

## Personal Info



*((After 10 years in the Infantry (Enlisted and Commissioned), I transferred to the ASA in 1963. Following a 3 month orientation tour at Ft Devens, my first duty assignment was to the 313th ASA Bn at Fort Bragg, NC (Aug 63). I spent a couple of months as the Bn Communications Officer and then became the Bn S-1/Adjutant. With the exception of a 5 month TDY to Fort Devens to attend the ASA Officers Associate Advance Course, I held that position until I assumed command of B Company in August 65. ))*

### 313th ASA Bn (Abn)

When I joined the 313th in Aug 1963 it consisted of:

**Bn Headquarters - (Fort Bragg)** Supporting the XVIII Airborne Corps. ( The Corps Commander at that time was a LTG Westmoreland.)

**Hq & Hq Company (Fort Bragg)** Provided Admin, Logistics etc support to the Bn.

**Operations Company (Homestead, Florida)** - Deployed to Florida during the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), the Ops Co was used as the nucleus for the formation of the 6th Field Station and never returned to Fort Bragg.

**'A' Company (Fort Bragg)** - Supporting the 82d Airborne Division. ( In April/May 1965 elements of 'A' Company were deployed in support of elements of the 82d Abn Div to the Dominican Republic and participated in the "Police Action" there. 'A' Co suffered several casualties including one officer KIA. Elements of 'A' Co were still in the DR when the Bn started deployment of other units to Vietnam.)

**'B' Company (Fort Campbell)** - Supporting the 101st Airborne Division. Deployed to Vietnam Sept 65 in support of the 1st Infantry Division.

**'C' Company (Fort Benning)** - Support of the 2nd Infantry Div. With the formation of the 1st Airmobile Division at Fort Benning, the Company was placed in support of that Division and deployed with it to Vietnam (10th RRU). The unit deployed from the east coast about two weeks prior to 'B' Co deployment from the west coast and arrived in Vietnam about 10 days before 'B'

Co.

**‘D’ Company ( Fort Lewis) -** In support of 4th Infantry Division. (Shortly after my arrival at Fort Bragg, this unit was transferred to the 303rd ASA Bn.)

### **‘B’ Co/11th RRU**

*(( As the S-1 for the Bn, I was actively involved with most of the reorganization/deployment actions. In August of 1965, after ensuring all that could be done to get ‘C’ Co and ‘B’ Co ready for deployment had been or was in the process of being done, I went on leave to Kansas. About midway into my leave, I received a call from the Bn Commander instructing me to return to Ft Bragg ASAP and informing me that the ‘B’ Company CO was not going to be able to deploy with the unit and that I was going to have to take command of the Company. We were back at Fort Bragg in 48 hours. The day after returning to Ft Bragg (while my wife started the clearing quarters and post procedures), the Bn CO and I were on a plane headed to Fort Riley, KS (which I had driven by just 3 days earlier). We went there for last minute deployment coordination with the 1st Division. After a couple days at Ft Riley, we returned to Fort Bragg. Five days later, my wife and kids dropped me off at the front gate of Fort Campbell and proceeded on to Oregon. ))*

August 29, 1965 I assumed command of the Company. (about 3 weeks before scheduled deployment.) In addition to some last minute personnel actions and completing some mandatory deployment training requirements, the major action remaining before deployment was preparation and out loading of our vehicles and equipment on to railroad cars. The later was accomplished by unit personal under supervision of post transportation. This was done while Fort Campbell was being subject to some really nasty weather (a tropical storm coming out of the Gulf).

The vehicles, equipment and supplies left Fort Campbell about 10 days before the personnel. One NCO was sent with equipment. ( I believe his name was SFC Scrodin-- could be wrong). The plan was the ship carrying our vehicles and equipment would arrive in Vietnam at about the same time as we did. (In fact we would be in country over two months before we would once again see our vehicles and equipment- more on this later.)

Other than what the individuals could carry and our Crypto gear, we were limited to taking 3 Conex containers on the ship with us. These were packed with a couple of tents, some mess equipment, weapons, miscellaneous supplies and a whole lot of C-Rations.

