the left side of the helicopter. SFC Shriver turned and ran back around the front of the Huey and grabbed the 'trainee' by the back pack and jerked him around, kicked him in the butt and made him come around to my door and get in—like he had told him to do in the first place. I didn't know what was going on so the whole time I'm yelling at Jerry to get on board, since I didn't give a damn which door they got in, as long as they got in so we could get the hell out of there.

With the team now on board we made a hasty exit from the area while our gunships opened up on the tree lines with their 2.75 inch rockets and continuous fire from their mini-guns. The team members joined my left gunner and me at firing everything we had at the enemy force as we

departed. After we landed and had a chance to inspect my bird....there were several hits from the enemy fire. One in the engine exhaust, one in the engine compressor, that also dented a drive shaft, one in the radio compartment, a couple of others along the tail, one of which went through the tail rotor drive shaft and one that came real close to getting our "Green Hornet" on the tail



We had successfully completed an emergency rescue of our MACV SOG team, led by SFC Jerry Shriver. This team was in extreme and real danger of being killed or captured within just a very few minutes had our gunships not arrived when they did to suppress the enemy fire and make it possible for my bird to land and rescue them. For my actions on this day, I was awarded my first Distinguished Flying Cross. This is the citation that came with my award for this mission.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO

JAMES W. BURNS

Staff Sergeant James W. Burns distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as a UH-1F Helicopter Flight Mechanic, in Southeast Asia on 23 October 1967. On that date, Sergeant Burns took part in the rescue of a long-range reconnaissance team which was surrounded and under attack by hostile forces. On the approach and while on the landing zone, Sergeant Burns exposed himself in the open doorway to help clear the helicopter from the surrounding trees and to assist the teams members on board the aircraft. The professional competence, aerial skill and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Burns reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Sergeant First Class Jerry M. Shriver was awarded The Bronze Star Medal for his actions that day. On his third tour in the Southeast Asia War MSgt. Shriver went Missing In Action (MIA) on April 4, 1969 and is presumed to have been Killed In Action (KIA). His name is on Panel 26W Line 041 of THE WALL (The Vietnam Memorial Wall) in Washington, D.C along with 58,253 other Americans who gave their all.

Well that's my story of a few moments in my life, one day, 23 October 1967, while on one of my tours to sunny Southeast Asia...and I'm sticking to it!!

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