



Handout - "The Meatgrinder"

"The Meatgrinder"

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I will never forget September 25th, 1967. I thought the NVA were going to blow Con Thien off the map with artillery, rockets, and mortars. We took over 1200 rounds that day. I don't think there was hardly a spot on that hill not hit by an incoming round of some sort. To that point and time in the war, this was the most incoming rounds ever taken by a unit in Vietnam in one day.

That's a lot of incoming rounds for such a small place! There was almost no place to hide! Every time a Helicopter would arrive, incoming rounds would follow. That made it very hard for us to be resupplied. During that week in September, a helicopter didn't touch down at Con Thien except for a Medevac; they just dropped the boxes of chow and mail out the doors without landing. The Marine Corps thought the Choppers were too valuable to lose.

Every night, Charlie would probe our lines to try and find a weakness they could penetrate; and there was Always the ever-present threat of NVA snipers.

That was also the time my high school buddy, Louie Torrellas, had a Russian rocket hit right next to his hole. I remember him staggering out of his hole with blood running out of both ears and his mouth. I never saw him again after that day. We medevac'd him out of there!

In a week or so, I received a letter from him on a hospital ship; he said he was going home. I was glad he was going home, but I wished it were Me! I remember rounds hitting all around us that day. I believe God was watching over us, otherwise we'd all be dead.

It was really hard on the "Brain Bucket" (your head) just sitting there waiting for the next barrage, the one that could take your life. The stress of the constant incoming artillery barrages could drive a man insane. It would have been different if we could have shot back at them. Then we would have been able to get a little relief.

As If the situation wasn't bad enough already, we also had to put up with the Monsoon rains. Our holes would fill with water; we'd have to bail them out four or five times a day. We also had "Emersion foot," and your feet would bleed and hurt like hell. Then there was the damn mud! You walked in it, you sat in it, you slept in it, and you even ate it. There was just no escaping it!

The thing about September 25th that really sticks in my mind is a picture of a Marine sitting in a puddle of blood and battle dressings, on a poncho, with his legs blown off from the waist down! He was numb from morphine and in shock from loss of blood. He was smoking a cigarette very calmly, as if nothing had even happened! He was waiting for a



Medevac! He probably died in the chopper ride back!

Our platoon arrived at Con Thien with 45 men; when we left, we only had 12! Now you know why we called it, "The Meatgrinder!"