

Fish In A Barrel

By [Gary Reviczky](#) CWO Ret

It was still dark in the morning just at the end of the monsoon season in I Corps 1968 when we were roused out of our bunks located in the closest GP medium to the flight line. After a quick bite in the barely open chow hall (another GP medium tent) the AC and I completed our preflight of a UH1 gunship and were preparing for “first light” patrol.

Someone had decided it was a good idea for a gunship from D Co 229th Avn Bn, 1st Cav Div. and a brigade scout LOH to run a patrol starting at LZ Sharon located just across the river from Quang Tri City heading South along Hwy 1 to somewhere between Hai Lang and the Giang river then east toward the beach turning north a few clicks from the Gulf of Tonkin then working our way just east of Quang Tri then home. Roughly 1.8 hours right?

I’m pretty sure the aircraft commander that day was Jim Workman but I do know for sure as I was in the right seat. It was a beautiful morning and watching the sunrise over the South China Sea was spectacular especially after seeing it rain for the last few months. As I recall the mission was pretty uneventful just watching the LOH tread his way along the river banks, crossing alternatively between occupied villages and some that were burned out during TET just a few months prior.



As usual, the chatter on the radio was a running dialog between the LOH and the AC describing what the LOH saw and sometimes getting a course correction from AC when we saw something from above that looked interesting.

As we worked along a long area of sand dunes with blotches of standing water LOH told us that he saw a guy with a rake just walking away from the beach area like he had no care in the world. LOH said he was going to back track the guy to see what he was doing out here in the early dawn with a rake. After a short while LOH said hey this guy has been raking in the sand. I see several areas that are obviously fresh but the guy did not have a bucket or anything to harvest anything with. I wonder what he was doing out here.

AC said why not throw a frag down on one of the spots and see what happens? So LOH did and what a surprise. Two Viet Cong crawled out of what was no larger than a 55 gallon drum and out onto the beach sand. AC dropped down to 300’ or so where we could keep a close eye on those guys in case they tried to shoot at us or something. After we settled down, LOH let off another frag 50 meters away and guess what – 2 more guys crawled out. AC radioed wait – stop, don’t throw any more frags because if we get too many people out on the sand we won’t be able to watch them all.

We called brigade HQ and told them what we had and that there were quite a number of these raking sites out here. So they scrambled the blues (1/9 Cav) and within 20 minutes we had troops on the ground and a fresh set of gunships on site. We had to go refuel. When we returned we escorted a CH54 flying crane sling loading a bulldozer underneath with a big rake on the back.

They raked over the beach area and found quite a number of Viet Cong hiding in barrels all over the place. It was pretty exciting to be part of something like that where we were able to capture enemy soldiers, gather excellent intelligence and not have to get shot at in the process.

My only frustration with missions like that where we have found caches of equipment or personnel is that we never were able to find out what the outcome of it all was. The attached photos taken by me, peter pilot, show the initial 2 guys sitting on the sand where we discovered them, then a group of 1/9 troops mixed in and the third photo is of the Crane bringing the bulldozer to finish the discovery work.



Over the next 18 months in country I'd have the opportunity to be in on catching enemy combatants two additional times – but never like having fish in a barrel.