

329<sup>th</sup> Heavy Boat May 66-67, Vung Tau

From: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Date: Monday, January 25, 2010 14:36  
Subject: 329th Heavy Boat Company.  
To: richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil

Sir,

I had written you earlier about the 329th Transportation Company (Heavy Boat). In your return e-mail you asked about my time with the company.

It's been a long time ago but I hope I can fill in some details. I was assigned to the 329th after finishing a seamanship course at Ft. Eustis in late January of 1966. As part of the course we trained with the 329th and I knew they were to be reassigned to Viet Nam.

I was assigned to the [LCU] 1532 and we trained until we were removed from our boats in around April of 1966. In May we were flown to Oakland, California and put on board the *USNS General W. H. Gordon*. We spent most of May on the ship including a stop in Okinawa. We then arrived in Vung Tau, Viet Nam. Only two of our boats were in country at that time, the 1556 and the 1567 (not sure of the second number). My crew took over the 1556 the next day. It was manned prior to our arrival (possibly by the 97th H.B.). The 1556 was taking troops and equipment of the 1st Infantry Division out of Vung Tau and down to the Rung Sat area. We continued that for a few days until the men were sent back north to their normal area. My brother Tom was with A troop of the 1st Cav, 1st Infantry at that time and I was concerned because the men we transported said his unit was in heavy action at that time. Fortunately he was okay.

After that we were mostly used to haul general cargo as well as fuel tankers and ammo. We went on runs to Saigon which would include a stop in Nha Be for fuel and fresh water. We also made runs to the Delta. Our Delta stops were in My Tho, Vinh Long and Can Tho. We saw the start of construction at Dong Tam near My Tho. One day (about 01/1967) we passed that area and saw that the VC had sunk the big dredge (the *Jamaica Bay*) they were using at Dong Tam. Our boat (1556) and others along with a USN LST were used to haul down troops and equipment of the 9th Infantry from the Saigon area to Dong Tam. Our boat carried a tank with a bulldozer blade. After Dong Tam became operational we would get fuel and water there.

In about [23] August of 1966 we were coming down from Saigon when the *Baton Rouge Victory* was mined, killing about seven Merchant Seamen. They closed the river but we had to pass the ship and continue to Vung Tau. There seemed to be VC firing on the ship but the Captain got it out of the channel and into the river bank.

Also while on the 1556 we hauled a ship's anchor to Cam Ranh which was as far north as I ever got. While lifting the anchor the crane almost went over and dropped the anchor back on the well deck leaving a big dent in the deck plates. I believe some of our boats went as far up as Qui Nhon. We (the 1556) also made a cargo run to Con Son Island which was a prison camp off the coast.

I also saw my original boat from Ft. Eustis (the 1532) around the Nha Be area. I believe it was part of the 5th HB which had just arrived (about Feb. 1967). Some of their boats would accompany us to get them used to the area. I believe they took over the Vung Tau operations and the 329th HB went north to Da Nang after I left for home in June of 1967. I was reassigned to the 1569 after we received additional boats. While on the 1569 we were used mostly for running equipment and general cargo to Saigon and the Mekong Delta as well as a run to an Australian base with artillery barrels. On one run back from Saigon we discovered and recovered the bodies of two "Huey" crewmen whose chopper went down in the river. I heard it crashed due to accidental causes. We were towing a command boat down to Vung Tau for repairs and used it to recover the men. I was left on the 1569 with most of the crew and we somehow made it back to Vung Tau with me in charge (a Spec 4).

During my time in the 329th we lost no men or boats that I know of but one boat was damaged by a ship on a run to Saigon. I understand that the company did lose a boat and its crew up north after I returned to the US. If you have a source of info about the HB companies (before, during and after Viet Nam) I would be interested in it. After returning from Viet Nam I remember seeing a news item about an Army boat straying into Cambodia and its crew being held for a time. I wonder if it was from the 5th HB. I also remember seeing newscasts about the Tet Offensive and seeing an army LCU with Marines in the Hue area. I would have thought they would use USN boats. I am sorry it took so long to reply to you. I hope to go someday back to Ft. Eustis and check out the museum.

Thank You, Robert D. Kenney  
[kenneyr@comcast.net](mailto:kenneyr@comcast.net)

From: "Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane" <richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil>  
To: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Sent: Friday, May 7, 2010 6:30:09 AM GMT -08:00 US/Canada Pacific  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.

Thanks for the reply. Where was your company headquarters and did your boat ever stop there?

What was your job on the LCU?

Do you remember any of your crew?

What were some of the funnier aspects of life on the boats? Rich

From: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Date: Monday, January 25, 2010 14:36  
Subject: 329th Heavy Boat Company.  
To: richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil

When we arrived in Viet Nam we were headquartered near Vung Tau. The boat crews lived on board the LCU's. We periodically stayed in the HQ area where we received our mail and were involved in cargo operations and unloading ships. Most of our activities involved cargo and we made most of our runs up rivers in 3 & 4 Corps [III and IV Corps Tactical Zones] (Saigon and the Mekong Delta). We also went along the coast to various areas north and south of Vung Tau.

