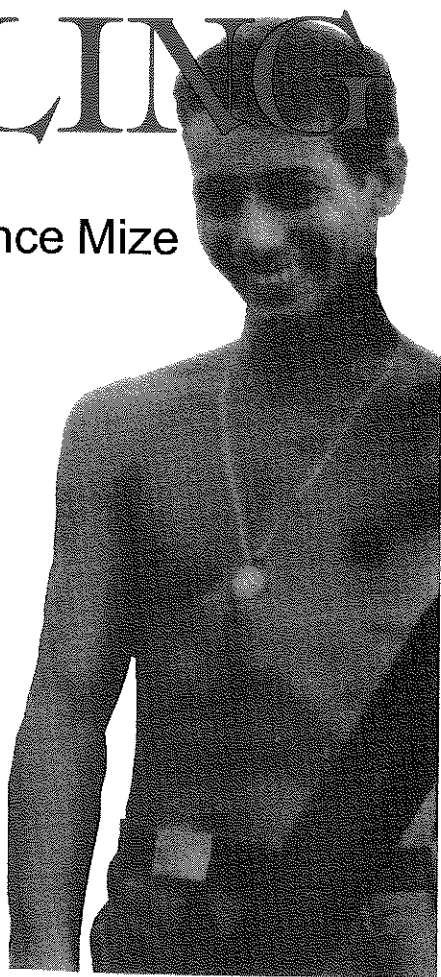


DEAD MEN CALLING

Lawerence Mize



DEAD
MEN
CALLING

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Lawrence Mize



American Literary Press, Inc.
Baltimore, Maryland

Dead Men Calling

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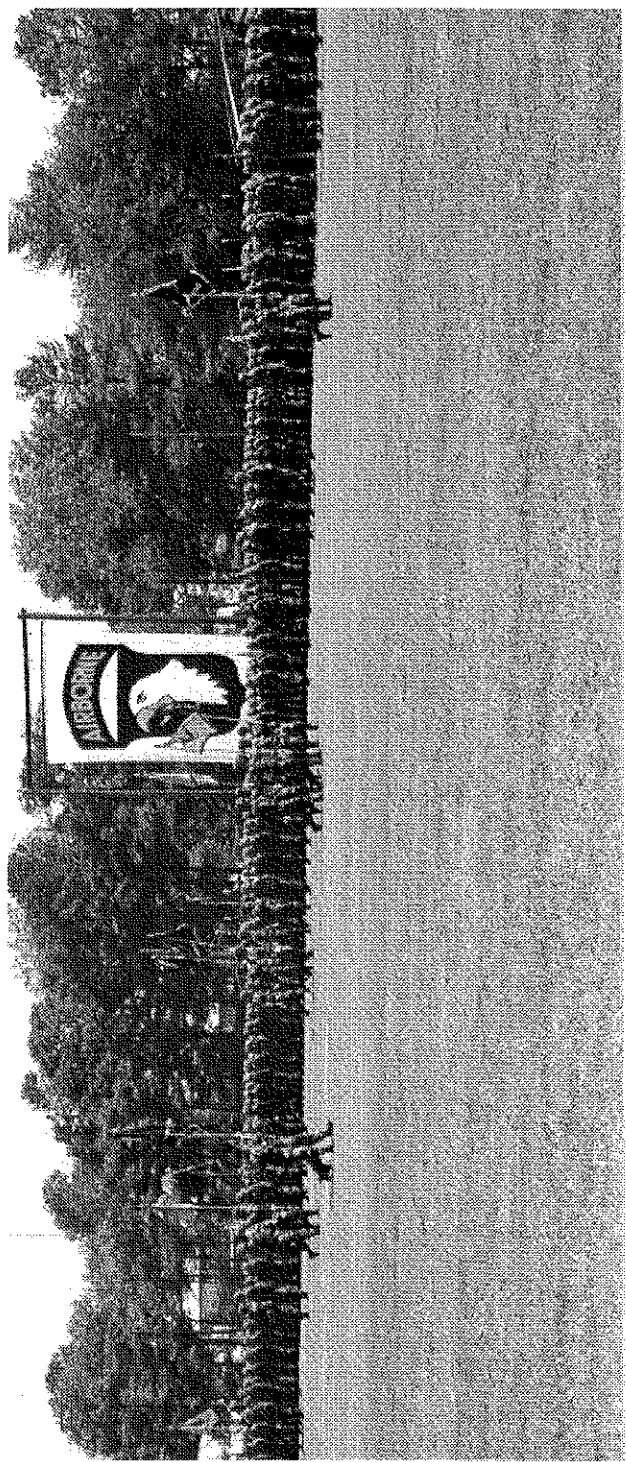
Dedicated to the memory of:

Ivan Febo-Bentancourt
K.I.A. 6 April 1968

and

Dennis W. Hoff
K.I.A. 25 April 1968

Now.....please let me be.



101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) soldiers passing in review at Fort Campbell, Kentucky during the "Week of the Eagles," a celebration to honor their history and the post installation. Photo courtesy of Michael Connell.

Introduction

June 9, 2000—I stood on the freshly mowed grass of the 101st Airborne Division (Air-Assault)'s parade field at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, watching thousands of soldiers pass in review. It was an awesome sight as they marched in step across the field in combat fatigues with their bayonets fixed to their rifles. The review was a part of the Post Installation ceremony marking the change-of-command of the Division. These activities and others had been scheduled for The "Week of the Eagles," a celebration to honor the history of the 101st Airborne Division and the post installation. It was being held in conjunction with the 101st Airborne Division Association's Annual Reunion. I had come to participate in the activities, but, more importantly, I had come to renew old friendships. I watched as the young men and women marched past the reviewing stand and as I watched I was taken back to another time so long ago when I too had marched in formation. It was here, at Fort Campbell, some thirty-three years ago that I had been deployed to the Republic of Vietnam.

I closed my eyes for a brief few moments and imagined how our Division had looked in 1967 when we were as young as the troopers passing before the crowd of on-lookers now. I saw that we were really no different. It seemed as though it were only yesterday. I looked out into the sea of faces and wondered what lay ahead for these young men and women. I prayed that God would give them the strength to complete their missions and return safely home.

Standing on the field with me were Fred Bender, Mike Connell, and Charles Quash who had served with me in Vietnam. We had all met once again at the Days Inn in Clarksville the day before. I found Mike (Mighty Mouse) Connell in the hospitality room. He immediately drew my attention to 1st Sergeant Fred Brander sitting at a table with Fred Bender. Leonard Kaminski and John Palmer were also staying at the motel and joined our group. We moved to the sidewalk in front of Fred and Mike's rooms to get away from the crowded hospitality room and talked the night away. We learned how

each had spent the last thirty-three years and relived old memories. It was one of the most enjoyable evenings I have spent in a long time.

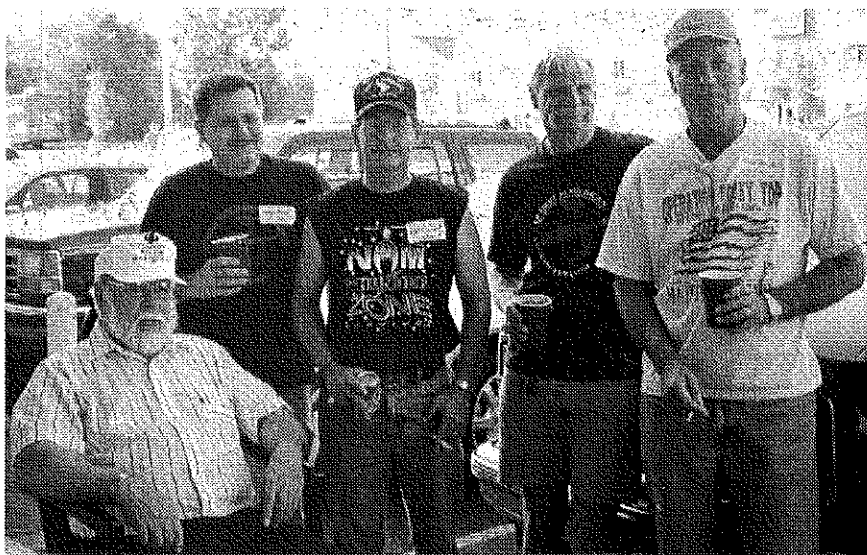
I began to write poems of my experiences in Vietnam in 1989. The poems provided me with a sense of relief and helped to lessen the guilt I felt that I had survived while a good number of my friends died in Vietnam. After a few years, I had enough of a collection of my poems to publish on my own a little book of poetry titled *Tortured Soul*.

