

## **COL (R) Walter Anderson interview summary 26 July 2006**

CPT Anderson arrived in Vietnam around February 1970 and assumed command of the 63<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company (Light Truck). Although it was designated light truck it only had one 2 ½-ton truck, which was an admin vehicle. The rest of the trucks were S&Ps. Three months after his arrival, the company was redesignated the 563<sup>rd</sup> Medium Truck Company. He did not know why. He was given the new unit designation and told to reflag the company. [The 563<sup>rd</sup> TC was a unit originally at Pleiku under the 124<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion]

His company fell under the 57<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion at Chu Lai and supported the Americal Division. As far as he remembered, his was the only transportation company in the battalion. All the other companies were other branches. The battalion commander was LTC Frank Francois.

The 63<sup>rd</sup> TC had six gun trucks and two V-100s. The only names of the gun trucks he could remember were: The Preacher, Lifer, War Monger, The Private and Smiling Death. The names of the two V-100s were Darling Maggie O'Toole (named by an Irishman) and No Slack. The V-100s could accelerate faster and drive off-road. In the coastal plane, they could go after the enemy in the rice paddies. CPT Anderson liked that aspect of them. He never had one get hit though. He put dual .50 on the copula and a M60 in the back. All his platoon leaders were TC officers but the Army had an excess of combat arms officers and sent them to TC units. He had one Engineer officer and several infantry officers. He made them commanders of gun trucks. The infantry officers liked the hardened trucks better than being on the ground.

Because the 63<sup>rd</sup> TC was supporting the Americal Division, it received lots of MP support. Some of the local runs were safe such as the one through the 199<sup>th</sup> Inf Bde and 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN Ranger Bn area. He did not have to worry about gun truck support.

### **Lam Son 719, 30 January to 4 April 1971.**

His company moved the battalion headquarters up to Phu Bai under the escort of five gun trucks to assume control truck units there in support of the Laotian incursion. That first night, the camp at Phu Bai was also probed by the enemy. They were very glad to have gun trucks on the perimeter. The 563<sup>rd</sup> Medium Truck Company remained at Phu Bai for a week and a half.

Each night the battalion sent out one convoy. Each serial was no larger than 20 vehicles to include gun trucks with a 15 minute interval. None of the officers of the 563<sup>rd</sup> TC were made convoy commanders, but allowed to ride in the gun trucks though. That first night there, the battalion asked for volunteers to lead a night convoy from Phu Bai to Camp Vandergrift. CPT Anderson and LT Al Jones volunteered. As their first night convoy, it was a frightening experience. For one, he did not know the road. He did not know where the obstacles and trouble spots were. During his time up there, the convoys only ran into two ambushes. It was short, quick then they got out of there. They opened

up with RPGs and .51 cal, destroyed the lead fuel tanker then left. There was no ground assault.

The company had to modify their gun trucks because of the attacks on Hai Van Pass. Because the enemy might be in the culverts just five feet below the road, the gunners needed to be able to depress their machineguns down. They moved the machineguns from pedestals in the middle of the gun box to pedestals welded on the sides.

When the 563<sup>rd</sup> TC returned, it brought back all its gun trucks but left some tractors and trailers at Phu Bai. The 563<sup>rd</sup> TC resumed its normal runs.