

DICK CHAPMAN

USCGC POINT HUDSON (WPB-82322) – Nov67 to Jun68 – Relieved by Horsey

Navy Unit Commendation – 1 Apr 68 to 31 Oct 68

Navy Unit Commendation – 1 Jan 69 to 30 Jun 69

February 26, 2021 – Dick Chapman E-mail to Bill Carr

Bill, not all that exciting but a simple memory taken home from Vietnam.

Bob Storch (Igor) and I were daisy-chaining up the coast and were passed off to the Thai gunboat skippered by LT Dusadee. As his wont, he was as gracious as ever and welcomed us aboard with open arms. It was during the monsoon so the seas were very choppy, a lot of motion.

Igor and I decided to stay topside and sat down behind one of the spray shields and started to chat. Suddenly, the door pops open and a Thai sailor came out and handed us two bottles of Thai beer which we happily accepted. The second we finished our beer, the door popped open and here comes the Thai sailor with two more beers. Again, we happily accepted. We chatted some more and as soon as we finished our beers the door popped open and here was the Thai sailor with two more beers.

Igor and I, never ones to turn down a cold beer in a combat zone or in any zone for that matter, happily imbibed. We chuckled at the wonderful service we were receiving and looked at the door. Through the port we could see the face of the Thai sailor watching us. I am sure that LT Dusadee gave this sailor strict instructions to never let us have an empty hand.

Knowing the Thai navy, this poor sailor would have probably been fed to the sharks if he failed his mission.

Upon reaching our rendezvous, we said farewell to LT Dusadee and “stumbled” aboard the Coast Guard patrol boat where we were handed a cup of hot coffee.

January 26, 2021 – Dick Chapman E-mail to Bill Carr – ...I enjoyed your story on the trawler. We (HUDSON) intercepted a trawler off the Bo Di river in southern Ca Mau. Bill Blanchard had the WPB to the north and I was sitting to the south. The WINONA with Gene Johnson in the engine room closed the trawler and they exchanged fire. The trawler self-detonated in a huge explosion. Bill and I swooped in and found nothing but many, many burnt wooden rifle stocks. WINONA claimed she sunk the trawler but I know better.

October 29, 2018 – Dick Chapman E-mail to Bob Christiansen – I was patrolling in HUDSON off the Bo Di River (Ca Mau Peninsula) when I received a message chopping me to a vessel which became the OSC for the event. I had no idea it was the WINONA; I thought it was a Navy destroyer.

We were instructed to take station just south of the river entrance. Bill Blanchard was stationed on the north side. It was totally dark (no moon), so we never did visually see the WINONA or trawler. We watched the trawler approach the river and the WINONA move in for the intercept (all on radar).

Suddenly, we saw the searchlight come on and the trawler open up with a machine gun. The WINONA returned fire with the 5-inch. This exchange lasted maybe a minute or less before there was a huge explosion.

In my opinion the trawler self-detonated. We sped to the scene and saw nothing but an oil slick, small pieces of charred wood and many scorched rifle butts. Tater has a photo of the rifle butts.

In the illumination of search lights, I was shocked to see the white hull of a Coast Guard cutter – the WINONA which was our OSC. Gene was in the engine room during this event and will probably strongly disagree with my self-detonation assessment.

A sidebar: When I learned we were going to be involved with this trawler, I instructed our cook to become a corpsman and get all the first aid material together and prepare the mess deck for any medical emergency. The ironic thing about this is that we probably had the worst cook in the division. He was seasick most of the time when we were outside the Delta and had a nasty habit of getting the clap while we were in port. He was not a man who used good judgement. Thank goodness there was no bone saw in the first aid material and his medical services were never needed.

October/November 2018 - Alumni Bulletin – I was on HUDSON as the blocking force just south of the entrance to the Bo Di River. Gene Johnson was in the bowels of the WINONA listening to the fire fight through the skin of the ship. As an engineer, he never got to see the flashes. I contend the trawler self-detonated when it realized there was no escape.

We were briefed that the crew were fanatics who would never be captured. Anyway, the Coast Guard couldn't afford HE rounds so the WINONA was firing BL&P. Gene disagrees with my assessment. Like MARONE, we hastened to the scene of destruction and collected many burnt rifle butts and a basket. Every crewman got to take a butt home. I kept mine until I realized that none of the women I dated were impressed by my wartime prowess.

