

September 2, 2013

David M. Curtin

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Dear Dave,

November, 1964 I was transferred from Mortar Btry, 2/504 82nd Airborne Division to the 173rd Airborne Bde. (Separate) in Okinawa, I was assigned to the Bde. Davy Crockett platoon.

My background was 4.2" mortars, however I attended the Bn Mortar and Davy Crockett School at Ft. Benning, GA in 1963, and upon return to Ft. Bragg I was assigned to the Davy Crockett platoon which was in Mortar Btry...

It took me until May, 1965 to get my wife and two sons (at that time), to Okinawa. She and the boys came by ship (22 days) both boys were sea sick, ran high fevers and had to be packed in ice... They also went through the edge of a typhoon. When I met her and the boys as they disembarked at the Naha port, I said guess what dear the 173rd is leaving for Vietnam in 4 days. (How about a 4 day accompanied tour in Okinawa.)

We could not take the Davy Crockett delivery systems to Vietnam. They broke the platoon down and assigned us to different line companies. I was assigned to Charlie Co. 2/503 for about 45 days. Then as luck would have it Co. D 16th Armor received four tracks mounted with 4.2" mortars and the platoon was brought back together. We were now the 4.2" Mortar Platoon.

I was the only person in the Davy Crockett Platoon that had 4.2" mortar experience and I was the squad leader for the number 2 gun which was the base gun. I had one week to train the platoon on the 4.2" mortar, before we were to go out and support in combat operations. In one week we did go out and support the infantry effectively. The platoon members knew gunnery and the FDC NCO knew the FDC end.

The Bde deployed to Vietnam TDY for 90 days, (they had signs in Okinawa welcoming home the 173rd Bde.) Guess what, around the 85th day they informed us that we had 9 more months in Vietnam; we were changed to PCS status.

The married guys were allowed to fly back to Okinawa to be with their families for 5 days and then return to Vietnam.

The Platoon Sgt. SFC Herman L. Trent (later to receive the DSC with the 101st Airborne Division during his next tour of duty in Vietnam) was moved into the platoon leader's slot and I took over as PSG and was promoted to SSG E-6 around September, 1965. I was wounded while on operation in the Iron Triangle in February, 1966 and evacuated to Ft. Bragg, NC.

(# Note any one assigned to D 16th Armor after February, 1966 probably noticed that the Number 1 track had D FOUR, the number 2 track had DEATH, the number 3 track had DEALING and the number 4 track had DEUCES all on the front of the tracks. All four tracks had a hand of 4 deuces painted on the left side.)

D FOUR DEATH DEALING DEUCES

I am trying to get copies of any pictures and movies I have ready for the reunion.

AIRBORNE

Ralph E. (Butch) Sprinkle II