

Arthur “Art” Hanley

- *Interviewed by Michael Verrino & Perry Verrino ~ 2005*
- *Interviewed by: Lucas Bertone, Liam Payne, Kyle DeSantis, Adam Payne, Perry Verrino August 9, 2020*
- *Documented by: Perry Verrino*

Branch of Service: Army Americal Division – 23rd Infantry Division.

Rank: Specialist E-4

Years of Service: 1969-1972

Location of Service: Vietnam

Medals: Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, National Defense Medal



Art knew he was going to be drafted so he initially started looking at the Navy. The Navy had a 6-year commitment, and he was unable to commit to that long. Then he looked at the Army and decided on joining and enlisted. Art recalls “I thought I might not go to Vietnam, but I ended up going. It was 50 years ago.”

What was your first day like? I got off the bus, was told to stand at attention, and the yelling began. Are you looking at me? Are you smiling? That’s not the way to stand at attention! Everyone was treated the same way whether you enlisted or were drafted. We were insignificant trainees. They were trying to get us to work as a unit and adhere to strict standards. That’s what you need to do in the service.

I already had my hair cut before I got there and was hoping not to have such a radical cut...but that was not to be. You had to know your service number. If you didn’t know your number, you didn’t get anything. You may not eat!

What were the early days of your service like? “I started out in Officers Candidate Training but was dropped since I disobeyed a direct order for me to harass another candidate. I deserved it.... I was then sent to Electronic Warfare School in Fort Hauchuca, Arizona.”

What was your job in Vietnam? Art was assigned as an UGSO – Unattended Ground Sensor Operator to the Americal Division. “Our teams supported Firebases throughout the Division Area of Operations, including Fire Support Base (FSB) Maryanne. Our teams were assigned the worst areas to put sensors on the ground. At that time, these sensors were cutting edge technology. They were wireless. We buried hoses as part of balanced pressure sensors and also utilized heat sensors to monitor defensive perimeters around the Fire Support Bases. We would plant the sensors. We called them toys. Internally some had magnets which detected moving ferrous

metals. They operated line of sight with radio recorders. The platoons that supported them did not like them because there were always high casualty rates when the “toy” went out. I spent the vast majority of my time in the area of Division Headquarters which earned me the slang name for my role as a REMF – Rear Echelon Mother Fu...r!”

When were you in Vietnam? “I was there in 1970, one year after the My Lai Massacre. - An Americal unit was involved in the massacre. They went in to kill every man, woman, and child in the village. One man was convicted as a scapegoat. There were a lot of people involved and many more of them should have been convicted for their part in the atrocity. The investigation was still going on a year later when I arrived in Vietnam.

Due to the ongoing publicity in the news, we were worried about mishandling of mail addressed to those of us service in the Americal Division by individuals in the Post Office. We were told to start using our numerical designation of the 23rd Infantry Division instead of the Americal Division to lessen the chances of the mail being mishandled.

What did you learn while in the service? I was part of an HQ Company – Bad part was there were no promotions. Promotions went to the field units. I had the privilege and rank of Sergeant but no pay. I was an “Acting Jack.” An Acting Jack is a Sergeant E-5, not officially promoted but allowed to wear the stripes as an acting NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer).

- Learned how to drive a stick shift.
- I would read all the manuals cover to cover.
- I learned to respect the rank while not being intimidated by it.
- Got to teach a class in the Combat Center. As a lowly PFC, I trained newly arrived soldiers and officers on the beach. The class averaged 400 people.
- ‘I showed the “toys” to the people that supported them later.”
- I had Top Secret clearance.
- Major Morrero was our commander when I arrived in-country. He previously had run the school which I had trained in at Fort Huachuca.

What other things happened of note while you were deployed? A hand-picked group of soldiers were asked if we would go into LAOS. The enemy had already been going in. We bombed LAOS because of what the sensors had determined. The same sensors my team had installed.

- The North Vietnamese used elephants to move supplies along parts of the Ho chi Minh Trail in Vietnam.
- When we installed sensors around the perimeter of FSB San Juan Hill, the Major in command of our unit at the time, worked alongside us. This was something we never expected and for which he earned much respect. The Major’s code name was Buana and he was respected for being boots on the ground working.
- Everyone worked and pulled their weight.

When did you leave Vietnam? April 6th was my 22nd birthday. Mail came with new orders from the Department of Defense. I was leaving Vietnam on April 24th! It was the best birthday present I could get! I was going home 32 days early!

Where did you finish your service and how was it when you finally came home?

- I was then sent to Fort Riley Kansas for a year (the remaining part of my service)
- Experimenting with doing away with advancement infantry training. – This did not last
- October 1971 – Went to Germany for a month for “War games.” I liked the little villages.
- I was discharged 6 months early due to troop cutbacks in the Army.

“This was the worst year of my life and also the best year of my life.”