

(Copy from C 4/31st Inf. Bn. veteran James B. Simms with the assistance of Mike Crutcher a veteran of E & HHC, 1/5 Cav, 1969-70 1st Cav Div. May 2014.)

31st Regt. Polar Bear (image printed top left)

196th patch (image printed on top right)

"WEST OF WEST" (text printed between the two images).

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polar bears thwart sappers at lz baldy

Early on the morning of May 12, LZ Baldy came under attack by an estimated company-size element of NVA Sappers. The sector of the perimeter defended by the 4th Bn, 31st Inf was one of the hardest hit. For four hours, the enemy pounded the bunker line with intense AK-47 and RPG fire. When dawn finally came a body count showed 17 NVA dead in the 4/31 area. This number was half of the total NVA killed at Baldy during the attack.

The list of "Polar Bears" who distinguished themselves during the course of the attack is a long one. A few of the more notable actions bear mentioning. One could easily put out an entire newsletter concerning the actions of the "Polar Bears" at LZ Baldy.

Sgt Larry Cathey of B Co detected two NVA Sappers sneaking around the B Co. supply buildings as the attack began. The NVA who were armed with AK-47's and Chicoms, were getting into position to throw grenades into the B Co. orderly room. Sgt. Cathey hurled himself at the startled NVA. He pounded the enemy with his fists and elbows thwarting their advance on the orderly room. Meanwhile, the five men inside had the opportunity to get out of the building.

1st Lt. Haze McDougal, B Co XO was responsible for evacuating a number of wounded personnel from a near by LRP compound when he took command of an APC and drove to the aid of the stricken men. He set up a defensive perimeter to provide protection while he loaded the wounded on the APC and carried them to safety.

SP/4 Wayne Browning a driver with the 4/31 motor pool continually exposed himself to intense enemy fire to drive his jeep to the bunkerline and evacuated wounded personnel.

Sgt. Ronald Wilder of A Co was responsible for knocking out a stubborn NVA position. Several sappers had set up behind some large rocks and were bringing heavy fire on the "Polar Bears". While his comrades laid down a protective base of fire, Wilder crawled to within yards of the enemy position and lobbed hand grenades on to the enemy. The position was subsequently knocked out.

a clean weapon saves lives!

C Company nets 14 vc in combat assault

Striking with deadly suddenness, "Charging Charlie" Company conducted a well executed combat assault which resulted in nine VC killed and five captured near Phuoc Son hamlet. Among the VC killed were a security chief, a high level propaganda cadre, and a VC village chief.

C Company was air lifted to the hamlet in western Hiep Duc Valley. At dawn the VC element occupying the Phouc Son was apparently caught completely unaware by the fast-moving "Polar Bear" infantrymen.

"We caught them flat-footed," explained CPT John Long (New Bloomfield, PA.) the CO of Charlie Company. "Our aggressiveness and coordination really surprised them, and the entire searching operation was completed in only an hour and a half!" "The VC were in such a hurry to leave that we found an M1 carbine and a quantity of important documents still lying on a table in a hootch".

Two platoons of C Company secured and searched the main hamlet. Third platoon commanded by 1st Lt Jerry Josey, (Bishopville, S.C.), was dispatched to a hootch area located several hundred meters to the south of Phuoc Son.

"As we approached the hootches, we saw five VC evading into a draw", related Lt. Josey." We took off after them and killed three as they tried to climb up the side of the draw to get into a nearby woodline."

A fourth VC sought refuge in a rocky cave. SP/4 John Class (New York City) ventured into the dark passageway armed only with .45 pistol. He detected movement to his front and fired, killing the VC. A search of an adjacent hootch revealed a quantity of VC medical supplies and a bicycle.

The platoon moved out again still traveling to the south. From time to time they received sporadic sniper fire, from an unknown enemy positions. LTC Robert B. Longino, aloft in his command and control helicopter, observed three VC in the vicinity of the third platoon. The "Polar Bear" Commander was successful in marking the VC position with smoke grenades although he was harassed by AK-47 fire. The VC position had now been pin-pointed, and Lt. Josey and his platoon closed in, raking the area with M-60 fire and M-79 as they advanced. One VC was killed as the platoon searched the area. He was carrying ten gallons of gasoline in addition to his AK-47 and ammunition. 80 pounds of powdered CS was also located in the Phouc Son vicinity. Captured documents indicated that he VC had been supplying rice to NVA units moving through the valley during recent weeks.

Congratulations pop

Congratulations are in order for SP/4 Joe "Rusty" Whitaker of the Headquarters Co. on LZ West. His wife, Nancy, recently presented him with a 8lb 14 oz baby girl, Dondi Michel.

Whitaker was a star for the 32nd ADDCOMM basketball team in Schwienfurt, Germany before joining the "Polar Bears". He is a former All-State performer for Lee-Davis High School in Mechanicsville, Virginia. Upon completion [of] his military obligation, "Rusty" will attend Randolph-Macon College on a basketball scholarship.

Comic: Two young soldiers observe their sergeant passing by. One of them comments, "I DON'T KNOW JUST HOW OLD SARGE IS, BUT I KNOW HIS SERIAL NUMBER IS SIX!!"

pOLAR BEAR CHANGES

A number of changes have taken place in the "Polar Bear" staff in recent weeks. Two former company commanders have taken over the slots of S-1 and S-3, Air. CPT James Conden the former Bravo Company CO, is now serving as the S-1. CPT John Whittecar, formerly the CO of Delta company is now in charge of S-3, Air.

There were also several new members of the battalion on the 4/31 staff.

CPT Gabriel Akiona takes over as the new S-2. CPT Akiona was previously a company commander with the 100th Bn., 442nd Inf. 29th Inf. Bde., stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. This reserve unit was activated in May 1968.

CPT James Mantoll joins the "Polar Bears" as S-4. Prior to coming to 4/31, he was an instructor at Fort Benning Georgia. CPT Stewart Richmond is the new battalion surgeon. He was formerly a member of the staff of the 14th General Dispensary, Qui Nhon, RVN.

contribute to paper

The battalion newspaper is printed for you, the "Polar Bears" of the 4th Bn., 31st Inf. Contributions from the members of our unit will be welcomed at any time. If you know a humorous, unusual, or exciting story send it in. Any responsible item will be published with the proper credit given to the contributor. Items of interest should be submitted in writing or in person to SP/4 Bill Crawford at the Headquarters CP on LZ West or to SP/5 Rosko at the S-1 section on LZ Baldy.

comic: An Air Force Sergeant is checking on facility comes across a guard in front a heavy steel door. The guard named "Traptite" appears to have swallowed a large key to the large steel door which can be seen in his neck. The sergeant says, "YOU SECURITY BOYS DON'T TAKE ANY CHANCES, EH TRAPITITE!!"

West of West

LTC Cecil M. Henry CO
SP4 William Crawford Reporter

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