

## David Engel

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**From:** The Vasbys [kvasby@smallbytes.net]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 28, 2015 12:27 PM  
**To:** Undisclosed-Recipient;  
**Subject:** Ten Years Ago - Lincoln High Newsletter - 5/26/05

# *Lincoln High Newsletter*

## *Memories of then! News of now!*

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Kent, the 45th reunion draws near ... excited to say the least.

Recently, I attended Waukesha West HS and talked to some of the English Department teachers and students about my personal Viet Nam experiences as they have been reading THE THINGS THEY CARRIED by Tim O'Brien. Additionally, I am doing email Q&A with the students for their final paper. Interestingly, I look at them and say, "It is hard to believe that 40 years ago I was sitting where you are today." I'm not sure who is affected more! At any rate, my talk and the subsequent discussions/emails hold no bounds with the exception of no graphic descriptions (I never did have/take any such pictures). Very interesting ... and, very intelligent and interesting students and faculty.

This leads me to my quest for a short narrative {monograph (?) } I did for the Retired Military Newsletter entitled "Air Power." I can not find my hard copy nor the electronic version on any of my disks or hard drives. I had a request to describe an incident and I thought this might do the trick. Another thought comes to mind and I recall writing to you about trading the weight of food off for the ability to carry more ammo and using a nickel ball of C4 to boil water. This narrative would be in response to a Q on "what did you carry?" Does any of this ring a bell? If so, I'm hoping that the EDITOR has better files and could find and forward to me.

Thanks for the newsletters and be seeing you soon. Peace & happiness.

Roger Gray

### **Here's what Roger wanted**

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**Capt. Roger Gray** [regraywolf@aol.com](mailto:regraywolf@aol.com) was in my wife's Wis Rapids high school class and was a Green Beret in Nam (or a bit north and west of there). Will put in some things he's written for his High School newsletter in future editions. In the meantime, he wrote this for the Retired Military Newsletter.

"Here's a piece for air power ... It was hot, dry, and approaching high noon when my small patrol smelled water and flanked out of the safe, shady jungle and started down into the more open valley. {It was the day after a unilateral stand-down and my long-range patrol had been ordered to sit tight for the whole day, do not move - DO NOT conduct offensive operations. I read "Gone with the Wind" cover-to-cover as we silently watched and waited ... no cooking, a little water & munchies now and then. Darn near pleasant.} Anyway, it was way-late afternoon of that hot, dry day when we finally single-file snuck our butts through a bomb crater and got some seep water. I was about number last to get through the crater and scoop up the now "thick" water ... I promptly popped an Iodine tablet as I gulped the thick wetness. It could have been a malt. Anyway, ...

I now recall fondly of looking down (yes, looking down or at least out at eye-level) on a TAC air flight providing my Montagnard/Cambod patrol "close support" ... oh, so close support ... who swept into "my" V-shaped valley after we ambushed an NVA infiltration/supply force on the Serge's Jungle Highway, N. of Hwy 13 & just E. of the Song Be (river) in III Corps. It was a classic chance encounter ... we were moving down slope, spread out "on line," with the idea of hitting the stream altogether, refill our many canteens, and melt right back into the opposite side and become one with the safety of the jungle. Halfway down and ... suddenly "they" streamed out of "their" jungle into the creek bottoms. They were spread out along the stream, running supply laden bicycles, and getting water! One "pop" and we all cut loose as if it were planned and immediately had'em pinned down all along the creek bottoms ... and they, a much larger force, had us

"pinned up" on the relatively steep and open valley slope. They had the creek banks for cover, water, and supplies ... we had the high ground, out of water, and soon low on ammo. We assaulted "on-line" 3 times, but couldn't sustain the push. We managed to overrun the lead elements of their supply train, capture a few bikes/rice supplies, but couldn't roll up the line as their troops began to rush to the front. No Cobras, no arty, no Huey gunships, no nothin' but my FAC with 2.75 WP rockets. We recovered to "our" side of the stream, but no one could really "cut & run" ... that is, until my sky pilot FAC got TAC air (I think Thuds) who literally roared down INTO the valley hitting both sides of the "blue line" but mostly "their" side, with a total of 20,750 pounders! Maybe a little close. Sword length pieces of bomb casing scythed through the air above our heads, dropping the few trees and limbs on top of us. Whole trees instantly shed their leaves as if it were fall in Wisconsin. At times we were suspended fully 3 feet above the ground as the mother earth took the hits. The sun shown like a flashlight on a dirty windowpane as the air turned to a mixture of dust, dirt and misty muck from the stream. No, we failed to go in and do a BDA - Bomb Damage Assessment ... we ALL just left. No friendlies were hit. We kept their bikes and rice ... after all, we were hungry too. All in all, it was a good day. (A few days later a small patrol did sneak back and recovered additional weapons and counted parts. And the BDA info was forwarded with many thanks.)"