The people at American Literary Press, Inc. helped me put *Tortured Soul* together. Johnny C. Bradley, director of publishing at American Literary Press was especially helpful. Since I had published the book at my own expense, I also had to sell it to recoup my investment. I found that it wasn't that hard and by the time of the "Week of the Eagles," I had only three copies left.

This new work contains all the original poems in *Tortured Soul*. I have had friends tell me that my poems are "different." I call them "dark" because of the subject matter. You can't spend a year in hell and emerge untainted. When I write, I want to give the reader a visual picture of what is going on in the poem. I want them to understand the horror of war and see how ugly war really can be.



Charles Quash, Michael Connell, Fred Bender, and author Lawrence Mize (l. to r.) at the "Week of the Eagles" celebration.



Fred C. Brander, Lawrence Mize, Michael Connell, Leonard Kaminski, and Fred Bender (l. to r.).

Photo courtesy of Michael Connell.



Major General Melvin Zais, 101st Airborne Division Commander, awarding the Silver Star to 1SG Fred C. Brander, A Co. 2/501st Inf. at Camp Eagle. Photo courtesy of 1Sg Fred C. Brander (Ret.)

The Pittsburgh Press

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With 101st Airborne in Viet

Green Troops Learn It's A Bloody War

First Combat Mission Makes Men Of Boys

By DON TATE

Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

CU CHI, South Vietnam—Up until now it had all been play war.

The green paratroopers, only two weeks in Vietnam, would run down the dusty road toward chow, and a sergeant would bark things like:

"Hey, you animals, let me hear you growl . . ." And they would go "Rowwwr . . ."

Arise For Orders

But this morning the men and boys of Alpha Company came out of their tents early, slowly formed into platoons, and waited for orders from their company commander, Capt. Dave Reiss of Alexandria, Va.

This was the morning they were going to war, their first combat mission—and for some of them, the last.

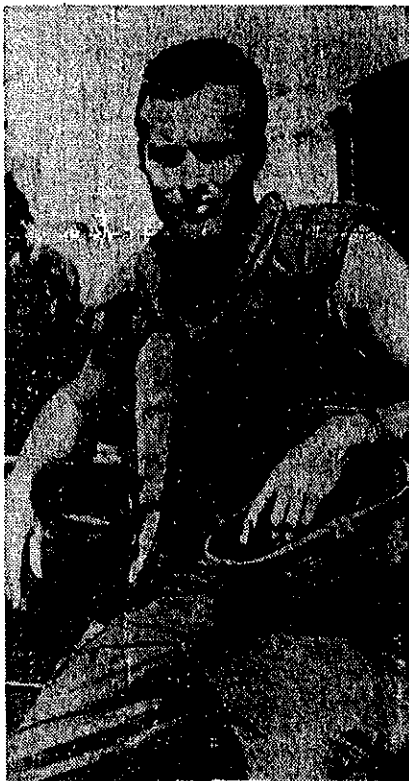
I moved among them, talking to one, then another. There were hard swallows, tight smiles, and very little of the famous airborne wisecracking. Some admitted they had not slept the night before.

Capt. Reiss had told me that though Alpha Company was part of the 2nd Brigade of the "Screaming Eagles" of the 101st Airborne, about 60 per cent of his men weren't hardcore paratroopers. Many had been mustered up hastily from truck driver or company-clerk jobs after the brigade had received orders back at Ft. Campbell, Ky.

"But they've turned into a good outfit fast," Capt. Reiss said. "Still, you never know until you've been shot at."

Worries About Pigeons

One who didn't seem particularly nervous about it was the baby-faced Georgia lieutenant who commanded the weapons platoon. He



DON TATE

Briefing lured him away.

smiled and said he was really more worried about the carrier pigeons he was training. He didn't like leaving them alone.

Another who didn't appear in mortal terror was his big, laughing Negro platoon sergeant from Kentucky, described by his commanders as not just a good soldier, but a "great" soldier. He and Capt. Reiss were members of the small nucleus of combat veterans in the

(Cont'd on Page 22, Column 1)

With 101st Airborne In Viet

Green GIs Find Bloody War

(Continued from Page One)

company who volunteered to return for a second tour in Vietnam.

One who didn't mind admitting he was nervous was 2nd Lt. John Rodelli of Chicago. Lt. Rodelli, small, swarthy, intense, said he didn't know how he was going to react or how his platoon was going to react. Only six months before, Lt. Rodelli had been taking ROTC and majoring in business management at college.

Another nervous one was 18-year-old Pfc. Larry Mize of Baltimore, an impish-faced medic with a missing front tooth.

"I've got a false one," he sort of stammered, pulling the tooth from his pocket, "but I don't wear it when I'm walking. It gives me a headache."

Pfc. Mize said he became a medic because he figured it might do him some good when he "got out. And maybe while I'm in . . ."

'New Ball Game'

Sgt. Dave DuBose of Birmingham, Ala., said sure he was an 18-year veteran and had been under artillery fire in Korea, "but this is a new ball game."

At 8:30 a. m. Capt. Reiss gave the order: "Right about face!" Then: "Move out in a column of fours."

Alpha Company was part of a battalion search-and-destroy sweep north from Cu Chi toward the Ho Bo Woods about 35 miles northwest of Saigon. The company platoons went out in three horseshoe-shaped formations from the camp.

"Get that rifle off your shoulder," someone bellowed to a soldier in the point platoon.

"What do you think you've got there, a bag of oranges?" bellowed a squad sergeant to a private carrying extra ammo clips in one hand in a sack. "How you going to fight like that, soldier?"

"Here it starts," said Lt. Rodelli, popping a magazine in his M-16.

6 Hours, No Enemy

It started and went on for six hours. We moved, watching for booby traps, guns ready, and kept going through blistering-hot, thorny, thick-brushed, broken-treed, insect-swarming flatlands. We found plenty of enemy tunnels, but no enemy. The heat knocked out a couple of troopers who had to be evacuated, and the big black and red ants seemed to want to eat you alive; but it was all tension and bull labor, no fighting.

By the time the company moved into a grassy stretch where they would dig in for the night, the tension and grimness had been sweated out.

They plopped down their packs and rifles, stripped off their shirts, drank deep from canteens, got out entrenching tools, started digging in the sun-baked ground and filling up sandbags.

"Is this piece of nothin' what we been marching for all day?" laughed a soldier, looking around.

"That's war," kidded another.

Start Off For Briefing

Lt. Rodelli asked if I wanted to go over to the briefing for the night ambushes, and I said I did.

"We'd better go a little early," he said. "I'm not sure where it is."

Beyond our perimeter now, about 500 yards out, came artillery bursts—it was our stuff back at Cu Chi zeroing in our position in case of an enemy attack during the night.

We walked through the weapons platoon where the baby-faced Georgia Lieutenant was holding forth as casual as ever, probably still

worrying about his pigeons. His platoon sergeant, the "great" soldier, was laughing and demonstrating digging to the greensies.

