

Just remember -- this is a TINS and some details may be "slightly" distorted with the years.

I. G. INSPECTION IN RVN

By [Bruce E Carlson](#)

Old friend John Hargelroad suggested that I write about this minor incident in the history of Lane Army Heliport. If any of you were there and remember it, please forgive me. It was a long time ago.

Ole John has suggested, to those of you on the net, that I wasn't allowed to fly formation with the rest of Charley Troop for blatantly false reasons. He falsely claims that it was because of the possible unstable nature of the custom made explosive devices that I occasionally carried on board my little Red Bird. Well, you all know John, he likes to embellish upon a simple story. Truthfully, I was forced to fly with the Scouts because I was dangerous in formation and a Huey was far too much helicopter for my limited skills. Being a loner by nature, I much preferred being close to trees rather than other helicopters. Therefore, the driving my little Loach for Scouts served my needs well.

Being unconcerned about my reputation, be it good or bad, among my brother rotor-heads, John wants me to tell you how I ended up in the Major's office . . . AGAIN! Gawd, I got so tired of beginning my conversations with the good Major with words like this. "Well, Sir. . . You see, it was like this . . ." Shoot, it seemed that I was in his office so often that I had my own coffee cup on his shelf. Thankfully, I was a decent Scout and they couldn't find anyone dumb enough to replace me. If I hadn't been somewhat effective, I would have been the only Army Aviation Warrant on full-time defecation incineration and disposal duty. Well, that's another story for another time.

Our story begins with a near fatal lapse of command responsibility. This whole situation was not my fault. THEY MADE ME DO IT!

Though I am sure that the good Major later deeply questioned his sanity, he assigned me as the Ordnance Officer for our little Scout platoon. Oh, let's be kind and defend the Major. Most likely the admin officer or the XO shoved a piece of paper on his desk to OK. Then with the flourish of one each, green in color, ball-point in style Army issue pen, Bruce got the job. At first blush, it wouldn't seem as if ole Bruce could get into too much trouble handling that little job. Shoot, all he was responsible for was a few mini-guns, a few CAR-15s, about a dozen M-60s, and a single conex and a small bunker with some smoke grenades et. al. Most likely, a moderately sane RLO could have handled the task with little or no activity.

However ----- Bruce was neither moderately sane, nor a was he an RLO. The poor Major had unwittingly sent the proverbial fox to guard the vulnerable and venerable hen house. Please allow me to regress, for a brief moment. I have carefully studied my family tree. Try as I might, I can find no evidence of fore parents with larceny in their hearts.

Furthermore, I can find none with a level of insecurity that causes them to rat-pack everything that they might need "someday." Lastly, my family tree contains nobody who liked to blow things up. Therefore, I am either a deep genetic throwback of countless generations or I was adopted. In either case, my parents should be held blameless for my "slight" oversights and misdeeds.

Returning to the coming crime, I quickly went to work. My first work rule as the ordnance Officer was that enough is never enough. Therefore, I continually committed myself to getting more. As an Aviation Warrant, I had heard vague rumors of something called a TO&E. As best I understood, it was not a part of a foot. Beyond that, it was a foreign concept. It was all well and good for someone in the five-sided-funnyfarm-on-the-Potomac say how many bullets and things that go bang are needed by an Aero Scout. However, I was an Aero Scout and I had other ideas on the conduct of the Aero war.

Before I continue any further, please be assured that I had assistance in my endeavors. Being new at this Army Aviation Ordinance thing my back-seater, ole Scotty, a hard stripe five with a bit more experience than I, assisted. Only a non-Scout can possibly question the veracity of the following statement. A Scout platoon can never have a sufficient number of mini-guns or M-60. Therefore, every time that we combat lossed a Loach, it was heavily armed. I always claimed that it was configured with a left and right hand side Mini-gun and with four hand-held M-60s. (Possibly, the dual mini-gun equipped Loach is a wee bit much. Old people occasionally get little details mixed up. Though, we did struggle with the idea of equipping a wing ship that way.) The only flaw in my system is that I usually was the one combat-losing the Loachs. Then again, who should know its configuration than the pilot who was flying it. (Side note. When I went to lead, I never flew with a mini-gun. However, each time I went down, I lost one.)

