

A Mohawker's Believe It or Not Story!

By James M. Boone

Marty Ehrlich's history of the 244th Delta Hawks in the Summer '96 issue of The Mohawker was a great memory jogger, an excellent outline of the unit history but space limited his ability to explain some of the "unofficial" and sometimes unforgettable history of the 244th special operations(?). There was some tall tales in that part of the history that should be explained so no one will think a Mohawker would stretch the truth about a mission! Noooo, never!

It seemed to us in '68 that the VC were out to destroy our morale with direct mortar hits on the real shower in the real latrine, on the beer CONEX, through the roof of the "mess hall" and other various important places. That's enough to get any Mohawker P_____ off and want to get revenge in some way other than with SLAR, IR and Photo missions ---and we did!

Prompted by our desire to light up the world at night when the VC did most of their dirty work on our compound, we hung a multi bomb rack on a C Model, loaded it with a bunch of parachute flares and had it on standby every night. We also used this "Special Operations" C for daytime photos and visual recon missions to try to find the SOB's blowing up our latrines, beer, and chow.

During these day time missions we always checked a Free Fire Zone within mortar distance of our hooches as we came back from our regular mission to see if we could spot the beer mortar hiding someplace. We suspected the VC were hauling supplies up a main canal next to the Free Fire zone and off loading their stuff to await the new Beer CONEX and give them another opportunity to Register their mortars again.

After many looks in this area without spotting any activity, we finally hit the jackpot! The stupid VC had stolen a "Hands Across The Sea" Farmall tractor with a flatbed trailer to haul their supplies across the Free Fire Zone to get closer to our compound and the thing was out in the open with no cover anywhere nearby. After circling the tractor in the loaded C Model standby flare ship, the VC jumped off the tractor to hide in an open ditch. We started calling everybody to try to get something with ammo on board to come out and shoot the suckers. As you can imagine, there is nobody around when you need them---not a helicopter gunship, the Air Force or even an O-1 with marking rockets on board. Very frustrating!

Having graduated from the infamous Mohawk Gunnery School and Navy Jax, I was especially frustrated because I didn't have a load of rockets like we carried in the 23rd SWAD back in '64. We had nothing but a bunch of stupid parachute flares hung under the wings that won't shoot like a rocket. But wait! We had been taught how to make a Napalm drop back at Navy Jax, not that we were ever expected to carry Napalm mind you, but that did bring up a brilliant and maybe stupid idea that a parachute flare just might

8/1968

act like a napalm tank if dropped at the right angle, etc. A grease pencil X on the windshield would serve as a good flare gun sight soooo, why not!

By this time the observer (age and time causes me to forget who that was) thought I was off my rocker but was game for some excitement considering that nobody had decided to shoot at us so far. I did a good Navy Jax roll in and leveled off for a straight low level run to the tractor using the X to line up the "fighting" C Model for the flare drop. Not having a salvo capability with flares, we could only drop one and we had no intentions of making another "grass top" target run.

The flare was pickled (thats gunnery talk) and we made an immediate pull up and turn to watch the flare make what looked like a perfect trajectory to the tractor but turned out to be about 10' left of the target. The grease pencil must have been too wide. The flare hit the ground directly under the tractors attached trailer, the aluminum parachute container was blown off as it was supposed to do, the flare ignited and set the grass on fire which began to spread to the tractor. We made a quick photo run to have evidence in case no one believed our story and got out of the area before the VC got over their shock of seeing a fool make a bomb run with a flare and decide to throw some lead at us.

The moral of the story---as long as you are strapped into a Mohawk, don't ever give up, the ole Grumman Iron Works will find a way!!!!

(NOTE: Need 5" by 4" spot for photo).