They say you never hear the one that gets you. I heard this one. It came down behind us hissing and my head already was down and touching ground before the explosion. That bursting, shocking sound came and the concussion went smacking over us.

Someone to my left was saying: "What the devil, what the devil . . . (and then the voice was furious, unbelieving) "That was one of ours!"

Another Explosion

There was another explosion farther away, and I heard the same voice yelling: "Tell that damned artillery to cease!"

In a moment I looked up and saw the black cloud from the first explosion barely 30 yards away. It hung over the weapons platoon. All around men were shouting: "Medic! Medic!" And at the same time there came screams, ungodly screams.

I stood up. Behind me a tall soldier was stretched out flat in the high grass.

"Are you hit?"

He just lay there rigidly flat in the grass. I bent over him and he stared straight at me blinking his eyes furiously. He wasn't hit. He was scared literally stiff.

I ran toward the smoke and stepped on something. It was a man's arm, severed at the elbow.

Belonged To Lieutenant

The man the arm belonged to lay in the dirt and smoke. It was the baby-faced lieutenant. His eyes and mouth were wide open as though he had died shouting.

A few yards away was the "great" soldier, who had been laughing and demonstrating digging moments before. He lay on his back on a bloody hump of earth without his head, with his left shoulder and arm blown away.

In the next nightmarish minutes I saw Pfc. Mize, the young medic, working among the blood and howls as though he had been a doctor all his life.

Radiomen were calling evacuation choppers. Capt. Reiss and Lt. Rodelli were both moving quickly, directing their men. Others were trying to identify the dead. One man kept saying he had to find the sergeant's head. Another picked up the lieutenant's arm and wrapped it up with him in a poncho.

Five soldiers worked with morphine and bandages over a man whose leg was hanging off. They had to keep knocking away huge ants. Nearby, ants were swarming over a helmet spattered with blood and flesh. The helmet had "Tennessee" penciled on it.

Count Four Dead

Between then and the approximately 25 minutes it took the first chopper to reach us, we counted four men dead, two more close to it, and eight others wounded. It was also determined (and later verified) that one of our own potent 4.2-inch mortar rounds from out of Cu Chi had fallen short by mistake.

One man stood looking down and said over and over, fighting back tears: "It's a helluva thing to happen. It's a helluva thing . . ." Another just said: "Damn, damn . . ."

Lt. Rodelli stood nearby, shaking his head.

Pfc. Mize came over to Capt. Reiss. The kid's hands were bloody to his wrists, only he didn't look like a kid anymore.

"Those guys had wives and children," Sgt. DuBose was saying. "They were good men."

"The best," the captain said softly. "The very best."

Alpha Company had reached the war.

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2 A.M. Blues

It's 2 a.m., I'm feeling blue.
Roused from bed.
Memories of Nam
drifting through.

Time again
To put pen to pad.
Write of things
that makes me sad.

Want to let go
put it all to rest.
It's enough to know
I passed life's test.

Shake with dread
From the flooding thoughts.
Put names to faces
of those who were lost.

No glory for me
or those who served.
Branded "Baby Killers"
of all the nerve.

Relive a time
so long ago.
Envision a place
I had come to know.

Search and DESTROY
was the name of the game.
Large body counts
brought recognition and fame.

All the battles we fought
in places quickly forgotten.

The stench of death
so putrid and rotten.

Napalm cannisters
tumbling through the air.

Instant horror
dropped with care.

Vills and hootches
burned to the ground.

Plenty of pain
to go around.

Tag'em and bag'em
our brothers in arms.
Their numbers at home
brought such an alarm.

They died from our guns
malaria took a few.
Snipers and mines
mortars too.

So senseless it was
the little war we had.
All the people killed
it's enough to make you go mad.

It's 2 a.m., I'm feeling blue
another sleepless night
nothing new.

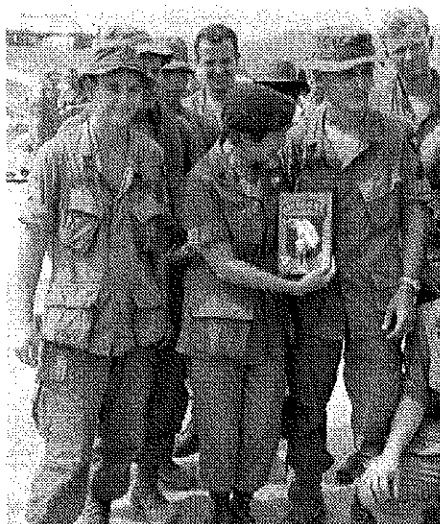
A Shau

Down in the valley
a humping I go.
Searching for Charlie
feeling low.

They call it A Shau
what do I know?
Never been so scared
don't care who knows.

Saw Martha Ray
just the other day.
Came to the LZ
had a few things to say.

A guy played a guitar
sang a few tunes.
Over before I knew it.
The gig ended too soon.



Found a dead gook
on a recon yesterday.
A Big ass Chinese
no way he's NVA.

Down in the valley
a humping I go.
Searching for Charlie
wonder if he knows?

Aftermath

The war is long over
the one we never won
No cheers of joy
just broken men on the run.

Branded as outcasts
stereotyped as ticking bombs.
Only wanted to serve our country
return home to our moms.

So analyzed and debated
to find at whose feet lay the blame.
Yet there's no one to latch onto
to account for all the names.

Names etched in stone
on a shiney granite wall.
If only they could speak
they'd tell it all.

They'd speak of their pain and suffering
the lost chance for fame.
There would be no excuses
nothing to sound lame.

Now it's just us oldtimers
the ones who have had their fill.
Stuck with horrible memories
served up a bitter pill.

We did our duty
served our country well.
Left only with stories
too terrible to tell.

We searched for the enemy
never had to go far.
Caused so much damage
left so many scars.

We fought to win
while others at home played games.
They made their decisions
some hid behind their names.

The cowards at home
wore their silly peace signs.
Burned their draft cards
sang their little rhymes.

Songs of protest
filled the air.
Joints of pot
appeared everywhere.

Marches and chants
nasty rumors of war.
Dirty little subversives
hiding in every door.

Some of the rats fled to Canada
others were deferred.
Now they seek glory
run for office... want to serve.

A shot in the head
should be a traitors just reward.
The cowards should have been branded
like cattle in a herd.

They gave us nothing
when they were young.
Now they want power
feel safe enough to run.

Their smiles so sincere
promises so great.
Just want your vote
know they'll skate.

It's over for us
the men and women of our kind.
We served our country with courage
in blood we did our time.

Back to "The World"

Got on my Freedom Bird
headed back to "The World."
Had a lay-over in Sacramento
saw a lot of cute girls.

My uniform looked sharp
knew I was standing tall.
Walked through the airport
spotted a fellow leaning on a wall.

His hair was long and dirty
clothes unkempt and soiled.

He looked like a bum
I thought he was going to fall.

Shook my head in disgust
at this apparition in jeans.
Wondered if he was a "Hippie"
wondered what the word "Hippie" could mean.

I turned my thoughts to home
it still seemed so far away.
I had come so far
tomorrow would be a great day.

Missed my Mom and Brothers,
my sister too.
I was feeling pretty happy
no time to be blue.

I was bound for Baltimore
the place from which I came.
Couldn't wait to taste a sub
hear my friends call my name.

The flight home took awhile
I fidgeted in my seat.
Tried to catch a nap
found I couldn't sleep.

Took a cab from the airport
drove down familiar streets.
It was early in the morning
there was no one out for me to greet

I knocked on my door
heard my Mom yell out
"Who is it?"
"Me Mom—Larry," I said.

"Oh my God," she screamed
"Larry's home."
"Home"... I repeated
suddenly feeling sad.

