

0300 I dozed off and the last thing I recall was Sgt. Maj. Plumley draping his poncho liner over me. That great grizzly bear — veteran of three wars — tucking me in like one of his grandsons. When I awoke I was



First Lt. Walter J. Marm, Jr. won Medal of Honor for a single-handed assault on PAVN position while attempting relief of cut-off platoon. Photo: U.S. Army

men would have to make it through the night on their own.

The reinforcements — Bravo Company of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cav — lifted into the LZ at dark.

Back at LZ Falcon, I ran into the familiar figure of Capt. Matt Dillon, Moore's ops officer and a man I had chatted with on that hike into the hills: "Matt, I've got to get in there."

He shook his head but when I kept after him he said he would put it to Col. Moore. In the ops tent Dillon got on the radio and

told Moore that he was coming in with a final load of ammo and water in two choppers: "And that reporter Galloway wants to come along." Moore responded that if I was that crazy and there was room on a chopper to let me come.

Shortly after 2000, 14 November, we lifted off LZ Falcon bound for X-Ray. I sat on a stack of cases of ammo and hand grenades. The rest of the load was C-rats and plastic five-gallon containers of water.

We came in low and fast and on the way down I saw flashes of light up and down the

mountainside that I was sure were muzzle flashes. Dillon saw them too but reckoned they were signal lamps to guide PAVN reinforcements down the mountain to the killing ground. Either way the sight was not reassuring.

We grazed the trees dropping into the LZ and then were on the ground bailing out into the darkness. I grabbed the boxes I had been sitting on and threw them out. In seconds the supplies were out, wounded on and the pilots hauling out.

A gruff voice came out of the dark as Dillon and I stood up. "Watch where you walk. There are a lot of dead bodies around and they're all American." That was my introduction to Sgt. Maj. Basil Plumley of Columbus, Ga. It was his battalion and those were his dead.

Plumley guided us to the patch of ant hills and trees where Moore's CP was located. Fires lit the distant slopes of Chu Pong. Artillery rounds came in with that strange sound that always reminds me of freight trains moving by at a distance.

Hal Moore shook my hand and pulled me down beside him. "I don't know why you wanted to come but you're here and you're welcome. Things are tough and they're likely to get a lot tougher."

Moore told me of Herrick's platoon up on the ridge and said they and we would spend the night in a ring of artillery fire to keep the PAVN off our backs. Flare ships were on call and Puff the Magic Dragon would be around to hose the bad guys with his miniguns.

The CP group had their backs against a decent-sized ant hill. Nobody was dug in except the Vietnamese Kit Carson scout who had burrowed into that ant hill until not even his boot soles were visible — and happily remained there for the rest of the battle.

I picked me out a nice tree and leaned back against it, watching and listening and loading some clips for Charlie Beckwith's M16. Sometime between midnight and 0300 I dozed off and the last thing I recall was Sgt. Maj. Plumley draping his poncho liner over me. That great grizzly bear — veteran of three wars — tucking me in like one of his grandsons. When I awoke I was almost buried beneath a layer of leaves, twigs and branches cut out of the trees overhead by passing shrapnel.

Up on his ridge, Clyde Savage had walked the arty right up on top of his thin lines and hunkered down. He found he was in a good spot to keep an eye on the PAVN as they organized their attacks against the LZ and he took some pleasure in adjusting the 105 battery fire to scramble things up for the PAVN every chance he got. Beginning around 0345 the Lost Platoon had to fight off a series of PAVN charges signalled by bugle calls.

Down below we stirred in the darkness. Col. Moore was hoping that elements of 2nd Battalion, 5th Cav, poised at LZ Victor, could lift in to reinforce at daybreak. No such luck.

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