My job was deck hand on the 1556 and mate on the 1569.

My original crew in Eustis on the 1532 went on the 1556 in Viet Nam. The master was WO 1 Schultz. The mate was Sgt. Atkins. The chief engineer was a WO1 who came on just before we left Eustis ( I forget his name ). The other engine crew members were a SSGT named Braddock (?) and a SP4 named Anderson. The deck crew (besides me) were 2 SP4's. One was named Taylor and the other was named Morris. The cook was a SP5 named Ed Seigh (not sure of the spelling). The 1569 was run by a SSGT named Wilson. Most of the crew were replacements and I don't recall their names. One deck crew member was with us in Eustis and originally on another boat. His name was Doug Scott.

The funniest incident I remember on board was on the 1556. We were unloading a troop ship and had an exchange arranged to swap some Jim Beam bourbon for food. The bottles were on the way to the ships cook when they were dropped down a hatch into our galley. The odor remained a long time but we still got some fresh food off the troop ship. Most of our time was everyday routine, not much else. Bob Kenney.

From: "Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane" <richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil>  
To: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Sent: Thursday, June 3, 2010 7:53:17 AM GMT -08:00 US/Canada Pacific  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.

Did your company sail to Vietnam with LCUs on the *Gordon*? If so why did you pick up two LCUs in country?

Do you remember the boat numbers?

I found the 2nd Bde, 1st ID conducted Operation Baton Rouge in Sung Rat from September-October 1966. How many LCUs were used and did they just drop the 1st ID off or do more support?

What you provided filled in a lot of gaps in the 329th history for 1966. Thanks, Rich

From: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Date: Wednesday, June 2, 2010 18:54  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.  
To: Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane <richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil>

We went on the *Gordon* without any boats. The boats we had in Eustis were turned over to the 5th HB. I later saw my original boat (1532) near Saigon after the 5th arrived. The other boats we used in Viet Nam were in transit and arrived after we did with the exception of the 1556 and the 1567 (not sure of the number). Those two boats had crews on them but were turned over to us the next day. The other boat crews stayed at the Company HQ's near Vung Tau until the remaining boats arrived. I do not remember the other boat numbers.

The crew we took over from on the 1556 was already involved with the 1st ID when we arrived in about late May or early June of 1966. So that isn't the operation you mentioned. We worked with the 1st ID for a few days and took some of them back up to Saigon where they went back up to their normal operational area. The only thing I can think of later was the mine that blew a hole in the Baton Rouge Victory on 08/23/1966 killing 7 crew members. Maybe the 1st ID had a later operation named for that but none of our boats would have been involved I think. The operation we were involved in 05 or 06 /1966 included just our boat. The other boat (1567?) was not part of it. We ran troops and equipment to the area not too far from Vung Tau as I remember it. The only other infantry operation we were involved in was taking some members and equipment including a tank of the 9th ID from Saigon down to the newly completed Dong Tam base in the Delta. About 4 or 5 of our boats and a Navy LST were involved. That was around early 1967. We also off loaded the 199th Infantry Brigade from a troop ship to Vung Tau after which they moved north. According to a book I have the 196th & the 199th IBs arrived in Viet Nam in 1966 but I believe we unloaded the 199th. My memory is not the greatest but I found some letters I sent my parents and used them for references.

I also have a bunch of 35mm slides and some pictures. I hope to go through them and maybe convert them to CD rom. If I do I'll let you know. Maybe they can show some of the day to day stuff we did. Thanks, Bob.

From: "Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane" <richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil>  
To: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Sent: Thursday, June 3, 2010 1:24:09 PM GMT -08:00 US/Canada Pacific  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.

So how comfortable was life aboard the LCUs?

How often was your boat shot at on the River? Rich

From: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Date: Thursday, June 3, 2010 14:00  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.  
To: Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane <richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil>

Life on the LCUs wasn't bad. We had a shower and our own bunk as well as our own food supply and a cook. When I first arrived in country we were given a cash allowance to buy our own food but it was changed after a few months but we still did pretty good.

As far as being shot at it was more a matter of being near some one who was under fire. We (1556) were on the river coming down from Saigon when they closed the river off due to the mining of the Baton Rouge Victory. We were close enough that we passed it as it was run into the river bank. As we went by it a Vietnamese gunboat was firing into the same side of the river. I could see rounds hitting the water near the Baton Rouge Victory and the gunboat and some near us. As we passed the Baton Rouge I saw an explosion behind us between our stern and the rear of the Baton Rouge. Huey Gunships arrived at that time and went to work. To the best of my knowledge we had no casualties in the 329th during my tour. The rivers we worked were large and relatively secure. The area around the river going to Saigon was defoliated. The rivers we used in the Delta were not defoliated and you had to be alert. All those rivers were patrolled by Navy PBRs as well as PCFs around the inlets. The river going to Saigon was patrolled regularly by Navy minesweepers. The biggest danger was the ships going to and from Saigon. One of our boats was hit by a ship and was out of action for awhile. I don't think anyone was injured but those ships had to keep moving. Bob.