Peace & Happiness,

Roger

Editor's note: Got to "yacking" with **Roger Gray** about military rations. He provided more info as to his Viet Nam tour and "cuisine".

**Roger Gray** [regraywolf@aol.com](mailto:regraywolf@aol.com) writes:

Kent, not that anyone will know, but I'm on the "right" in the pic you sent last week...and, I wouldn't want to disparage Lt. Fredericksen! When I said I was "lean", I was pushing 155 wet in this pic. I recall this was just after the early June operation mentioned in the "Anatomy of..." article. I was pretty burned out, wounded, and hungry and really not ready for a staged pic. Anyway, I had trimmed down from 188 upon arrival "in-country"...when I was in solid shape. I never had enough food (a trade off choice for more ammo and water). So, I ate captured food, bamboo sprouts, jungle plants/mushrooms & bugs (If the Montagnards did), snakes, lizzards, monkeys, and just about anything that was slower than me. No wonder my unofficial call sign was "garbage gut". I pretty much enjoyed the cuisine.

I really did limit my "take along" food in favor of ammo and water as I ran short on occasion ... **Ed: One has to establish priorities when being shot at!** but those are other stories. Actually, we were on "separate rations" or "rations not available" pay...only problem...there wasn't a "local economy" from which to buy local food. I used the PIRs (Personal Indigenous Rations) which were numbered 1 through 5 with all instructions in pictures...no writing on the dark green packets so at least I could handle the "cooking." But, I would cut back the one ration to just the dried meat/fruits (which were very light in weight). I especially liked the #4 (?) "fish & squid" and #3 "shrimp." Based on the combat patrol/activities, I would then supplement this with whatever I could forage throughout the day while on patrol (not much to eat in the rubber plantations...I liked the jungle). This became my evening meal. My other "meals" were Instant Breakfast + Sanalac Dairy's (Vesper, I believe) instant milk which I had Mom send to me as often as possible and instant Jell-O packs I scrounged from the "Americans"... Apparently, they had their fill of Jell-O and, as you know, Jell-O doesn't set up very well without refrigeration. Anyway, these (1 portion of either per meal) became my "breakfast" and "lunch" since it only took 2 minutes "stop the march" and a "nickel-ball" of C4 (**Ed: small ball of plastic explosive that, when lit, provided heat rather than "exploding"!**) to scald a canteen cup of jungle water. Then it was plop-plop, stir, and drink...and we were on are way. Of course, sometimes we were lucky and caught some really big lizzards (longer than my M-16), ran into a troop of monkeys, or a large python...and, if we thought we were "safe" the patrol ceased to exist while we feasted...then back to the patrol. We never, never stayed in one place too long nor remained over night (RON) (sleep) were we last ate.

Yes, I liked the C-Rats **Ed: Military C-rations - canned rations left over from WWII for the most part, Editor ate some that were 20+ years old with no ill effects!** - when we could get them. The "Americans" though we were nuts trading "stuff" for C-Rats and boxes of frozen hot dogs and canned bread dough. But, a special "night out" for us might have been home made "pigs-in-a-blanket" with the dogs & dough or a "pizza" with the C-Rat canned cheese, spaghetti sauce & meat balls plus extra meat on the now "pizza" dough. On the other hand, the SF Camps could purchase pallets of beer and pop...I think 80 cases to a pallet and get it delivered via C-7Alpha Caribou or C-123/C-130 those air crews never failed to deliver. These, we then would, of course, drink or use for trading along with crossbows, flags, captured equipment, etc., with various American units.

Each Wednesday was "VN Food Day" in Chi Linh. The poor C-7A crews airlifted in local foods for the Irregulars...live chickens & ducks, "frozen" (not) fish, fertilized ducks eggs (now there's a story), "ripe" veggies/fruits, and rice...lots of the finest Louisiana long-grain white rice to be had. And, it was never enough since the 550+ Strikers in our camp all had their extended families with them. I had the dubious honor of coordinating the food deliveries and the equitable distribution to the various units in my Camp...I always had an invite to dinner.

Boy, you sure can get me to talkin' ... I guess I needed it. Thanks, Rog