Coast Guard Awards and Medals Board – List of CG Units Coming Under Hostile Fire

August 30, 2004

Encl. (16) to COMDTINST 650.25b MEDALS AND AWARDS MANUAL

POINT HUDSON – 3 Apr 68

March 1, 1968 – Ship's Log

0020H – All hands to General Quarters.

0220H – Secured from General Quarters.

0240H – Commenced search for debris from trawler at position WQ 400 580/VC/200 rpm/ 25 feet.

0830H Steering various courses and speeds picking up debris of trawler destroyed night of 29 February and March 1, 1968.

1015H – Small boat underway to pick up debris.

WIKIPEDIA

On 1 March 1968, PT HUDSON was one of several Coast Guard cutters and U.S. Navy Patrol Craft Fast that intercepted and destroyed an enemy trawler off the coast of the Ca Mau Peninsula.

RELATED ARTICLES ATTACHED

MEETING THE CHAM PRINCESS

THE AMBUSH

A MEDCAP GONE WRONG

I can give you a snippet on the Thai patrol boat. CO was a full LT named Dusadee. Have no idea how to spell it.

Will get the Thai story to you this week.

Cheers, Chap



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Fwd: Vietnam

1 message

Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Thu, May 13, 2021 at 4:49 PM

To: Richard Chapman <chap65@verizon.net>

I think I'm getting myself a little confused. When you mentioned in your 1/26/21 e-mail below that, "Will get the Thai story to you this week" was that the story of the Cham Princess? I have that and two others - ambush and the MEDCAP gone wrong.

Is there another story in your memory I should be hoping for or are you done?...🕶️

On Tue, Jan 26, 2021 at 4:39 PM Richard <chap65@verizon.net> wrote:

Bill, thanks. I enjoyed your story on the trawler. You are correct. We intercepted a trawler off the Bo Di River in southern Ca Mau. Bill Blanchard had the WPB to the north and I was sitting to the south. The WINONA (I think) with E.K. Johnson in the engine room closed the trawler and they exchanged fire. The trawler self-detonated in a huge explosion. Bill and I swooped in and found nothing but many, many burnt wooden rifle stocks. WINONA claimed she sunk the trawler but I know better.

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Cheers, Chap



Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

The Cham Princess

1 message

Bill Carr <bill@getrain.com>

Tue, Jan 26, 2021 at 12:32 PM

To: Richard Chapman <chap65@verizon.net>

Dick - Your piece, attached, is great....thanks...I'll be sure to include it in the Class of 1965 Vietnam Scrapbook I'm putting together for the Reunion.

I've attached an article that I put together for my veterans' writer's group that meets monthly. I wonder if the Cham Islands that I talk about in the middle of the second page has any connection to the Cham ethnic group piece you just sent me.

One more thing - can you do a few words about that Thai WPB CO that we talked a little bit about yesterday?

Thanks again Dick.

P.S. I owe you that snippet of my Ship's Log that detailed our classmates in An Thoi; I'll get that to you soon....

2 attachments

 The Cham Princess - By Dick Chapman - 26Jan21.docx
14K

 Trawler Night - Cham Islands.docx
17K

Bill Carr

From: Richard [chap65@verizon.net]
Sent: Monday, October 29, 2018 3:27 PM
To: Christiansen Robert
Cc: Livingston Tater; Walton Dick
Subject: Re: Vietnam Reunion

Chris, I enjoyed chatting with you today. Here is the story.

I was patrolling in POINT HUDSON off the Bo Di River (Ca Mau Peninsula) when I received a message chopping me to a vessel which became the OSC for the event. I had no idea it was the WINONA; I thought it was a navy destroyer. We were instructed to take station just south of the river entrance. Bill Blanchard was stationed on the north side. It was totally dark (no moon), so we never did visually see the WINONA or trawler. We watched the trawler approach the river and the WINONA move in for the intercept (all on radar). Suddenly, we saw the searchlight come on and the trawler open up with a machine gun. The WINONA returned fire with the 5-inch. This exchange lasted maybe a minute or less before there was a huge explosion. In my opinion the trawler self detonated. We sped to the scene and saw nothing but an oil slick, small pieces of charred wood and many scorched rifle butts. (Tater has a photo of the rifle butts). In the illumination of search lights I was shocked to see the white hull of a Coast Guard cutter, the WINONA which was our OSC. E.K. was in the engine room during this event and will probably strongly disagree with my self detonation assessment.

