

*Sunday, 10 February, 2013*

*Mr. Mike Kettles*

*11614 Valleydale Drive*

*Dallas, Texas 75230*

*RE: Song Tra Cau Riverbed Extraction*

*15 May 1967*

*Mr. Kettles:*

*My name is Dewey E. Smith and at the time of the above action I was a Sargent E-5 assigned to Weapons Platoon, B Company, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.*

*On the morning of the 15th our platoon was informed that an element of the Tiger Force, our battalion recon platoon, was engaged with an NVA unit of battalion strength. My platoon and the 3rd platoon of B Company was to be airlifted in to provide support for the Tigers to facilitate their extraction. Weapons platoon consisted of only eighteen men due to casualties suffered the previous day. Third Platoon consisted of approximately twenty-five men.*

*Weapons Platoon was on the first lift into the LZ around 0900 hours. There was intense enemy fire directed towards the helicopters on our way in and heavy small arms, machine gun and mortar fire as we unloaded from the choppers. Within the first ten minutes every man in my section was wounded except for myself and my machine gunner. By 1100 hours I was the ranking NCO in weapons platoon.*

*The helicopters continued landing in the LZ while receiving intense machine gun fire to bring us more ammunition and to extract our wounded. Sometime around the middle of the day one of the helicopters suffered a direct hit from a mortar then flipped over and began to burn.*

*Around 1800 hours the decision had been made to break contact with the NVA and extract all of us from the river bank. When the flight of helicopters came in to extract us we loaded the wounded, our KIA's and all the munitions and equipment we could and the flight of, I believe, four helicopters loaded to capacity took off. One small problem. There were still eight of us left on the LZ. We were trying to figure how we were going to get out of the area without being captured or shot when off in the distance we saw one lone helicopter headed our way.*

*You could see all kinds of tracers climbing towards that helicopter. In my heart I just knew that the pilot would abort the landing because of the fire he was receiving and all of us on the ground would be out of luck. When we saw that the pilot was going to bring the helicopter in for us we all started running for the area where we saw that he was going to touch down. He was coming in so fast that when the runners hit the ground the helicopter seemed to bounce and setteled back on the ground about forty or fifty yards from where we expected. We all changed directions and took off for the huey at a dead run. This put our backs to the NVA and I could see tracers going past my shoulders and impacting the back end of the huey. I just hoped that the huey didn't substain enough damage to where it couldn't fly. As I jumped into the huey and the pilot started to take off there was an explosion not far from the right side of the huey. A mortar round I think. Several guys on the right side yelled that they had been wounded by shrapnel. After we got back to camp I found out the pilot that got us out of what we called Tiger Valley was a Major Kettles. I am convinced that had it not been for the actions of Major Kettles I wouldn't be here today to tell what happened on that day.*

*Dewey E. Smith*

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