

KIA 20 Sep 70

**WO1 Larry G Baldwin
Sgt William T Dotson
Sgt Dan O Felts
1Lt Albert M Finn**

This crash occurred during a low level P/75 Ranger (Killer) team insertion near the DMZ. A Cobra pilot thought that Finn took a .51 caliber round in his windshield just before they hit the ground at 100 knots. Steve Butrym escorted Finn's chicken plate to DaNang to be tested for a suspected .51 caliber hole. Test was negative. A Ranger survived this crash.

From: "Rick & Sandi Scrugham" <scrugham@ntown.com>
To: <daveslone@yahoo.com>
Copies to: "Gary Earls" <beegee@abraxis.com>, "Ken Mayberry" <phoenix50@neb.rr.com>
Subject: Your Inquiry To The Phoenix Nest
Date sent: Thu, 7 Mar 2002 22:58:53 -0500

Dave -

I recall the Sniffer Mission on the DMZ that Lt Finn flew on 20 Sep 70. I later flew an aircraft that assisted in recovering some of the bodies. It was into a burnt out area near Alpha 4 (just a few miles from the North Vietnam border). It required a fast, low level approach into the area and the aircraft lost tail rotor control on short final and started a series of right 360 degree turns just prior to impact. I didn't realize there were any survivors. You're a lucky man.

Rick Scrugham
Phoenix 23
scrugham@Ntown.com

Lone Ranger Survivor:

Send reply to: <daveslone@yahoo.com>
From: "David Slone" <daveslone@yahoo.com>
To: "Rick & Sandi Scrugham" <scrugham@ntown.com>
Copies to: "Gary Earls" <beegee@abraxis.com>, "Ken Mayberry" <phoenix50@neb.rr.com>
Subject: RE: Your Inquiry To The Phoenix Nest
Date sent: Thu, 7 Mar 2002 23:06:42 -0600

Rick - thanks for your response. Things like this are never too tardy. Certainly not after 30-years. We were definitely on a low level approach and then I remember the chopper turning and I guess I was dumped out of the chopper (I have a vague memory of hanging from a skid) and then I guess I fell into a bomb crater, perhaps filled with water. I maybe came to on the evac chopper, and then to the field hospital in Phu Bai, I think. I don't know where you found the other guys. Were they in the helicopter? It seems pretty weird that they all died like that, unless they stayed in the chopper and it exploded and/or burned there. I understand also that NVA were firing on the site, perhaps with mortars, or with small arms, don't know. I understand a few infantry guys sent in to secure the area were killed, too. I just can't figure the sequence of what happened. Whether the C&C chopper came down and got me, a Medevac or whatever. I'd like to someday thank whoever it was. I didn't break anything and there were no internal injuries, just multiple "contusions and lacerations" and they kept me in the hospital for a couple of weeks and sent me back. By the way, there can't be any more courageous people than chopper crews-then and now! I mean that sincerely.
Thanks again.

Dave Slone

Subject: **Re: Finn Baldwin Dotson Felts**
To: phoenix50@neb.rr.com
From: "Steve Butrym" <sbutrym@us.ibm.com>
Date sent: Wed, 10 Apr 2002 19:15:56 -0400

Ken,
I'll tell you my part in that day and I'm sure there will be a lot more from the other guys. From my perspective and memory:

We were up in Quang Tri on CCN rotation. I usually flew with Felts and Dotson on my ship. I was a newbie aircraft commander and they were good friends. One of my favorite pictures of the tour is on the shelf in front of me now and is of the three of us lounging around the ship between lifts and was taken shortly before that day. I was the high time pilot in the platoon on that morning though and was given the day off which, in my memory anyway, is why the guys were available for Finn's mission. I was sitting in the three holer going over the standard porn collection when one of the enlisted guys came running up yelling about the crash and to suit up as I was needed to fly one of the main recovery birds. I grabbed a bird and a crew, I have no idea who, and we went roaring out there. The perimeter had just been set up and we went in looking for survivors as there were bodies missing or that couldn't be found. We were hovering all around the LZ when one of the crew in the back saw a hand sticking up out of the water in one of the bomb craters that were all around there. They had evidently been thrown

clear of the crash and landed in the crater. I honestly don't remember if we brought back bodies or not. I guess the brain just blocks out some bad memories sometimes. At any rate, they recovered the chicken plate that Finn was wearing and it was broken in half. The mission had been to try and locate an AA site, a 50 Cal or something, and there was a chance that they had been shot down vs pilot error. There's been a lot of conjecture over the years and I honestly don't know what the final decision is but at the time, the CO told me that the feeling was pilot error and that Finn had flared too low and dumped the tail rotor in the trees, suffered an anti-torque failure which caused the spin that threw the grunts out and then crashed. He wouldn't normally have said anything to a new AC like me but he was explaining my new assignment. I was still high time pilot and as such, was sent, with the broken chicken plate, to the big base down south at Bien Hoa, near Saigon and Tan Son Nhut airbase. Remf heaven. I had jumped a ride on a C130 or caribou going down and reported to the base military police lab. The purpose was to have the lab examine the chicken plate under the microscope for signs of lead or bullet casing material. We were trying to discover if the plate had been broken by a bullet vs by the impact of the crash to prove that it wasn't pilot error. There was no blood on the cloth pack that held the plate. I stayed in the MP compound for three days while they did their examinations. They had never seen one of our armor pieces before. At any rate, the tests all came back negative. There was no residue on the plate to indicate a bullet had hit it and that was the info that was given to the CO.

Steve Butrym