

RVN 1968 68th AHC  
By [Douglas S. Decker](#)

This is one of many events from flying helicopters in the Republic of Viet Nam in 1968. This event took place sometime between May and December 1968.

Action: 2 ship formation  
Location: SE of Song Be mountain at Special Forces airstrip and camp.  
WO1 Dennis Day was AC of lead ship. WO1 Doug Decker was AC of wing ship. We were supporting Special Forces operations for a DCS day. DCS is Direct Combat Support. We assigned ourselves to this mission as I was the assignment officer and both of us liked supporting the SF. One ship was usually for ash and trash and the other to support the command staff and/or the Col. The time frame was late morning or noon. Weather was high clouds above 5000 feet, clear visibility. We were 3000 feet and close; make that tight formation, 2-rotor disk or less formation. We had been joined by SF to move something prior to this little event. At times SF used us for special jobs, emergency re-supply, evacuation of wounded and take replacements into a unit in contact. Most of the time with no gun support. (Later, more about a special mission that Dennis flew with F-100 and B52 s for gun support!)

Dennis and I flew together a lot, when I came into the unit as a new pilot. I also flew with WO1 Ski a lot in my training time. When I made AC I was already the platoon pilot scheduler for crews and aircraft assignments. Since I didn't drink, I was at least sober and could make some rational assignments. I also got the platoon aircraft availability list each day, then walked to the flight line to check log books for ready status, hours available and just double check. I never had a reason to check any further as the great crews (CE and G) always had all in order and maintenance had made available the aircraft with the hour level needed.

Ok, enough background. There we were 3000 feet, lead calls, we are starting the approach and we go into a steep spiraling turn and roll out on short final at the north end of the runway and just to the side, the dust boils up and we are in a brown out and all I can see is the area through the left chin bubble as we touch down in the exact same formation as we started with and kept throughout the turning. We were lightly loaded if anything other than standard crew. Not heavy that was for sure. The fun and remembering part was the close formation, as one aircraft. It was so neat a maneuver and worth remembering and only because Dennis and I had flown together so much and were always on top of our job and tasks.

When I flew company formation with Dennis (when I was his copilot), he was usually chalk 2, our job was to keep in radio contact with Red Leg artillery control to keep the flight, 10 ships usually, clear of the GT and impact zones. GT is Gun-Target line. Also as chalk 2 we were to be flight lead at any time if lead

became unable to lead the flight, either breakdown or shot up/down. We also flew trail and B flight lead, flying in the slot as the 2nd lead.

Lead and chalk 1 A flight  
Chalk 3 Chalk 2  
Chalk 5 Chalk 4  
B flight lead tucked  
in line with flight lead and equal spaced between 4 and 5.

Using this formation we could change from a V formation to stagger left or right depending on the next turn lead had to make to landing. A couple of months later, I was doing all of these positions as the AC and was training another co-pilot.

Dennis and I loved to fly. He still does.



1968 Top Tigers Song Be Mountain