A sidebar: when I learned we were going to be involved with this trawler, I instructed our cook to become a corpsman and get all the first aid material together and prepare the mess deck for any medical emergency. The ironic thing about this is that we probably had the worst cook in the division. He was seasick most of the time when we were outside the delta and had a nasty habit of getting the clap while we were in port. He was not a man who used good judgement. Thank goodness there was no bone saw in the first aid material and his medical services were never needed.

Have a great couple of days in Charleston. I know Tater and Bullwinkle will put on a hell of a show.

Cheers, Chap

On Oct 27, 2018, at 11:22 PM, Robert Christiansen <robertchristiansen41@hotmail.com> wrote:

Chap -

Sorry you're not going to be there to tell your story. I'm supposed to relate what you did over there concerning your involvement with the Winona and the NVN trawler. Let me know best times to call you so I can take notes. Cheery Bye!

Chris

Cheers, Chap

On Apr 16, 2018, at 6:22 PM, William Blanchard <blan.consult.serv@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Chap,

It's so nice to hear from you. My wife Ginny and I are in Boston until tomorrow, when we will drive back to Grand River (an eastern suburb of Cleveland), Ohio. We are staying with our daughter Jane, who lives in Newton, a block from the 17 mile mark for the Boston Marathon. Another daughter, Susan, who lives in the Bronx, ran the Marathon today and stayed with us last night.

I recently came across a photo of you, me, and another person, who I can't remember right now. In the photo, we are dancing skillfully in a course line. I'm thinking this picture might have been taken Coast Guard Day 1968, just before we paid a special tribute to our Navy comrades by mooning them. If you like, when I get home, I'll scan the photo and send it to you.

Warm regards,
Bill

On Mon, Apr 16, 2018 at 3:50 PM, Richard <chap65@verizon.net> wrote:

Bill, you are spot on. I was in POINT HUDSON as the blocking force just south of the entrance to the Bo Di River. Our classmate, E.K. Johnson, was in the bowels of the WINONA listening to the fire fight through the skin of the ship. As an engineer he never got to see the flashes etc. I contend that the trawler self detonated when it realized there was no escape. We were briefed that the crew were fanatics who would never be captured. Anyway, the Coast Guard couldn't afford HE; so, the WINONA was firing BL&P. E.K. disagrees with my assessment. Like POINT MARONE, we hastened to the scene of destruction and collected many burnt rifle butts and a basket. Every crewman got to take a butt home. I kept mine until I realized that none of the women I dated were impressed by my wartime prowess.

Bill, I have fond memories of our time in An Thoi together. Hope you make it to Charleston in November.

Chap

On Tue, Apr 17, 2018 at 1:43 PM, Richard <chap65@verizon.net> wrote:

Bill, I had a photo of you, Bud Sanders and me standing outside a quonset hut the day before we departed Saigon. I cannot find it but will keep looking. I still remember when you, Storch and I were filling out our "wish sheets", and you entered MSO Eighth District. We challenged you and you said something like, "I don't need to specify New Orleans. Where else could they send me in the district?". We chuckled when you received orders to Port Arthur. I know that story had a happy ending as you met your future wife there.

I am trying to think of the name of the boorish Navy Lieutenant stationed at An Thoi (shoreside). He was a bit overweight and was always going on about how destroyer sailors ruled the world. He and the Swift drivers were always getting into it and we egged them on. Lots more stories: patches the monkey and his parachute, Swiftie singing "Danny Boy" off key when he had a few too many, the night the base was "attacked" and we ran to the bunker where the snotty LT Brown (head of the Swifts) was handing out weapons and ammo. He gave Storch the M-60 and handed me the ammo. Opened the can of ammo while lying on the beach and found single M-16 rounds. Many, many more stories.

Who was the reserve officer that worked with you on the staff? Is his name Clay Drexler?