Collision Course

On a Collision Course
Don't know why
Thoughts of Nam
Make me cry

Cast adrift
In a sea of the past
PTSD has claimed me
Lord long at last

Don't know where I'm going
Only where I've been
Memories of Nam
Keep reeling me in

Older now
Haven't grown
Stuck in Southeast Asia
Hearing helpless moans

Saw men die
Bore witness to it all
Like sticks of wood
They had to fall

Feel the shame
For what I've done
No one to blame
I'm the only one

Bear the guilt for leaving
Those I had come to know
I had to live
They had to go

I didn't pick
And couldn't choose
God took his numbers
They flashed them on the news

Want to let go
Be rid of the dreams
Forget the faces
Turn off the screams

I struggle to cope
Try to blend in
Be like everyone else
Forget where I've been

I'm a cook, a cop...
Neighbor's best friend
Searching for answers
Waiting for the end

Some call me hero
Don't know why
I fought to live
Tried hard not to die

I've survived
Made it this far
Fight the urge
To belly up to a bar

I stand on corners
Wearing my sign
Beg for pennies
Committing no crime

I'm housed in prisons
All across the land
Say brother...
Won't you lend me a hand

Work each day
Try to do right
Keep low key
Stay out of sight

I'm at the VFW
American Legion too
Joined the many
Part of the few

I want to understand
Know the why
My friends...my friends
Had to die.



Cu Chi

Cu Chi was a bitch
believe me I know.
Broke my cherry
made me grow.

Transformed me from a street punk
from good old Baltimore.
God aided the change
a child no more.

Rounds started dropping
seemed so near.
Thought I'd be okay
thought our guys knew we were here.

I saw a cloud of dirt fill the air.
Heard men screaming loud and clear.
Grabbed my aid-kit taking off in a run.
Went through the cloud that blocked the sun.

Once in the commotion
saw a lot of guys were down.
Corpses and wounded
spread out all over the ground.

I kneeled by the wounded
started my I.V.'s.
Used up my bandages
wondered how many there could be.

My morphine syrettes
were gone in a flash.
I only had five
knew they wouldn't last.

The shock of what happened
was met with disbelief.
Realized I was at war
with so much time to do.



Dead Men Calling

I see their faces
hear their shouts.
Long dead soldiers
calling me out.

They stand in a group
atop a hill.
Smile as if posing
so lifeless and still.

Uniforms so dirty
streaked with red.
Such wicked smiles
from the long past dead.

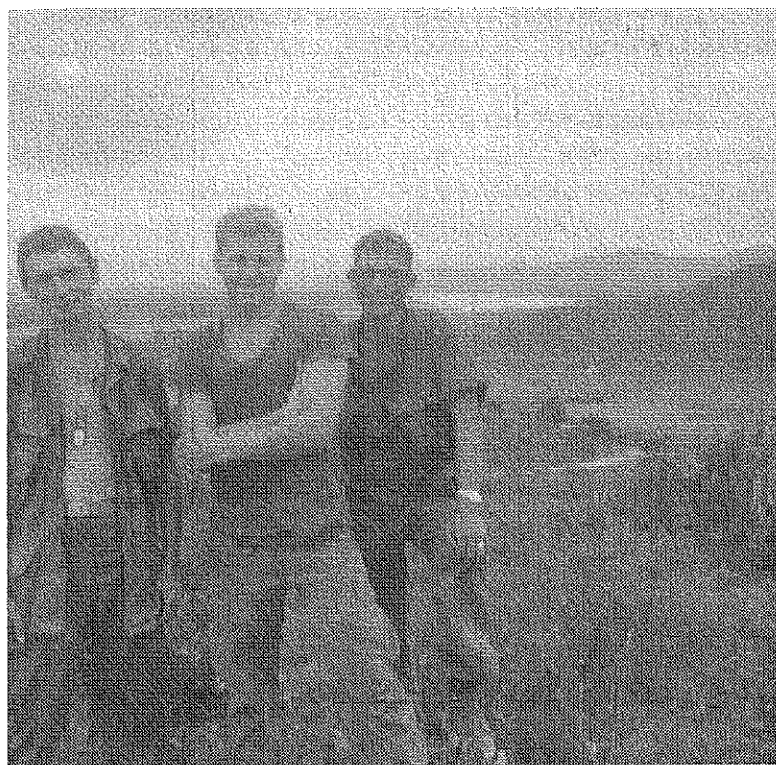
I know these men
they were once there for me.
Keep returning in my sleep
won't let me be.

They died so young
in horrible fashion.
For some...
in their very first action.

I've tried to distance myself
from that period in time.
Let Vietnam go
it was never really mine.

It continues to cling
grab and hold.
The memories come in a flood
as I continue to grow old.

So there they stand
atop that damn hill.
Waiting for "Old Doc"
Their final kill.



Dennis Hoff, Lawrence Mize, and Keith Marshall.

Escape

In the middle of the night I dream
a deep, dark, foreboding dream.
One of men and places long since past
of a country doomed to breathe its last.

Into the deep, dark void I go
to revisit the friends I know.
Hoff with his acne scarred face
Febo with his smile to fill all space.

Faces flash across the screen of my mind
bringing back the hurt of a lifetime.
I review all the evil I've seen
all the death caused by man's machines.

Corpses rise up with their wicked smiles
bloated and decaying they rot in piles.
Waiting for the transport of those few last miles
whose left to speak for them...the ones we never saved?

Hills and valleys so lush and green
Vietnam so beautiful...so evil, so mean.
I sense the end is coming near
clutch onto the life I hold so dear.

Look for a spot to slip away
escape...escape to dream another day.



Febo From Nam

Green blades of grass
reach up to the sky.
No one told Febo
it was his time to die.

I think of a time so long ago
relive the terror that always leaves me low.
Febo's back from Nam,
did he ever really go.

I close my eyes
wait for the light to rush in.
Listen for the sounds
of the far away place I had been.

An image forms,
Febo running for cover.
He heads for the dike
then runs no further.

I rush to my friend
heart filled with fear.
Febo's dead
but it doesn't seem real.

I lift his head
to close his eyes.
Curse at God
scream out "Why?"

His blood on my hands
so sticky and hot.
I looked down at Febo
Febo smiled not.

The rain fell heavy
on the swollen rice paddy field.
The mound of dirt forming the dike
could have prevented the kill.

Mortars exploded
small arms fire struck everywhere.
I sat alone with Febo
I no longer cared.

I stayed there forever
or so it seemed.
I entertained the thought
Vietnam was a horrible dream.

Febo's legacy a tableau
that's stamped in my mind.
Febo's gone
I'm still here.

Green blades of grass
reach up to the sky.
No one told Febo
it was his time to die... Why?

Freedom Bird

Engines roar
Loud as thunder
All alone
Can only wonder

In a box
Dark as can be
Feel the earth
Pass under me

Up in the air
Headed for home
No more will I fight
No longer will I roam

I think of valleys
So lush and green
A land so beautiful
So like a dream

Faces of people
Come and go
Their villas and hootches
Left me feeling low

Felt so sad
At the plight they were in
Came to help
Thought we would win

Relive the horror
Of my final fateful day
The trail and the mine
That blew me away

Rose up above
The carnage and pain
Listened to "Doc"
As he called out my name

He couldn't save me
I was beyond repair
I watched him work
While floating in the air

So dumb and stupid
The little thing I had done
The trail so flat and smooth
Made me want to run

I took a chance
Thought it would be safe
For just a little while
I needed a break

So tired and hot
Sweat pouring like rain
Gear so heavy
Felt so drained

Heard the snap
Just before the blast
Caught in the moment
Happened so fast

Blood squirted out
From every conceivable hole
So hot and wet
Taking my soul

Starting to fade
As we fly through the clouds
My freedom bird
On it's way to the "World"

Have to let go
Leave this lifeless shell
Get out of the box
My eternal cell

I know what's coming
What's in store for me
A grave and the ground
Endless darkness with nothing to see



Stanley "Ted" Williams, Leonard Kaminski, Mike Connell, and Fred Bender (l. to r.) at Cu Chi.

