

KIA 21 Dec 1969

SP4 David L Eggleston
WO1 Thomas L Forsythe
CPT Arthur R Herndon

From: "robert c scarbrough" <robertscarbrough@earthlink.net>
To: <phoenix50@neb.rr.com>
Subject: **Re: From a Ranger Co P**
Date sent: Sun, 17 Mar 2002 09:56:52 -0700

Ken,

The night before Herndon and Forsythe were shot down, Arthur and I took off from Quang Tri and flew into the DMZ with one crate of M-60 ammo. It was the monsoons, we flew in and out of the scud layer until Quang Tri lost radar contact with us. The grunts launched some flares, which went out several times on short final. Fortunately another flare lit so just in time to continue our approach and dump the m-60 ammo. It was only by the grace of god that we weren't blown out of the sky on that one.

The next morning we had another mission and an extra pilot. I asked Tom to fly for me, and Miller to Schedule him. Before Tom left to fly he gave Twiggy [miller] a letter for him to mail to his wife. He said that he was going to "get killed today". Arthur took off with a load of grunts without gun support, since they had some kind of technical problem loading ordinance. Tom got shot between the eyes with a large caliber, Arthur screamed on the radio all the way down. The rest of the Phoenix crew launched and were on site in about 15 minutes. The aircraft was pretty flat, the grunts were strewn around it like rag dolls, they all had blood running from their ears but otherwise looked like they might get up and walk off any minute. The crew that took Eggleston back thought he might live since his heart started beating, false alarm though, it was caused by the aircraft vibration. The other phoenix gunner jumped out prior to impact and lived through the episode, he was also shot down with Swanson and Las Hermes a month before he lived through it the same way, by jumping out of the aircraft. Jack Ross said that they had to remove Arthur from the battery compartment, Arthur was about 6'3" and real stout.

Miller and I were on short final to a hover in the hot LZ for recovery. For some reason, he said I've got it and moved the aircraft over about 20' or so just in time for a RPG to land under our former tail-boom position.

After we had finished someone had all of the flight gear in a wheelbarrow. The gear was smeared with blood, the ears broken off the helmets, their boots torn from their feet. We stood around joking about who would get the well shined jump boots (cocrans). This was the last time we spoke about it for 25 years until well lubed at a VHPA convention. So this incident was one of tragedy and miracles all still embedded in my memory like a postcard from a past life. I don't even have to close my eyes to see it.

Scab

From: "robert c scarbrough" <robertscarbrough@earthlink.net>
To: <kensue@neb.rr.com>
Subject: forward
Date sent: Mon, 18 Mar 2002 11:34:45 -0700

My friend and door gunner Pvt Egelston may have made it all the way to the hospital ship but as it was explained to us at the time, his intermittent heartbeat was some kind of weird reflex. Pvt Egelston was a young southern African American. Now that I am 50+ I can say that he was a sweet person. He did his job well, never complained and I was proud to have him as a crewmember and a friend. His attention to his job saved my life and the lives of the other helicopter crewmembers in a previous helicopter accident. Pvt Egelston's mother wrote our company commander a letter after he was KIA. She wanted to know why he had to die in Viet Nam...I didn't know the answer then, I don't know the answer now.

The other crew member that survived by jumping out of a burning huey (at about 200 feet) the month before. Both pilots were KIA. (I will send you his name as soon as I dredge it up).

Tom Forsythe was kind of a Cowboy. If you look at the way he wears his hat and the grin on his face you will get an idea of what his personality was like. Like all of us we had dreams, hopes, and ambitions as soon as we got this thing called "Vietnam" over with. Tom loved his wife and family, I have missed him over the years.

Arthur Herndon was a former Army "Ground Pounder". There was nothing he wouldn't do for the troops on the ground. He believed in Duty, Honor, and Country and was a true Patriot when being one wasn't that cool.

Arthur was quiet and soft spoken, it was hard to tell the difference between a conversation and a reprimand.

Scab

From: "Larry G. Frazier" <frazierlg@ctos.com>
To: "Terry Roderick" <rgrrock@cfl.rr.com>, "robert c scarbrough" <robertscarbrough@earthlink.net>
Copies to: "Robert Dowd" <njang177@bellatlantic.net>, "Ken Mayberry" <phoenix50@neb.rr.com>
Subject: Re: Door Gunner on the Dowd's Final Insertion
Date sent: Thu, 4 Apr 2002 00:20:39 -0700

Bob S, Terry, Ken, Robert D, and Others, I've always thought December 21st is correct, and if you check dates on the wall etc. this is when our crew and their team died. Since we're all adding comments about this incident, I thought I'd throw some of mine in. The day it happened, we (Carlton Gray and I) were flying missions out of the nest, we weren't in Quang Tri at Phoenix North as I believe we called it. Gray was a brand new door gunner at this time, and I wasn't the most experienced crewchief myself only flying maybe 2 months when this happened. Anyway we had flown that day and I was working on 67-1761 I doing some maintenance when they called us (a 2nd platoon crew) to fly with two 1st platoon pilots. I'll remember their names shortly. Anyway, Gray had our two 60's torn apart and soaking in solvent in the gun room in the hanger at Evans. He threw them together, and we took off as a recovery bird for Herndon's crew. When we got there we learned that we would be taking out bodies in bags. We were given permission to light up (shoot) the area going in, and we tried without success. Neither M60 would fire, and the pilots were pissed. We shot M16's, pistols, and everything else we had, but they were still a little pissed to say the least. We brought back I believe three bodies fully bagged, and I always believed they were our crew, but one of the other pilots on another recovery bird at the Ft Worth reunion in 1988 told me they brought back the crew. Anyway, regardless of who we brought out of the site, I will never forget what I thought were burnt remains and fresh blood flowing and blowing from the bags back toward us with the doors open etc. I washed that bird out thoroughly later that night. Not sure any of you really wanted these details, sorry if you didn't.

