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US Navy –ATR2
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Hal 3 (Seawolves) Vietnam – May 1970- July 1971
Home Town: DeLeon, Texas

In March 1970 I my first assignment out of AT (Avionics Technical) School was VF-121 in Miramar, California. This was to be a one year duty station. In October several of us were given a recruitment talk about volunteering for a helicopter unit in Viet Nam. Hal-3. Benefits included, combat pay, hazards duty pay, all pay tax free, and each year with Hal-3 would count as 2 years of Sea Duty. The benefits and a chance to fly made the whole thing sound like an adventure worth volunteering for. When you're 21 and immortal adventure has little personnel danger.

Before the Film:

My first assignment with HAL (3) was at Binh Thuy, Viet Nam. Binh Thuy was home base for the Hal-3 Seawolf Squadron. There were 9 Detachments around the Delta using refurbished Army helos. You may notice some differences in the paint jobs on the different Seawolves in the film.

Det 1 – Nam Can – “Solid Anchor”

In January of 1971 I was assigned to Seawolf Detachment 1 at Nam Can. Located on the Cu Lon River Det 1 had originally only staged there during the day. At that time it was referred to as “Sea float”. Once the base was complete the Seawolves moved in and it became “Solid Anchor”. The Cu Lon was to the south west of the base and a canal to the east left Solid Anchor wedged in the middle of a V with 300 yards of open ground to the North and North East.

Film Information:

There were two hoochs for the Seawolves. An enlisted hooch and an Officers Hooch. The O and E hoochs were both located next to the helo revetment. The film begins at Nam Can. The enlisted hooch is on the left and Officers hooch is on the right. Being this close to the revetments made since I suppose but it meant we were actually outside the base. It placed us between the base and jungle. After Det 3 was over run at Son Ong Doc we did put a heavy barb wire fence around the hoochs and fortified our mortar bunker with a 50 cal. Machine gun. Although we received a number of mortar attacks there was never a serious attempt to over run “Solid Anchor”.

It was important to be close to our helos. When there was a need for us to answer the “scramble” alarm we would be airbourn in less than 5 mins.

Early in the film is a picture of the runway, landing pad, and revetments at Nam Can.

The smoke off was a common way to send off a departing Seawolf Officer or Gunner. Tour of Duty over for an Officer or Gunner and we would all "pop" a couple of smoke grenades as a final farewell salute.

Our flight team consisted of 2 helos. The helos were equipped all most the same. Both would have a rocket pod on each side, a pylon mounted mini-gun, M-60 left door and the right door would have 50cal for the lead bird and a door mounted Mini-gun in the trail bird. The left door's M-60 was mounted such that a screwdriver was all the held it on its mount. This made it easy to remove for conversion into a free hand M-60. In the film you'll notice that both the 50 cal. and free hand M-60 are being fired out the right door.

LST off the coast

Earlier on most of the Seawolf detachments were stationed on LSTs. By 1971 the LST were more of a place of safe haven should we loose our land base. They did have good beer and chow so we always like to make trips to them just for the supplies we could get.

Mike Keith a 50 gunner eats an apple on the way to Ca Mau. Waiting for our mission to get underway Mike takes a restroom break. The small white patch on the tail boom is a patched bullet hole. Masking tape was a common way we patched these holes.

Our primary mission was close Air support for Special Forces units such as Seal Teams and PBRs. We were involved in many other operations too but when there were no missions scheduled we would do patrols in our area of operation (AO). Our Area of operation was a jungle area on the southern tip of Vietnam. Our daily routine included patrols of this area. We would occasionally get lucky and catch Charlie moving supplies through the area.

Our method of patrol would be for the lead bird to fly at tree top level and the trail bird in support at about 1500 ft. Trolling at treetop level didn't give the enemy time to get a good shot at you but if they tried it gave us their position. The area we patrolled was heavily used to transport weapons and supplies and there were not suppose to be civilians in the area. There were many strips of defoliated areas but there was plenty of thick jungle cover for the bad guys to hide in too. Trolling was only one method we used to find "Charlie". Smelling or seeing smoke was a dead give away that Charlie had a campfire going. A sampan next to vacant hooch was also sign of enemy present.

On my last patrol we followed a fresh foot trail leading from a defoliated area into a jungle area. I spotted a sampan and popped a smoke to mark the spot. As we came around to inspect closer we received small arms fire and engaged the enemy. As often happened we placed strikes on the area until we received no more return fire never knowing if we had taken out the enemy or they had simply decided it was wiser to quit shooting.

After landing at Nam Cam I say good bye to my friend and constant companion, my faithful M-60. There are two patched bullet holes visible in the tail boom.