God Help Me

A shot rings out
in the middle of the night.

I turn to my left
turn to my right.

Wild men's eyes
All that I can see.
I'm lost in Vietnam
God help me.

Stare down my sights
look through the wire.
Search for movement
near and far.

Listen for sounds
that don't seem quite right.
Wonder if Charlie's coming
if he'll hit us tonight?

Thoughts of home
washed away.
Think only of surviving
to live another day.

Someone screams "Medic."
A chill goes up my spine.
Crawl out of the safety of my bunker
wondering if I've lost my mind.

I run to a kid
look at his wound.
Tell him it's okay
he'll be going home soon.

"Help me, Doc."
"Don't let me die."
I stare at his wound
want to cry.



Highway 1

We traveled along
on Highway 1.
Singing songs
chewing gum.

From Hue to Quang Tri
Bien Hoa too.
Everywhere we went
saw something new.

Vills and hootches
a pagoda or two.
So far from home
so lonely, so blue.

Young kids were we
sitting in those trucks.
Each one wondering
how fate would place his luck.

We endured the dust
took in the sights.
A Vietnam so beautiful
yet somehow not right.

The convoy stretched forever
seemingly for miles.
We sat packed together
laughed and smiled.

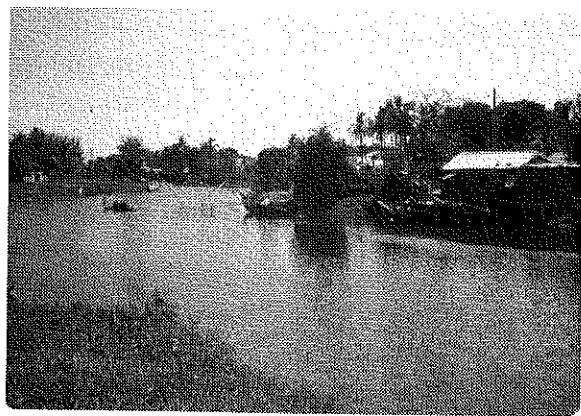
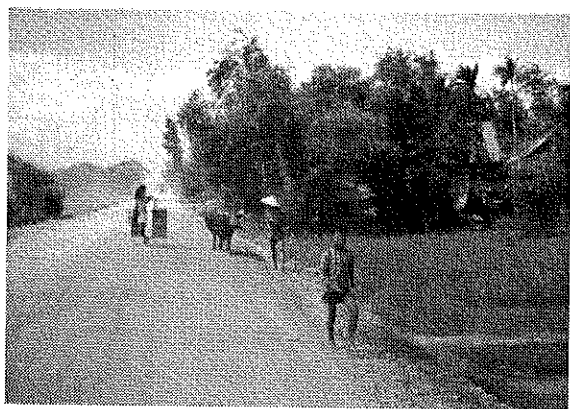
Never saw the mine
placed in the road.
The world exploded
fast as a shift in the load.

Men screamed out in agony
as metal tore through their clothes.

Bodies flew up and out
“Medic,” a constant shout.

Never saw the gook
who placed the mine.

Only the blood
pouring like wine.



Huey

Tiny speck
in the sky.
Drawing nearer
flying high.

Thump, thump, thump
rotor blades beating.
Bringing hope
set fears fleeing.

Joined by others
forming a V.
Headed for the LZ
headed for me.

Smoke popping
its odor fouls the air.
I feel invincible
no longer care.

My lifelines back
growing ever so larger.
Green and ugly
I love it dearly.

The huey dives for the ground
then flairs out above the grass.
I take my leave
quickly deass.

I climb aboard
take my place.
Forget the terrible things
I've had to face.

I'm inbound for home
Hue, Bien Hoa, Cu Chi.
Their names don't matter
the huey has me.

I rise above the trees
watch the ground rush past.
Airborne again
flying so fast.



Humping

One klick, two klicks,
three klicks...four.
Walking in the bush
can't take no more.

Aid kits heavy
weighing me down.
Want to dump my gear
leave it on the ground.

Five klicks, six klicks,
seven klicks...eight.
Charlie knows we're coming
he sits and waits.

Mortars drop
Screams fill the air.
Run to the wounded
administer care.

Got a medevac coming
air strikes on the way.
Haven't seen Charles
wonder if he's coming to play.

Nine klicks...ten
reached our objective once again.
Secured the LZ
start to dig in.

Tomorrow we'll move out
do it all again.

Incoming

They opened up
as we crossed the field.
We were caught in the open
with no treeline in which to steal.

Their rounds struck the mud
mortars fell in behind.
We scattered like roaches
fell in the rice paddy slime.

Shouts of Incoming
filled the air.
With nowhere to run
it didn't seem fair.

I listened for sounds
of "Medic" or "Doc."
Didn't want to die here
didn't want to rot.

The radio crackled
from the RTO's back.
They had got us good
trapped us like rats.

With nowhere to run
no vill in which to hide.
I raced to the wounded
bagged those that died.

Forgot my fears
as I kept on the move.
Was afraid to stop
knew my life I would lose.

The attack continued on
for a half hour or so.
Then as if by magic
stopped...don't you know.

The rice paddy grew quiet
save for the moans.
No more shouts of Incoming
only pissed off groans.

License To Kill

Got a license to kill
going for broke.
When my time comes
pray I won't choke.

Stuck in Nam
doing my time.
Searching for gooks
no reason or rhyme.

Take a hill
give it back.
Lose a friend
while Charlie laughs.

So like ghosts
they strike at will.
Hidden in trees and hootches
Protecting the vills.

We walk right in
they line us up in their sights.
The sound of their AK's
causes such fright.

Pity the pointman
so far out and alone.
The enemy waits
to trap him in the kill zone.

They pin us down
watch as we run for cover.
Pick their targets
as Medevacs hover.

We set up a perimeter
secure the LZ.
Stare at the sky
ask, "God why me."

I see an NVA soldier
line him up in my sights.
Fire my M-16
watch him fall in the fading light.

We surround the vill
call in an air strike.
Watch the F-4 Phantoms
exercise their might.

Napalm canisters
tumble through the air.
Exploding with impunity
spreading destruction everywhere.

Out of the smoke and fire
a familiar sound.
The report of an AK
it's round striking the ground.

We search and destroy
that's what we're paid to do.
Call in our numbers
our guys...gooks too.

I walk to the spot
where the soldier fell.
A thin piece of scalp
the only sign he was there.

Looking For Charlie

Looking for Charlie
searching high and low.
Can't seem to find him
Where did he go?

Went on recons
long range patrols.
Looking for Charlie
gets so old.

