



JOSEPH L. HOOD
Spec. 4 – U.S. Army
Vietnam War

Joseph “Joe” Hood, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joseph D. Hood of Mercer, entered the U.S. Army on June 3, 1971 and served until March 4, 1974. He recounts that although he was a young 24 year old in Vietnam, he was referred to as one of the old guys since most of the troops over there were in the 18 and 19 year old range. He had graduated from Mercer High School and Grove City College and married just 3 weeks before shipping out to Vietnam.

Hood served Basic Training at Fort Dix, New Jersey and AIT at Fort Jackson, South Carolina before heading overseas to Vietnam. His plane landed in Tan Son Nhut Air Base and he was assigned for the first 3 months to the 272nd Military Police (also known as the “Fighting Duce”) supporting the Adjutant General. After the MP Company was broken up and shipped back to the states, Joe Hood was reassigned to MACV Team 21 on Artillery Hill Fire Base near Pleiku. During a major attack in May of 1972 (Eastertide Offensive) his group was evacuated to Nha Trang. He was one of the few who were called back to Pleiku where he was involved with supporting the South Vietnamese (ARVN) guerilla warfare combat troops. There was a major North Vietnamese force where over 200 Viet Cong tanks surrounded Kontum in an effort to cut

the forces and the country in half which would have forced Hood and the others out into the ocean. Neither the Americans nor the South Vietnamese had tank support at their disposal. The Air Patrol support from B52 strikes was the only thing that saved them from being over run until the ARVN Rangers organized and took on support, miraculously holding the town.

In recalling other impacting factors, Hood recalls the 6 months of constant monsoon rains (probably the worst monsoon they had experienced in Vietnam in 100 yrs) and nights that were so black you couldn't see your hand in front of your face – it was all really depressing. The snakes and the mosquitoes were a constant and their encounter with a 300# Black and White Bengal Tiger stands out in his mind. He remembers the South Vietnamese soldiers would bring their whole family with them as they moved throughout the country hunting down the Viet Cong and engaging in guerilla warfare. The ARVN often dressed in just civilian attire and it seemed like all the women were pregnant.....you could never really tell who was friendly and who was the enemy.

When Hood returned stateside he worked in a “Confinement Facility” at Fort Ord, California where he was joined by his wife, Bonnie. He kept contact with many of his friends who were still in Vietnam. He recalls that the day the “peace truce” was signed, his friends found that the Viet Cong were directly across the street and coming for the American troops next – hours separated them from the attack and the peace truce being enacted.

Joseph Hood and his wife Bonnie are the parents of daughter Erin (Kevin) Fink, a son, Chris Hood and 2 grandchildren.