Of course, like everyone else when we lost a ship, if possible, we stripped it. Being deeply aware of the weakness of the supply system, we always reported everything on the ship from chicken plates to foot powder combat lost. I'm sure that some other units did the same thing. Fortunately, the powers to be never added up the weight that our lost Loachs must have been carrying. True, I flew my Loach very very very heavy. However, even a Loach driver of my epic-quality and world-class skill could not make an eight-thousand pound Loach stagger into the air.

With larceny in my heart and a Yankee trader's willingness to dicker, I went to work. Our "D" Troop, equipped as ground Cav, really loved to put mini-guns on their Dodge three-quarter ton trucks. They were called weapons carriers. Right! Using a mini ran the batteries down quickly. But . . . it sure was effective when mated with their fifty cal's mounted on jeeps. Ah, my dear friends, lean back and think for a minute. How much stuff that goes boom in the night, do you think, that I could get for a good mini with feeder/delinker, electrical harnesses, and two thousand round ammo tray. STAGGERS THE MIND DOESN'T IT!!!!!!!!!!!!

I felt no shame. All my effort was for the war effort.

Things were going well. I was beginning to establish some contacts with the Koreans who thought a little extra firepower might be useful. They were also interested in additional M-60s. Because they provided security for our little spot on God's green earth, I felt morally responsible to help them. (More about that later.) In fact, I was beginning to put out some feelers with the Air Force. I knew that they dropped some stuff from their starched wing birds that made very big noises. I wanted some. If I got some, I was sure that Scotty and I would figure a way to deliver the mail to our friends from the north. First things first. I wanted to get some of those big noise makers. (Moment of truth. In the Army, there are some things which are best left to the NCOs. For the most part, Scotty checked with me and I approved his deals. I did very little of the wheeling and dealing. Ole Bruce lacked the good connections. Later, when I was a Maintenance Officer I found the same approach worked well. A good NCO with connections is worth his weight in gold!)

All was going well. Scotty was creating some very interesting and creative explosive concoctions which I chose not to know too much about. Some of you have spoken of the various non-standard combinations. I was always partial to a gallon of outdated hydraulic fluid wrapped with an assortment of C-4, Comp B, ten pound warheads, and Willie Pete grenades. It usually would create a nice hole and make some good flames. As we bold and brave Scouts were gleefully furthering the war effort by making all the loud explosions that we could, some staff weenie rained on our parade.

An Inspector General's visit! In Vietnam! You gotta be kidding me! NOPE! When I first heard about it, I thought the RLOs were pulling my tender and foolish leg.

I wasn't too sure what it was going to be all about. However, I got suspicious that I wouldn't like it when my platoon commander got nervous. He shared his uncomfortable feelings with the XO. In turn the XO shared them with the Major. The next day we weren't flying. If memory serves me well, we had taken a couple of days to get ready for the IG. (The growing cynic in me loved it. Call off the war for an IG inspection.) Suddenly from down by my precious bunkers, I heard my name loudly used in vain. The XO had discovered the full extent of my stash. He was good. Most of the pilots didn't know about it. It had been a well kept secret between Scotty and the other back-seaters and myself. (I think it was one of those "don't ask don't tell" situations.) One conex and one small ammo bunker had grown to three or four conexs and two very large bunkers.

I was informed to get rid of all my expletive deleted "ill gotten" gains. "Jimmey H. Christmas, what am I going to do with it, Sir?" He wasn't much help. RLOs tend to be like that when we poor simple-minded Warrants have a problem. He spoke cryptically. "I don't know and I don't care. Give it back. Get rid of it. As to the extra ammo, you've got a couple of days. You can blow it at the firing range like you have before." If the fireworks were too old, too unstable, or Chicom, I wasn't adverse to blowing it. As much as I hated getting rid of my goodies, I wasn't worried about it. This was Vietnam and we had lots of stuff that went bang. One only had to know how and where to look.

The stage was almost set. Now you impatient types, settle down. When you jump to the

so-called bottom line or conclusions, you miss all the fun and subtleties of the ride. I know. I know. You already know what happened.