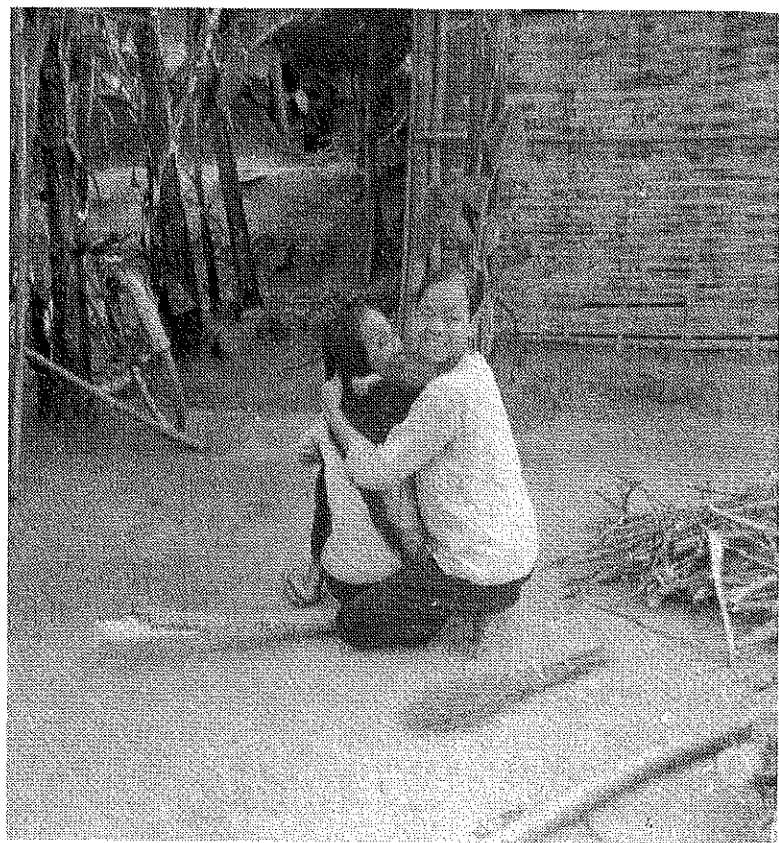
He's out in the vills
deep in the bush.
Back at the basecamp
everywhere I look.

His mines take a leg
sometimes an arm.
Though he's never around
still causes such harm.

He's got mortars and rockets
an RPG round or two.
Strikes from out of nowhere
tell me something new.

We shoot at his shadows
At moving blades of grass.
Just want to find him
want to beat his ass.





Mamma San

Mamma San smiles
with blackened teeth.

Washes my clothes
gives me things to eat.

We barter and trade
for the strangest things.
She's looking for a deal
it's always the same.

She'll sell her body
but, not her soul.
Possesses an ageless beauty
keeps her heart cold.

I see her in villas
with a toothless grin.
Squatting by hootches
sorry to see me again.

She fills sandbags by day
carries an AK at night.
She'll fight for her cause
she knows she's right.

I see her in basecamps.
Down dusty roads.
Out in the paddies.
She carries a heavy load.

She's the strength of her country
can't break her will.
I'm just another intruder.
Walking through her fields.

Medic...Medic

From one end of the tunnel
to the opposite end I sped.
Searching for a way to get him
hearing his screams in my head.

Looking for an opening
a safe place to make a rush.

In me...

Hoff had placed his trust.

He was laying on a hillside
his fatigues all dirty and red.

No one could get to him
while he bled and bled.

I would reach out to grab him
feel the dirt fly in my face.

Every time I lunged out
a sniper put me in my place.

His screams went on forever
as day gave way to night.

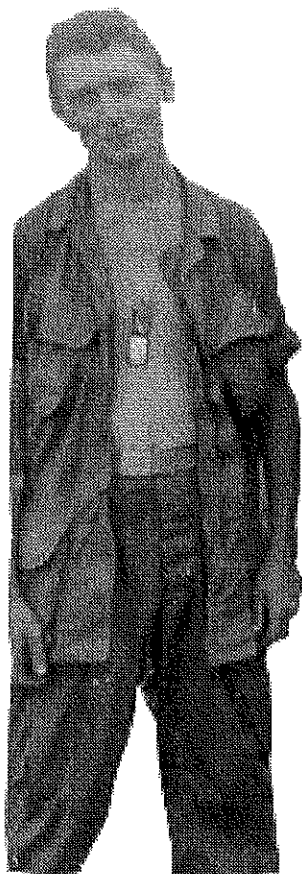
An airstrike got the sniper
but not until first light.

I climbed out of the tunnel
my body heavy and tired.

A soldier of fortune
Uncle Sam's man for hire.

Hoff lay in a heap
his body twisted and bent.
Everywhere I looked
I saw men wasted and spent.

I spend sleepless nights now
filled with the memory of Hoff.
My mind tells me to let it go,
but I'm not quite that tough.



Memories of Nam

I watched them fall
and then they died.
Bagged them up
fought hard not to cry.

Supply ships rolled in
carried them away.
I packed my aid-kit
prepared for another day.

Some only lasted
for just a little while.
Their dead eyes blank
no clue they ever smiled.

They'd come in a rush
died in a flash.
I was one of the few
who made it to the last.

I counted the days
till it was time to go.
They took forever
passed so slow.

The last thirty-three years
have passed so quickly.
I woke up one morning
discovered I was fifty.

The memories of Nam
continue to come.
Leaving me no place to go
No where to run.

I want to just scream, rant, and yell.
Need some relief...from this unending hell.



Monsoon

Can't stand the rain.
Drives me insane.
Dulls the senses.
Fucks with the brain.

Balls are itching.
Skins on fire.
Feet swollen and wet.
Hate walking through the muck and mire.

Its hard to see
through the torrential downpour.
Soaks everything in sight.
Then rains some more.

They call it the "Monsoon."
Comes every year.
Something the Vietnamese
hold very dear.

It fills the paddies
where rice grows in the flooded fields.
Sustains the country
for yet another year.

It continues to fall
as we fight in the vills.
The ground soaks it up
Can't get its fill.

It comes to cleanse
and wash away.
A soldiers blood
at the end of the day.

Recon

I covered every position
gave each man his big orange pill
I was greeted with friendly smiles
as I made my way around the hill

Everyone was happy
we were again in the rear
A few called out to tease me
“Hey Doc! Why’d you give us this pill?”

I checked their sores and blisters
brought on by the heavy rucksacks
No one seemed to mind
there was nothing they lacked

Geronimo we called it
home was this lonely hill
Malaria was a threat
hence the pill

Everything before was to be forgotten
while we drank and ate our fill
burning shit and standing guard
there was nothing to fear

Geronimo was safety
a place to let go
A much needed break from humping
God, if you could only know

We had lain around and took it easy
letting the sun dry our clothes
with darkness came the Lieutenant
his arrival meant it was nearly time to go.

I readied my aid-kit
then drew tight the straps
I made a mental note of everything in it
while I prayed my supplies would last

We moved out in single file
staring at the back of the last man's head
I couldn't help but wonder
who would be among the dead

The night seemed to drag on forever
until we set up in a circle near a well traveled path
We put out our tripflares and claymores
setting our deadly trap

We lain on the ground and waited
looking out into the night
hoping it would prove uneventful
that we could rejoice in the oncoming light

We heard them coming
singing as they walked down the path
Unconsciously I tensed every muscle
anticipating the imminent bloodbath

They tripped the flares
appearing as dark shadows in the artificial light
They ran about confused
searching for the night

They reached for their rifles
slung on their backs
I hit my claymore and saw the blast
I knew the man in front of me had breathed his last

We pulled back to hide
in this deadly game of cat and mouse
When morning came we went back for the count
three dead NVA lay in the grass

They seemed so young
ageless if you will
I felt numb all over
unable to feel

We humped back to Geronimo
our home in the rear
We were all glad to be alive
the recon was no big deal

I covered every position
gave each man his big orange pill
I was greeted with friendly smiles
as I made my way around the hill

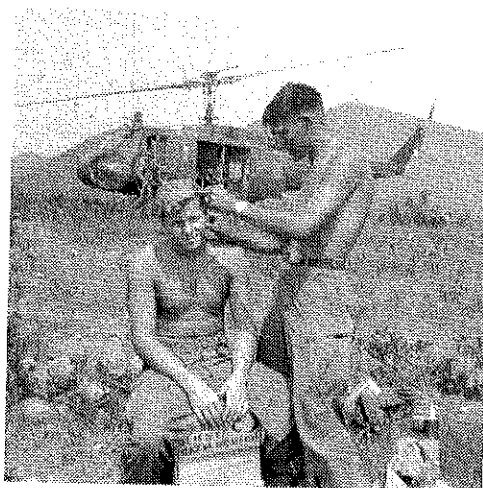
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No one seemed to mind
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home was this lonely hill
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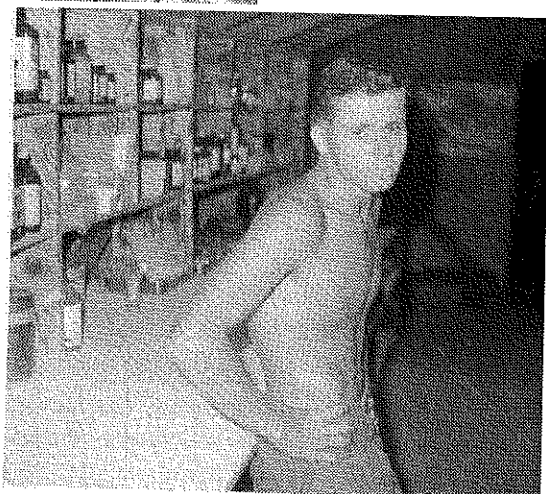
Everything before was to be forgotten
while we drank and ate our fill
burning shit and standing guard
there was nothing to fear

Nowhere could the word be heard...Kill.



