

**Subject:** 36 Trans Bn/RVN

**NOTE:** Questions posed by Transportation Center Historian, Richard Killblane and submitted by Tom Bruner.

**Q.** How did your drivers receive their taskings for the day? What time did they line up?

**A.** The drivers received their taskings from the unit truckmaster. Taskings were given to the units from the Bn S-3. Meetings were held at Bn HQs for the larger convoys to coordinate with the various units and coordinate all support such as air cover/artillery and RON site protection. TCMDs were allocated for the cargo and coordination effected for spotting of task trailers for pickup of the cargo at the depot locations. This could be days in advance of a convoy. On day of departure, all of the trailers would have been picked up and spotted in the unit motor pools, or if Class V, hooked up that morning at the ASP. Line up started from 0400 on and departure around 0600.

**Q.** Do you remember when you received the M52A2s? How did they exchange them? What was your opinion of the M52A2?

**A.** The 172d Trans Co(Med Trek Cargo) was sent to Ft Lewis when mobilized. We shipped 11 M52s to Lewis. They were not deployable and were turned in to Post. We received 39 M52s from ECS sites around the country and drew 22 M52A2s starting in May through September of 1968. Some of the A2s were new but most came from a unit being de-activated at Lewis. I tried to get all of the available A2s to replace the 52s, which were at Lewis, but to no avail. The A2 was a better truck. More power, newer, and not as maintenance prone as the 52. One of the problems with mixed tractors was in RVN, diesel fuel was the fuel of choice. Mogas was in short supply/need so we had to haul our Mogas on convey for our tractors as the forward sites had limited gas and lots of diesel. No ASL was in country for 52s so it took time to get parts in country. Engines were not available for 52s, so we washed them out for A2s as needed. The A2s were much better in the mountains as the 52 lacked power and lagged behind in many cases. The A2 would run even when it's batteries fell off where the 52 would not. Common to each was the large amount of flat tires sustained on convey.

**Q.** How many trucks and what type did you have in an average convoy? How was a convoy organized? Did you organize trucks in a convoy by companies and run the same destination each time?

**A.** Convoys varied as mission needs of the customer units dictated. Local hauls to sites within one day distance and return same day may be 10-25 units. The big convoys would be from 90 up to 180 vehicles. The task vehicles were S@Ps and POL tankers. We had up to 25 bob tails as replacement tractors for break downs. Also the trail party had wreckers and shop trucks (2 1/2 ton M35A2s) and deuce of spare tires mounted. Each serial had a five ton converted to a gun truck. M151A2s were the control vehicles and MPs used hardened 151s or had the V100 wheeled armor vehicle.

Also, one or two 3/4 ton ambulances with medics were provided and a side band radio vehicle for long range communications. Convoys were organized in about 25 vehicle march units, usually with unit integrity to facilitate C@C. Convoys were made from all units in the 36 TC Bn and the QM Bn (POL). Every day missions had to be sustained such as port clearance and local haul, so the Line Haul convoys were pieces of each unit. Line haul missions could be up to five days in length and destinations shared by all units. Air cover and recon was provided by Army fixed wing and/or Cobra/Hueys.

**Q.** What was the normal routine for drivers?

**A.** Drivers were up early, drove long hours, pulled maintenance, changed tires and helped flip S@Ps after off loading. We would flip S@Ps over onto another S@P and chain down. This would free up tractors to tow breakdowns back and also strip tires off for more spare tires. We slept at RON sites by trucks and ate C rations on the road. Nights drivers also pulled security if RON site was not secure, such as at Dalat. It was hot, dirty/dusty driving. Also I must say that the mechanics were also heroes in their part in repairing and retrieving equipment on the road. They worked long into the night fixing for the next day.

**Q.** Did you lead convoys every day? If so, how were you able to run your company? Where did you position yourself in the convoy and why?

**A.** C&C of convoys alternated between units, thus allowing commanders breaks to allow routine company business to be conducted. Positioning in convoys was normally about a third of the way front. This allowed us to go forward quickly or back as needs allowed.

**Q.** Did your company build any guntrucks? How did you build and crew them? What were their names?

**A.** Each company built a five ton cargo gun truck using the M54. Rig mount in cab for 50 cal mg, armor kit for cab, and the cargo bed had 2x6x2' plank enclosure filled with sand. Gunned with two M-60 mg and 40 mm grenade launchers. Crewed by unit members. I don't recall the names.

**Q.** What changes did LTC Honor make while in command and how did they effect operations?

**A.** He was much more laid back than the previous commander, which was great. He was not a micro manger and allowed input from all levels to base his decisions on. I think he respected the troops on the ground and their experience and provided his support and resources and trust which made us want to be successful on our own. He transformed his staff to a service staff rather than a direct order staff, forming a team effort atmosphere. He could overlook the "Army" way and accept reality and what made good sense given the situation. He was a very good commander.

**Q.** What other memorable events took place during your tour?

**A.** The infusion of personnel from other units into the 172d Trans Co was the hardest thing for us. This was done to preclude a rotational hump at tour end and lose an entire unit. There for 25% of the unit was transferred out each month for three months in the Spring of '69 with a like amount of troops coming in to the unit. This was a good time for the other units to cull out not their best troops. This was very hard on moral for a USAR unit. Fortunately, it took place within the Bn, so all remained close. Also, most of our troops made rank faster in the other units, as they were excellent soldiers and recognized as such. The unit maintained the best readiness level and lowest rate of discipline problems in the Bn. The unit received a Meritorious Unit Commendation for its work in RVN for which we are very proud of. The unit also was nominated by LTC Honor for the NDTA Award for best unit.

**Q.** Who were some of the more memorable people you worked with and why?

**A.** In addition to LTC Honor, it would be the NCO's and personnel of the company. It was a very small circle of contacts I had at the unit level. Our 1st Sgt was an outstanding NCO. First Sgt Alan Robertson was assigned to us at Ft Lewis. He was an infantryman with CIB/two stars. He had been a POW in Korea and this was his third tour in RVN. The troops loved him as did I. He was tough but fair and developed leadership in all of us. He was very proud of "his reservists"

***Tom Bruner***