Continuing on with my little saga. Mrs. Carlson's little boy was a very luck boy. While my days were interesting in as much as I daily communicated with the boys from the north, my nights were quiet. It was said that there was no rear area in Vietnam. I do not concur. Lane Army Heliport was always safely tucked in for the night and well behind friendly lines. Setting just a few clicks outside of Qui Nhon, we slept just as safe as if we were in our mommies' arms. We had no personnel bunkers within the compound! We didn't need any. Base security was handled by the ROKs. They had thoroughly eradicated and exterminated all the vermin in the country side. If perchance some survived, they dared not hit us. Never a rocket, mortar round, or bullet penetrated our perimeter. Lane was wondrously quiet. (The one obnoxious exception was those dang hooks running their screaming APUs all night.)

To continue with the setting, Lane was comfortable tucked into 270 degrees of steep hills. Militarily I am not sure that it was a very defensible position. However, generally speaking it was well sheltered from the weather and the bothersome noise and confusion of the war. The only booming noises came from occasional use of the rifle range, the 129's "Charley model Cobras" sighting in a few rockets against one of the hills, and our Snakes doing the same. Oh yea, occasionally Bruce and Scotty would do a little EOD stuff on the firing range. Those of you on the net, who served at Lane, can confirm the wondrous idyllic setting.

The XO had spoken. Scotty and I drafted a few of the ole Scouts to give us a hand. I can't remember for sure. Possibly we found a sympathetic pilot or two to also give us a hand. After a bit of sweat and hard work, we emptied the conex's. Someone, much smarter than I, knew what our TO&E was. We carefully reloaded the smallest of the the conex's with what ole Mac's "Wiz Kids" said we needed. Scrambling about, we did our best to hide the rest of our "stuff." My Yankee trader's blood wasn't about to give away what I had worked so hard to get. (I'm not a supporter of the Democratic party. I believe that a man should keep what he earns. We had worked hard to gather that stash together.) For the life of me, I don't remember where we hid most of it. I'm sure we didn't ask the 129th to hide it for us. That band of thieves would have robbed me blind.

I do remember the bad time my hooch mates gave me that night. Saying that I had been in the Scouts too long, they accused me of being paranoid. I know that my platoon commander took one look and told me that he hadn't seen anything and that if the IG caught me he would disavow any knowledge of me being under his command. That night, I slept on top of three complete XM-27 mini-gun assemblies. Talk about a lumpy bed. YES! They were unloaded. Despite rumors to the contrary, I was and am not that stupid.

As to my ammo bunkers. I believe that we managed to camouflage one of them. I can't remember exactly how. We probably buried it and shoved a couple "NOT TO BE USED" round vertical urine receptacles in the loose dirt. Despite our best efforts, we were left

with an overflowing duce-and-a-half of things that go bang. Well . . . the XO said that we could blow it the next day. That gave us the whole day to take care of the problem. Scotty volunteered to take care of our little EOD problem. I should have been suspicious. However . . . I was tired. Physical labor and I have never gotten along.

Again, if my memory is to be trusted, it was about 07:00. YEP! You guessed it. At 07:00 Scotty created the biggest bang that we had ever created. The ROKs went on full alert. People fell out of their bunks. Stereos and speakers went crashing to the floor. The nice "U" shaped hills which protected Lane directed the full force of the blast inward. Our Officer hooches were the closest to the blast site. People ran about trying to break the rust off their hand guns. When I landed back upon my comfortable bed of mini-guns, I groaned and agony. And . . . it wasn't because it hurt to land on the minis.

Untangling myself from my mosquito netting, I threw on my flight suit, laced up my boots, and jamming my hat on my head, started toward the Major's office. He was going to be mad enough at me. I didn't want to keep him waiting.

"Well, Sir. . . You see, it was like this . . . The XO said . . . Scottie and I . . ." As I remember, he poured me a cup of coffee and we discussed my "questionable" future in the Army.

Looking back, I remain thankful that there were few people stupid enough to fly Scouts. Otherwise, I would have be telling you all about the only Army Aviation Warrant in Vietnam on full-time defecation incineration and disposal duty.

Oh yes. I no longer blow things up and there is little or no larceny in my heart. However . . . as a point of confession, I still rat-pack stuff.