Senior Aidman Keith
Marshall giving author
haircut at LZ.

Lawrence Mize
in Aid Station at
LZ Sally, 1968.



Scream

At night I scream...
a lonely high-pitched wail
that curdles the blood
straight out of hell.

I see men die
mourn the loss.
Jesus left me
he's faceless on my cross.

I look around
watch the fog roll in.
Feel the rain
so cold on my skin.

A huey appears
tiny speck in the sky.
I sit alone
wondering why.

The taste of death
so fresh on my lips.
No one to save me
from this nightmarish trip.

Gooks in the grass
and on the hills.
Gooks in the treetops
waiting to kill.

I hear the thump, thump, of rotors
beating the air.
Pop my smoke
without a care.

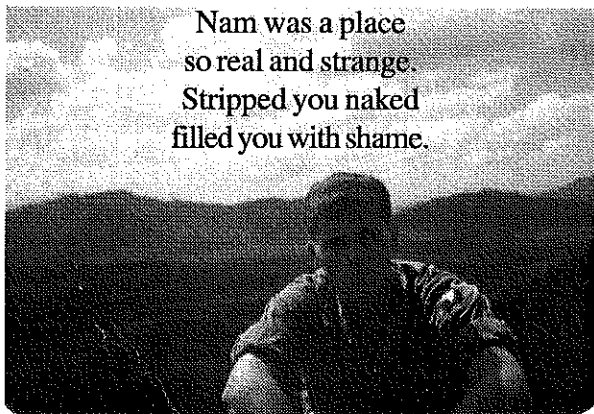
I roll them and pack them
into green body bags.
Lifeless and heavy
they always sag.

I wait for the bird
to come rushing down.
To take my load
get them off the ground.

Their numbers don't matter
dead is dead.
It's always their faces
stuck in my head.

I lay asleep
caught in this wretched dream.
No one to hear me
as I scream and scream.

Nam was a place
so real and strange.
Stripped you naked
filled you with shame.



Screaming Eagle

I'm a Screaming Eagle
a real puking buzzard.

I come from the air
to destroy and smother.

Use rotors for wings
come in smoking.

Land in the boonies
tell ya, Man, I'm not joking.

Set up a perimeter
secure the LZ.

Start an assault
look for VC.

I go up and down valleys
recon in the bush.

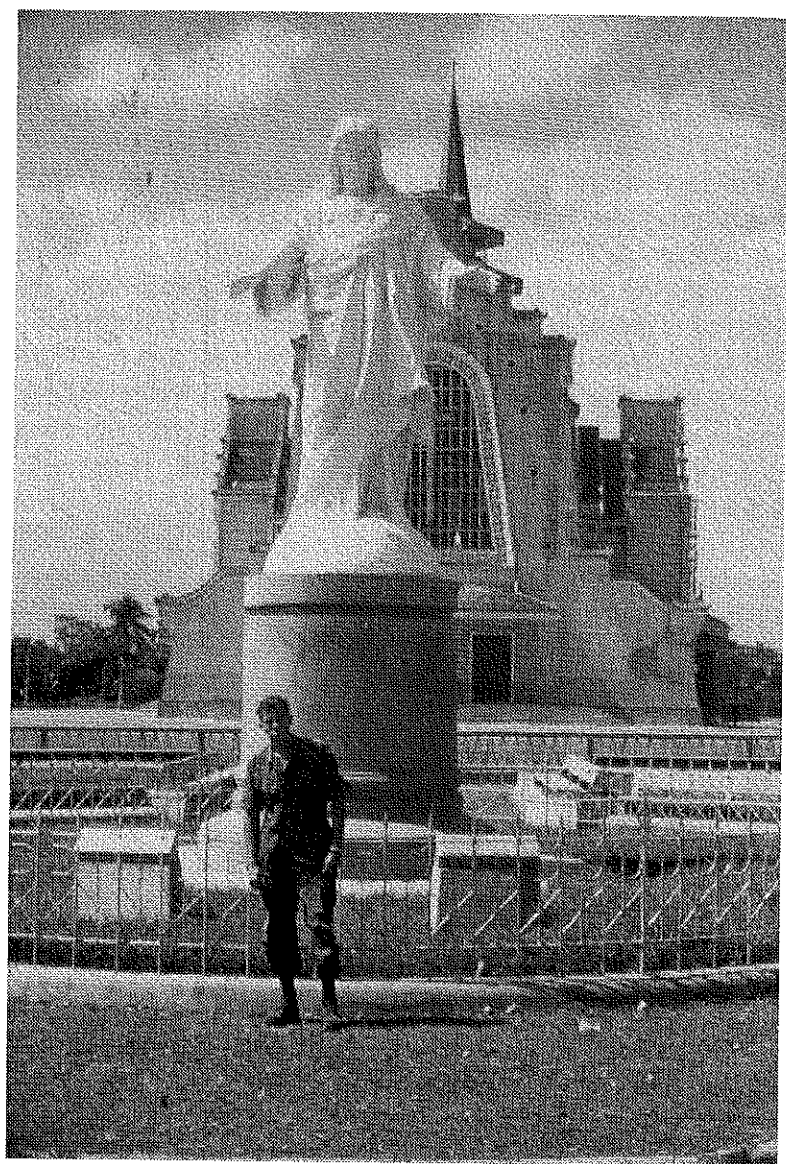
Plow through the jungle
don't need no push.

Walk in the vills
down beaten paths.

Worm through the tunnels
I'm here to kick ass.

I'm young and I'm strong
as hardcore as they come.

Humping in the Nam
keep Charlie on the run.



Shattered Dreams

Broken promises
shattered dreams.
Vietnam's legacy
an endless scream.

Cry for the soldier
who fought and died.
Cry for the family
left to wonder why.

Feel the pain and suffering
of those left behind.
Came home losers
marking their time.

So many men
crippled and torn.
Paralyzed in body and spirit
asking why they were born.

Look into the souls
of those brave young men.
Feel their hurt
say...never again.

Think of home and family
What it all means.
No more Vietnam's
no more shattered dreams.

Smiley Face

I went to Bien Hoa
to see a wounded friend.
Walked to the Aid Station
inquired within.

Was met by a nurse
her smile so big and warm.
She led me to his bed
told me how he's been.

I stayed for awhile
conversing with my friend.
Heard a huey land outside
saw the wounded being rushed in.

I looked about for awhile
the nurse appeared quite busy.
She tended the wounded
the place was in a frenzy.

The commotion continued
for an hour or so.
I told my friend
it was time for me to go.

I walked by a room
so quiet and still.
The nurse stood alone
looked a little ill.

A soldier lay dead
on a bloodied army cot.
Nothing could have saved him
from his horrific shot.

The smile was gone from her beautiful face
a frown was there instead, in it's place.