Due to an outstanding effort on the part of Company personnel we were ready to deploy about five days before our scheduled departure date. Rather than setting around Ft Campbell waiting, I decided to issue 3 day passes to any one who wanted one. I notified the Bn Commander of what I was going to do and requested permission to waive the travel restrictions. (If I remember correctly, at that time there was a 250 mile limit for 3 day passes.) The Bn Commander told me such a decision was up to me and he warned me that if anyone missed shipment they would be in deep trouble and it would probably be a career ending move for me. Long story short, about thirty-forty personnel took the passes and traveled to various places throughout the country and every one made it back to Fort Campbell by the deadline.

On/about Sept 29th we flew out of Ft Campbell. If my memory serves me correctly, we left Ft Campbell with around 116 personnel. We left around 11PM (it was already dark), flew to Oakland and was transported by bus to the ship arriving about midnight. Already on board were elements of the 1st Infantry Division and some other units. The ship departed the next day. I can not recall the name of the ship. (Some one will be able to recall the name.) - USNS Barrett

The trip to Vietnam took about 22 days. At Guam the ship had to refuel and all the troops were taken to one of the recreational beaches and treated to a Bar-B-Q and some liquid refreshments. Because of a limited number vehicles, troops were transported back to the ship in relays. When we found out that we were going to be the last group, most of us formed up in Company formation and "double timed" back to the ship with an Airborne attitude. (Each time we passed another unit or they passed us (in the trucks) we would serenade them with the Mickey Mouse Club theme song.)

A few days before reaching Nam, in accordance with orders, we changed our unit designation to the 11th RRU and our insigna from MI to Signal Corp. I explained to the senior military officer on board and the Captain of the ship what we were doing and why. A couple hours later someone (I don't recall wheather it was one of the 1st Div Officers or a Ships Officer) got on the ships PA system and announced to everyone on board that Company 'B' 313th ASA Bn had changed to it's cover designation the 11th RRU and should not be refered to as Co 'B'. So much for security. (I learned some time later that the unit designation change had little to do with security and more to do with diplomatic considerations. The assistance treaty we signed with the South Vietnamese limited the number of "Intelligence" personnel we could put in-country. By redesignating our units "Radio Research Units" we could put as many as we wanted in country and the South Vietnamese could save face.)

I am still a little fuzzy about what day we actually arrived in Vietnam. The 20th of October keeps coming to mind, but may be wrong. (I am sure some of the other guys can be more precise.) The ship anchored off Vung Tau and as we transfered to landing craft for the trip to shore, I am sure many of the men as well as my self were apprehensive about what we would face on shore. If we were going to encounter any VC, we were in deep trouble because only a few of us had any ammo for our weapons. Not to worry- when the ramp dropped on the beach, there was a bunch of senior officers from the 1st Division Headquarters and MACV. The 1st Division Band was playing and a group of USO Doughnut Dollies serving refreshments. (I will never forget the first two thoughts that crossed my mind as I went ashore (1) what kind of war zone is this and (2) the band and USO had a higher travel priority than we did.

After a short pause on the beach and getting organized, we boarded aircraft and flew from Vung Tau to Bien Hoa where we got transportation to the 1st Division staging area at Long Bien. Lt Joe Button and other members of Det 2 were waiting for us at Bien Hoa and escorted us to the staging area. Lt Button provided us with a jeep and a 3/4ton so that we would have some transportation of our own.

The 1st Division Headquarters and some the Support Command units had arrived in-country about a week ahead of us. The Div Headquarters and some other units were still in the staging

area and some had already set up at Dian. We remained in the staging area only a couple of days. The Division provided us with one general purpose tent. Since there was over a 100 of us, most of the men slept out under the stars.

The day after our arrival at the staging area, four of us went to Di Ann to look over the area set aside for our unit and to plan how we were going to organize our company area, which was located between the Division Headquarters and the Division Medical Bn (that was already set up and operating when we arrived). Engineers had or were in the process of cutting in the roads, drainage ditches and clearing most of the larger vegetation. While we were walking the perimeter of the company area, there was report of a rifle and zing of a bullet over head, following my lead, my party took cover in the nearest ditch. The guards around the medical facility opened fire and sent some people out to eliminate the problem. We rapidly finished our survey and returned to the staging area. The following morning at the Division's Command briefing, I learned that they found an older VC in a "Spider Hole" with an old single shot rifle. From the condition of the individual and the hole, it was obvious that he had been there for some time waiting for the right target. As a result of this incident the Division conducted a detailed sweep and found several other spider holes and some tunnels within the perimeter of the Di An Base Camp area.

