

## **Wayne T. Holtfreter interview summary by Richard Killblane, 7 August 2008**

Holtfreter was trained a wheeled vehicle mechanic (MOS 63C) and originally assigned to Germany. He volunteered for service in Vietnam and married his high school sweetheart while home on leave.

He arrived in Vietnam on 2 February 1968 and was assigned to the 134<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company (POL) under the 240<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Battalion at Phu Tai on QL1. He was originally assigned to pipeline maintenance. But because he was rebellious, he was sent on guard duty for a month. This was boring duty for him. He then became a gauger, crawling on the fuel tanks in the tank farm and measuring the remaining fuel. He also became the driver of the officer in Charge (OIC) of night operations the tank farm.

One night in May 1968, the OIC told him to wash the jeep. Wayne told the lieutenant he would wash it in the morning. The Lieutenant told him to wash it tonight. Wayne explained that the lieutenant was going to bed and did not need the jeep until the morning so Wayne was going to bed and would have the jeep washed before the lieutenant needed it. The lieutenant did not back down and told his driver to wash it, and Wayne told the lieutenant, "Fuck you, sir!"

Consequently, Wayne Holtfreter was sent out on line haul duty where he drove a 5-ton tanker hauling a 5K tanker named "Bummer." The 134<sup>th</sup> QM had a few tankers and all were named. He remembered one named "Tiny." In May 1968, the company had one 2 ½-ton gun truck named "Sandbagger." It was built out of sandbags and the crew was armed with M60s and M14s. (The photo of the gun trucks was taken in February 1968.)

Wayne had driven a lot of trucks growing up and a day after passing the driver's test, he took a convoy to Pleiku. Their convoys did not run with those of 8<sup>th</sup> Group. Their normal runs were west to An Khe and Pleiku, to LZs Schuler, English, Uplift, ROK Son Cau, Bong Song, and once to Da Nang. The line haul mission was under the responsibility of a lieutenant.

In either September or October, they needed two convoys to deliver to two different destinations at the same time, so SP4 Wayne Holtfreter was made an acting jack sergeant and NCOIC of a convoy. For that reason the crew gave him the nickname, "AJ" for acting jack. They built the second gun truck on a 5-ton with ½-inch steel plate, a single pedestal mounted M60. The crew consisted to two to three gunners armed with M79 grenade launcher, M14s, and Thompsons. They also had one gun jeep with one M60 and no armor. The lieutenant carried a shotgun and an M79. The gun truck also served as the reaction for any attacks in the tank farm.

A convoy usually ran with six to eight tankers escorted by one gun jeep and one gun truck. They did not get hit much because they ran as fast as they could. Diesel was heavier than AVGAS and MOGAS, so he put the diesel ahead of something lighter so the other trucks could push the diesel tanker. They would drive 20 mph up mountain passes and pass 8<sup>th</sup> Group convoys. When the road leveled out, they liked to keep the interval far

enough that the dust would not obstruct the view of the tanker ahead and behind. They would get in behind 8<sup>th</sup> Group convoys running between 40-50 mph on the flats.

They would smoke a joint on the road to relax and wanted to make contact. Sometimes when hot and bored, the driver would roll the canvas top back, get up high and steer with his feet.

They were coming back empty one day and heard rounds fired, so they rolled into LZ Schuler (?). They drove fast up to the turn and when making the turn with the steering wheel, Wayne locked the "Johnny bar," back break, which would cause the fuel trailer to swing out, and as soon as it lined up with the cab, he unlocked the break and hit the gas. As he came at the gate, the MPs' eyes were wide open in amazement and fear. Wayne drove the lead truck and the other drivers did the same.

When talking about the new guys, they referred to them as "babies." Wayne lost one driver on his first convoy.

Wayne left Vietnam on 21 January 1969.