She wiped at a tear
that suddenly rolled down.

I continued on
being ever so quiet.
Fearful another copter
would start a riot.

Sweet Death

Death, Sweet Death
how like a whore.
Can't seem to get enough
followed me to my door.

You were with me at CU CHI
Quang Tri too.
Took so many of my brothers
left me feeling blue.

I saw your face at a riverbank
near a burned out vill.
You appeared as a gook with an AK
smiled anticipating the kill.

Another soldier took the shot
blew you back into the hill.
Me, I continued on with my wounded
not troubled by the sight.

I've seen your work so many times
over countless years.
It's left me numb to your games
made me unable to feel.

I'll face the twilight of my years
in you I have no fear.
I know you'll keep following me
you'll always be near.

So if Death you are to take me
now that I'm coming to my end.
Embrace me in my sleep
Sweet Death...be a friend.

The Wall

Hear the sounds...
Of lost souls crying.
Brave young men
not ready for dying.

The time has come
to honor our dead.
Pay our respects
bow our heads.

Quiet now
silence please.
Touch the wall
fall on your knees.

They live on forever
etched in stone.
To be remembered
never alone.

Listen...listen
if you will.
Hear the horror
associated with the kills.

Gunships flying
mortars exploding.
Shouts of war
a country imploding.

Close your eyes
picture the sight.
Soldiers bracing
For the final fight.

No glamour in war
it's ugly and mean.
We send our best
to lose their dreams.

Battles recorded
marked in time.
Medals galore
not worth a dime.

Images of suffering
come crashing down.
Plenty of pain
To go around.

Trinkets left
to mourn the loss.
A unit patch
or shiny cross.

We give of ourselves
when going to the wall.
Think of those
who had to fall.

Quiet now
fall on your knees.
Careful as you go
try not to bleed.

Who's Left to Pray

Who's left to pray
for me my Lord?
I've come so far
can't take no more.

I feel so tired
walked through every door.
Fallen on my knees
prayed from every floor.

I'm still carrying
so much guilt and pain.
Tell me Lord
do you even know my name?

I've looked for your signs
nearly everywhere.
I'm beginning to think
Lord...you don't care.

So many died
a sinful shame.
Tell me Lord
who do I blame?

Vietnam was but
a blink of the eye.
You took so many souls
why Lord? Why?

As I come to approach
the end of my life.
The memories still pierce
like a sharpened knife.

Who's left to pray
for me my Lord?
Will you tell me now
before I leave this world?



Mike "Mighty Mouse" Connell by a bunker near Hue.
Photo courtesy of Michael Connell.

Glossary

Aid Kit- canvass backpack used by medical corpsmen to store medical supplies.

Air Strike- a bombing mission usually directed at a specific tactical target.

AK-short for AK-47, an automatic rifle used by North Vietnamese and Viet Cong soldiers.

Ammo- short for ammunition.

Charlie or Charles-slang term for enemy soldiers.

Claymore- anti-personnel mine used by U.S. Troops.

Copter- short for helicopter.

Deass- slang for leave the area.

Doc- term used for medical corpsmen who provided emergency medical treatment to wounded or injured soldiers.

Freedom Bird- any type of aircraft used to transport soldiers back to the States after their tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam.

Gook-a derogatory term used to describe a Vietnamese person.

Hootch-a Vietnamese dwelling.

Huey-nickname for the UH-1 helicopters that flew troops and supplies.

Incoming- warning shout of Mortar attack or enemy fire.

KIA- killed in action.

Klick-short for kilometer.

LZ- Landing Zone. Large open area for helicopters to land.

Medevac- helicopter used to transport wounded soldiers to rear areas for treatment.

Medic- medical corpsman. Provided emergency medical aid to injured and wounded.

MIA- missing in action.

M-16- Automatic rifle used by U.S. troops in Vietnam.

Nam- short for Vietnam.

Napalm- an incendiary jellylike substance which burns at great temperatures used in bombs.

NVA- North Vietnamese Army.

Perimeter- outermost area of a position.

Pointman- lead man in a squad or platoon.

Pop or Popping Smoke- term used for setting off a smoke grenade to signal approaching helicopters or to mark a position.

PTSD- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. A mental disorder resulting from exposure to a traumatic event. Veterans who suffer from this disorder experience flashbacks when they relive their experiences in Vietnam.

RECON-short for reconnaissance.

RPG- a shoulder mounted rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

RTO- radio telephone operator.

Search and Destroy- an operation in which U.S. Troops would search an area and destroy anything that could be used by the enemy.

The World- Home. The U.S.

VC- Viet Cong. Enemy soldiers.

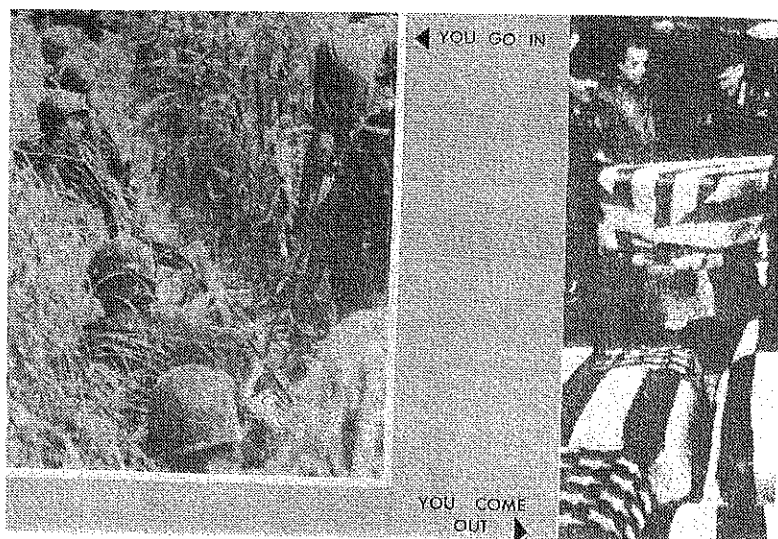
Ville- short for village.

About the Author

Lawrence E. Mize was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1949. At the age of sixteen he dropped out of high school. One year later, shortly after his seventeenth birthday, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Nearly a month after turning eighteen, he began his one-year tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam. He served with the "Screaming Eagles" of the 101st Airborne Division as a combat medic. Mize returned to the states and obtained his G.E.D. after completing his military obligation. He went on to serve with the Baltimore City Police Department for over twenty-nine years. Mize retired from the Baltimore City Police Department in June of 1999. Mize began to write poems of his experiences in Vietnam to help him cope with the painful memories that continue to haunt him. His poetry has been published in various Veterans organization publications, including the *Maryland Vietnam Veteran*, *The Perimeter*, and the *Purple Heart Magazine*. He was married to Sandra Cronan in 1973. They have two sons, Lawrence Jr. and Nicholas.

Lawrence Mize,
Ft. Campbell, Kentucky





National Liberation Front Leaflet.
Courtesy of Leonard Kaminski.

\$12.95 U.S.
\$17.95 CAN.

Poetry



LAWRENCE E. MIZE was born in Baltimore, Maryland in 1949. At the age of sixteen he dropped out of high school. One year later, shortly after his seventeenth birthday, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Nearly a month after turning eighteen, he began his one-year tour of duty in the Republic of Vietnam. He served with the "Screaming Eagles" of the 101st

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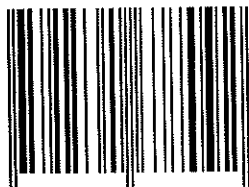
This new work contains all the original poems in Tortured Soul. I have had friends tell me that my poems are "different." I call them "dark" because of the subject matter. You can't spend a year in hell and emerge untainted. When I write, I want to give the reader a visual picture of what is going on in the poem. I want them to understand the horror of war and see how ugly war really can be.

—Lawrence E. Mize



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