From: "Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane" <[richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil](mailto:richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil)>  
To: [kenneyr@comcast.net](mailto:kenneyr@comcast.net)  
Sent: Friday, June 4, 2010 5:04:52 PM GMT -08:00 US/Canada Pacific  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.

What rivers did you sail up and how long did it take you? Where did you RON enroute? Rich

From: [kenneyr@comcast.net](mailto:kenneyr@comcast.net)  
Date: Friday, June 4, 2010 16:56  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.

To: Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane [richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil](mailto:richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil)

I don't remember all the river names. When we left Vung Tau for Saigon or the Delta we went past ships waiting to go up river. The anchorage was part of "Cape St. Jacques" as I remember it. If we were going to Saigon we entered the river we referred to as the Saigon River but I remember parts of it being called the "Long Tao" and the "Nha Be". Those rivers took you in a mostly northward direction to Saigon. If we went to the Delta we entered further down from the Saigon River. We took a series of rivers that took you in a westerly direction. The first stop was My Tho and later Dong Tam was opened up a short distance from My Tho. We had 2 other stops in the Delta. The first was Vinh Long. It wasn't far from My Tho. The other was Can Tho which was tricky. You continued on the same river until you got fairly close to Cambodia then took a small river in a southerly direction to connect to a larger river. You then went easterly to Can Tho. Because of the roundabout route it was a long trip. I remember after I came back a news item about an Army boat mistakenly going into to Cambodia. It showed the crew being led around by Prince Sihanouk. They were dressed in suits. It all looked staged and I believe they were later returned to us. It was an LCU if I remember correctly.

The time depended on how fast you got there and how fast you got unloaded and reloaded. A trip to Saigon was usually one day. Early on we would get fresh water and fuel at Nha Be and continue onto Saigon. If you were running late you had to tie up overnight and go downriver the next morning. In the Delta you generally stayed overnight at anchor outside of My Tho and later

we were able to stay inside Dong Tam where we also began getting water and fuel. We were strictly not to run at night. Our first master on the 1556 took us down river from Saigon one night because we were running late. This occurred in our first week in country and earned him a reprimand from the company C.O.. ( Capt. Dalton). Some of our boats were coming back from the Delta one day and stopped overnight (I believe outside My Tho) and were passed by a Vietnamese LCU which continued around a bend in the river and was shot up by the VC. The next day our guys went by the shot up boat. It was heavily damaged. I saw some pictures of it later on. I heard they lost a good part of the crew. Bob.

From: "Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane" <richard.e.killblane@us.army.mil>  
To: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Sent: Monday, June 7, 2010 4:57:25 AM GMT -08:00 US/Canada Pacific  
Subject: 329th Heavy Boat Company.

I have an interesting interview of Floyd Wilmouth who was on the LCU that took the wrong turn into Cambodia. He describes everything you mentioned. Go to my web page <http://www.transchool.eustis.army.mil/Historian/historian.htm> then click on Vietnam Studies, then Vietnam Oral History. One of the problems Wilmouth told us about getting lost was navigating without charts. They had no charts so they had to memorize the routes.

I have been interviewing lots of Vietnam veterans at reunions or by email like I am doing you. With their permission I post those interviews on the web page so others can learn from them. The VA also uses this web page to verify PTSD claims.

The vets get the most use out of this web page, but it was also done to encourage historians to research and write about TC operations, however, I don't get much feedback from historians.

From: kenneyr@comcast.net  
Date: Monday, June 7, 2010 18:23  
Subject: Re: 329th Heavy Boat Company.  
To: Richard E Mr CIV USA TRADOC Killblane

Thanks for the link to the 329th web page. I saved it and only read part of it concerning the 329th in Viet Nam. I will read it all later. I noticed that it said we arrived in Viet Nam on the USNS Gordon with personnel and boats. We were personnel only on the Gordon. The boats arrived on cargo ships as I remember it.

I also found it interesting about the 329th during the Tet offensive. I remember seeing a news broadcast at the time and saw an Army boat under fire near Hue. I didn't realize at the time that it may have been from the 329th.

I recently saw a show on History Channel about the Marines in Hue during Tet. One former Marine officer on the show talked about the help they received from the Army boats.

I also found some letters I sent my parents from Fort Eustis. The February and March letters show the 1532 in the return address but two letters I sent in April had the 1593 on the return address. I don't remember being on the 1593 but I guess we turned the 1532 over earlier than I thought. Our last days in Eustis were in barracks.

I still hope to find some old pictures and I do have some old slides. If any are interesting I will try to forward them.

Thanks, Bob.