MEETING THE CHAM PRINCESS

Dick Chapman

January 26, 2021

Preamble: The Chams are an ethnic group that live in Vietnam and Cambodia. Their kingdom was absorbed by these two countries. Many of them are Muslim and they look like a mix of Vietnamese and Malaysian. In the 60's they, like the Montagnard's, were looked down upon by the Vietnamese. There is a fairly large group in the coastal area near Phan Thiet.

While on patrol during the 1968 Tet Offensive, I met an Army 1st LT from a MACV team stationed about 10 miles inland of Phan Thiet. He was surprised to learn that there was a U.S. patrol boat in the area as they were in firefights near the shore on occasion. If they knew we were there, they would have called us.

Now this pissed me off, so I left the WPB in the capable hands of my XO and went to visit his boss, a major, and spent five days with the team. My absence was surely a courts martial offense but no one blew the whistle on me. As I was being driven back to Phan Thiet, the 1st LT asked me if I wanted to meet the Cham Princess.

Of course, I said, "Yes". I was told to bring a gift, so I pulled a carton of cigarettes out of my bag (I didn't smoke but kept them for bartering). Shortly after, I was introduced to a local Cham who was going to introduce me. We parked the jeep next to a jungle trail and proceeded. About 100 yards in, my guide put his arm out and stopped me. He then pointed to the right and there was a thin lime green snake making its way across the path. This was the only time I ever laid my eyes on the dreaded Bamboo Krate.

We proceeded another 100 yards and I spied a large thatched house sitting on stilts. I was starting to get excited envisioning a beautiful Dorothy Lamour type creature. We climbed the ladder and were told to wait in this small anteroom. Soon, I was ushered into the "throne room" and there, sitting on a very large, ornate cushion was the princess.

She greeted me with a very large smile and bowed her head slightly as she accepted my gift. I was charmed. Here sat a 70 year old, wizened woman with more wrinkles than a sharpei. When she spoke again, you couldn't help but notice her teeth had been ground to stumps and were surrounded by a red stained mouth and lips. She obviously had been chewing betel nuts for many, many years. My vision of Dorothy Lamour quickly faded away. After a few minutes I was ushered out. I will say she was beautifully dressed and her smile was infectious. Too bad I was not allowed to take photos.

THE AMBUSH

Dick Chapman

It was a week or two into the Tet Offensive and we were patrolling near Tuy Phong on the coast. We had received some fire at night from the hills but nothing of any consequence.

I received a call from Tuy Phong asking us to take a 1st Lieutenant up to Cam Ranh Bay. Once aboard he told us that he was with the MACV team located inland about 10 kms. They had trained the local Ruff Puffs and were leading them on patrols, search and seizures, etc. They had been in contact with the VC almost every night.

They were in a big shoot-out one night near the coast and could have used our help if they knew we were there. This totally pissed me off because no one in Saigon alerted these guys that we were on patrol. After Cam Ranh, we returned for another six-day patrol (like a Double Victor) and I went in to visit the major of the MACV team.

I ended up spending the entire six days with them. The major was a very large West Pointer that had lost two radio men in the previous two weeks because he would stand up during the firefights giving directions. He was also no-nonsense and just as pissed as me about the situation. He said he trusted the Province Chief (ARVN) a hell of a lot more than the US Army guys in Phan Thiet - so he ignored them.

He took me to meet the Province Chief, who, believe it or not, was trained at Camp Pendleton with the Marines. He spoke very good English and invited us to a lunch of steamed crabs and Johnny Walker Black scotch. It must have been 110 degrees out as we sat in the hot sun eating crabs. Absolutely no water to drink and he kept filling up my glass with scotch. I almost lost it a couple of times and didn't think I'd ever get out of there.

Back at the MACV base, which was surrounded by claymore mines and small bunkers with wires running everywhere, the top sergeant was planning a search and seizure mission for the next night. When the time came, they asked me if I wanted to join them - which I did.

While it was still light, we proceeded to a small Ruff Puff "fort" with towers - looked just like the old west. The plan was to send out a heavy squad to parallel the road about 500 meters out in the bush along the base of the mountains. An hour later we left and walked down the dirt road to the first of three hamlets which were VC friendly. Across the road from the hamlets were rice paddies. The plan was to search the hamlets and if the VC tried to get back into the mountains, the blocking force would intercept them.