To finish - we found out later that neither M60 had a firing pin in them. Gray again was a brand new gunner and was cleaning the guns virtually by himself and was hurried to reassemble them. I probably would of checked them later, but had been busy doing maintenance in the revetment prior to them scrambling us. Coe and I were both 19, I honestly believe many thought his name was Cole though. His real first name was Carlton, we used mostly last names though. We became pretty good friends, he turned into one of the better gunners in the 2nd platoon, but we lost him in the Saunders aircraft as you probably know on 18 May 1970. His 20th birthday was to be May 20th, two days later, mine was on May 30th. We had been planning a big party that we never got to have. I still can't believe he was ten days older than I. I've got one picture of him that I need to get scanned to share with you guys.

The other thing I wanted to add about this day (Dec 21st 1969) was about Walter "Mike" Amos. He was the crewchief, or the left side gunner as you've referred to him as that survived. The story we've always been told was that he jumped from the aircraft that day and survived. I was surprised to hear "said to be pinned under the helicopter". He was back flying in January, didn't think he was in "critical condition" from this crash. I visited with him a few years ago, he was living in West Virginia and was recovering from alcohol. I invited him to reunions at that time, but he wasn't ready. I'll look him up again one of these days and ask him about jumping. Many of the Phoenix know him for also being the sole survivor of another aircraft 31st January 1970 (Swanson), a little over a month later. -again, he jumped and survived. After two of these in a little over thirty days he was sent home.

That's about all this brain will recall at this date anyway. Let me know if I can explain anything else. Didn't mean to get carried away and side tracked but though these details about Gray and Amos might add value.

Thanks for listening..

Larry G. Frazier
frazierlg@ctos.com

From: JOHNEATON1@aol.com
Date sent: Wed, 10 Apr 2002 03:34:33 EDT
Subject: Fwd: Herndon Forsythe Eggleston
To: kensue@neb.rr.com

Steve Rotsart and I flew the bodies back to Quang Tri. We had been on a log mission in the area when we got the call that a Phoenix was down. We rushed to the area and coordinated the search and initial recovery until somebody 6 showed up and took over. We then flew into the site (there was not an LZ) and hovered with the tips of the skids against the hillside and the main rotor blade very close to the steep slope while the bodies were thrown into the cargo area. I do not remember how many we pulled out but Herndon and Eggleston were among them. As I recall, Forsythe was hit in the middle of the chicken plate with a 50 cal and fell forward over the controls and Herndon was not able to pull out in time. The aircraft did not burn. The area was hot. We took heavy fire leaving the crash site.

John Eaton

From: "Francene Miller" <francene@shreve.net>
To: <phoenix50@neb.rr.com>
Copies to: "Robert C. Scarbrough" <robertcscarbrough@earthlink.net>, "Jack Ross" <Phoenix8@sbcglobal.net>
Subject: Re: Herndon Forsythe Eggleston
Date sent: Wed, 10 Apr 2002 21:56:49 -0500

Ken, Scab is pretty well right on. The survivor was the crew chief, named Amos. The first part of the recovery was a big mess. Herndon and Forsythe were supporting the 5th Mech. out of Quang Tri. Most of their pilots were FNGs and didn't have any experience in the hill country. Because they were 5th Mech. grunts, they wanted to run the recovery. On the first attempt to the crash site, the lead Mech. aircraft wouldn't listen and made his approach down wind and turned a couple of 360s before he got it back under control. I remember Scab and me saying how helpless we felt watching the Mech. spin and thinking he was going to crash. The reason that he approached down wind was that the NVA that nailed Herndon were up the hill shooting down on you if you landed into the wind. I got on the radio to Gary Elliot (I think) who had come up from Evans and asked him to take over command of the recovery. After briefing him on the NVA .51 cal. position, we decided to vary our approach as much as we could and make our approaches into the wind. I think we were more concerned about crashing than the .51.

The incident that Scab mentions about the RPG I think was on our second trip in with security forces. The LZ was clogged up because they were trying to see if anyone was alive and there was a delay on the ground. Scab and I were hovering out of ground effect about 100 meters from the LZ on approach when one of those eerie feelings that you get after you have been in country for a while came over me. I remember feeling uncomfortable and like we were in a vacuum. Then I realized that we had been hovering for what seemed like a long time and were down hill from the NVA gun position. I told Scab things didn't feel right and we needed to move forward. Just as we did, we

heard the RPG go under the tailboom and explode behind and to the right. I think those of us that survived our tour developed a sixth sense that let us feel when things were about to go wrong. I distinctly remember several times when that feeling saved my ass.

I am going to copy this to Jack Ross. He may have something to add. Take care,

Roy