

We were told to dig in ... 40-60 of us ... only a platoon or two ... but called a company ... a captain, our CO ... a couple of higher up NCOs ... then folks like me ... squad leaders ... field promotions, mostly ... I didn't know most the guys ... I was kind-of book-ish ... hung out by myself ... read ... wrote - home and poems, sad songs really... kind-of like a prisoner in a cell doing his time.

Late one day, after a long march ... we were told to dig in ... the heat and humidity were stifling ... I was drenched. Had to dig a foxhole in this soft dirt and sand ... it stuck to you ... the dirt ... smell ... I hadn't had a shower in days! Our big reward was to spend the night in this hole we just made ... ah, but the ground was cool ... and if you kept your head down, you were out of rifle shot ... there was a lot to be said for both.

I was never at peace in positions like these. They knew where we were – sitting ducks. I relaxed a bit but was soon up, looking about ... between me and a wood line 40 yards off, only grass ... no one could cross that unless they crawled so slowly as to not bend a blade on a still, hot, breezeless night. An impossible task ... I told my guys to keep a sharp eye on the tops of the blades ... any movement, open up ...

Then I went off to check the rest of our perimeter. It was risky ... I didn't know the guys, or them me ... there was a lot of tension in the air, though you never talked about that.

If you call my squad's spot 12 o'clock ... we had a serious problem at 9. Our line ran right up to a steep wooded hillside ... no separation ... they could creep through the trees, assemble en masse, and in a sudden rush ... Yeah, in a sudden rush, it'd be our ass ...

I went back to my hole ... asked Al and Lee if they'd be willing to go out with me ... an ambush. Orders? ... no ... but the 1st shirt said ok ... and those two crazy bastards ... they just laughed, said sure, anything beat sleeping in a hole waiting to die.

Our first shirt gave me the password for night's watch ... "you'll need it, god willing."
And that was that ...

Obviously, we made it back ... all sheer luck. Oh, they came alright ... don't know how many ... we heard them, never saw 'em, duck-walking through the woods ... we opened up ... Lee had part of an ear shot off ... Al lost a finger and crapped his pants ... our guys opened up, steel jacketed rounds everywhere ... but they ran off ... don't know how many were left behind.

After a long silence, we realized we had to cross our own line – them all keyed up ... we crawled as close as we could, started yelling that password ... and everything else we knew ... they let us through ... thank god ... we were such fools!

Later that night, I met the Captain ... he thanked me, by name. Shook my hand. Hmm, I thought. The next week, we were over run. Some didn't make it back ... Luck ain't a forever thing.