The blocking force got wet feet and never went to the base of the mountains. They were waiting for us in a large ditch next to the dirt road. Our Ruff Puffs were pissed but along we went. We searched the three hamlets in a professional military manner, setting up perimeters,

etc. We found some empty sandbags and a cache of food ready to be transported, but nothing else. After the third hamlet, we turned around and headed back to the "fort".

At this point, all discipline broke down. One Ruff Puff turned on a portable radio which was belting out music and most of the men were carrying their rifles over their shoulders. When we got to the first hamlet the noncom decided to search the hooch's again. When he went up to the door all hell broke loose. We had walked into an ambush.

When I heard the shots, I dove behind the berm of the road and almost landed on another guy. He was a veteran of many patrols and his reaction was quicker than mine. Our feet were in the rice paddy and we were facing a lane that cut through the palms to the hamlet. We could hear the AK-47 rounds snapping over our heads. He grabbed me and said, "Don't look up!".

I will never forget that snapping sound. After a very short time the firing ebbed and then stopped. We heard some movement, so looked up and saw people in the shadows. We trained our weapons (M-16 me and an M-2 carbine him) and realized they were our Ruff Puffs scurrying around. It was over. The VC killed one Ruff Puff and we found a bush hat covered in blood along the trail leading back to the mountains. My guess is a VC was severely wounded.

A sad postscript to this story is that the Ruff Puff who was killed was a recent father. He had proudly introduced me to his wife and new son while waiting in the "fort" prior to the patrol.

Second postscript: the next day the senior sergeant presented me with a Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) which I still have. Of course, I was not permitted to wear it; but it brings back the event every time I see it.

A MEDCAP GONE WRONG

Dick Chapman

August 7, 2020

Near the end of my tour I was stuck on staff for a few months. With little to do, I decided to speak with Navy corpsmen and doctors to see if they were interest in performing a MEDCAP.

A Chief Corpsman jumped at the chance, so I checked out a BOATON WHALER and away we went. On two occasions we visited VC villages. When we arrived, there were no young men anywhere to be seen. We sat with the elders, smoking cigarettes - waiting for the women to line up with their children. We completed the MEDCAP and walked back to the BOSTON WHALER. I was a bit nervous about turning my back and had to fight the urge to run like hell. News of these MEDCAP spread among the Navy medical unit and soon a dentist told me he would like to go. So I set one up.

We arrived on the lee side of an island and took a quarter mile trail through the jungle to the weather side where the village was located. I guess they liked the breeze which I must admit felt pretty good. We found the village chief and with my limited French and Vietnamese explained that this fellow was a (bac si) dentist. After pointing to teeth and saying bac si a few times, the chief figured it out. While this was going on a lot of villagers gathered around the table (think of wooden picnic table) with inquisitive looks on their faces, yet never said a word. While I was talking to the chief, I felt something wet and hot hitting my arm. When I turned around, a little boy, who could barely stand, was in the middle of the table just pissing away. When I looked at the little boy, everyone started laughing. The Vietnamese don't put pants on boys until they are potty trained.

Anyway, the dentist needed to perform triage, so the chief explained what was going on. Dutifully, about 10 people lined up. The dentist checked every one and said to me that the old woman had a bad abscess and needed to have a molar pulled. I told the chief and the old woman came back and sat in the chair. At this point the dentist pulled out the needle and Novocain which got everyone very excited.

I explained the best I could that the needle was needed to prevent pain. Again, the chief figured it out and told the old woman. Everyone crowded around while the dentist injected the Novocain. We then went over to the table to smoke cigarettes (to be polite) and wait for the Novocain to kick in. About 10 minutes later the old woman started howling and wailing, saying words to the effect that ghosts and spirits had been injected into her mouth.

I picked up the words "ghost" and "spirit" just as the chief got into our faces shaking his finger. I told the dentist to pack up and be ready for a hasty retreat. Now the villagers were pretty angry as the old woman, still wailing, came after us. People started pressing in, so we slowly walked toward the trail. Once we hit the trail we put it in high gear and ran for the BOSTON WHALER. I prayed it would start on one pull and it did.

Bill, I can't remember the proper spelling for bac si. It could be bac ci. Hope this helps. I actually have a photo of the old woman somewhere. I have another story about visiting the Cham princess.