(At that same briefing, I learned that the ship carrying our equipment was setting in Saigon Harbor waiting it's turn to be unloaded. At the time, I thought this is almost too good to be true. What I was not aware of at the time was (1) the dock facilities in Saigon could only accept a couple ships at a time for off loading (2) there were several dozen ships waiting to be off loaded and more arriving every day (3) the priority assigned our ship was apparently somewhat lower than those carrying beer, doughnuts, and band instruments. Long story short- the ship would set in the harbor waiting its turn until it had to return to the Philippines to refuel. This went on for two months.)

After a couple of days in the staging area we moved to Di An and met up with the Conex containers that we brought on the ship with us. Realizing that it maybe some time before we got the rest of our equipment, we went into a survival mode. We consolidated our Mess operations with that of the Div Hq Company. We were able to get a few tents from the 1st Div and I think we got a couple from the 3rd RRU in Saigon. Although it was very cozy, we had everyone under cover within a few days. Part of one tent was set aside for a "dayroom" consisting of two 30 gal trash cans for cooling beer and soda.

The old "yankee ingenuity" demonstrated by the senior NCOs was the primary reason we were able to start with nothing and by the time our equipment arrived have a functioning base camp area. SFC Donald Stoops was designated our Field First Sgt assisted by SSgt Ray Shook were put in charge of "area improvement" and "morale and welfare". They along with the other NCOs used their "NCO network" to identify sources of needed items and "negotiate" obtaining them outside normal logistics channels. When 1st Sgt Robert E. Lee was medically evacuated, SFC Stoops became the Company 1st Sgt and SSgt Shook became our "Field First". (His actual duty position was Company Mess Sgt., however the Division Hq&Hq Co provided most of the oversight of the conslodated mess operation.)

The extra C-Rations we brought with us became “currency” and the Air Force became a good supply source. (Crews of the cargo and troop carrier aircraft were provided “box lunches” consisting of fresh food prepared in mess halls. Due to the heat and humidity most of this prepared food was not edible by the time it was delivered to the aircraft, let alone several hours into the extended flights.) Some of the Air Force units were very happy to get C-Rations in exchange for “undeliverable” and “surplus” items.

I and Lt John Hentz (Co XO and Supply Officer) found, after exhausting normal logistics channels, the best way to resolve a need, was to mention it the NCO’s and the needed items would normally appear in the company area within a day or two. In order to maintain deniability, John or I never asked where it came from or what it cost us.

While making the area “livable”, it was also essential that we develop some secure communications capability so that we could get in the “loop”. (During the buildup of forces in Vietnam, and probably for the remainder of the war, the majority of intelligence provided to the combat units initiated with RRUs and similiar Air Force and Naval units supported by off-shore assets.) We had brought our Crypto equipment with us , however we had no other communications equipment. Det 2 and the 3rd RRU provided us with sufficient equipment that we were able to set up a “comm center”. We were then able to provide the Division Commander and G2 with at least some level of Special Intelligence support until our equipment arrived.

Around 6 Dec, at the morning Divison Command briefing, I was informed that the ship carrying our equipment had docked in Saigon, but due to lack of people it would probably be a few days before it could be off loaded. I suggested I take 11th personnel to the docks to help off load . After a few phone calls and borrowing some trucks from the Division we proceeded to the docks and by the next day had all of our vehicles and equipment off loaded. The Captain of the ship was so glad to finally be off loading that he looked the other way while we threw some of the lumber (used for temporary decking and bracing) into our trucks as they were being lifted out of the hold. This material was subsequently used to provide framing for some tent floors and the construction of a proper “day room”, the first in the Di An Base Camp area.

It took us about 10 days to get our equipment and vehicles assembled and operational. The priority was getting the 1st and 3rd Platoons deployed out to their respective Brigade areas. (Det 2 was redesignated the 2nd Spt Platoon. Some of the Detachment equipment and personnel were redistributed to other Company elements. )

## **CHALLENGES**

## **OPERATIONS**

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

## **UNIT AWARDS**

## **Personal Experiences (this and that.**

