

The Face of War

I sketched this moment of intense survival from a photo that was given to me by our special forces photographer, Tom Shinton. He was caught in the same three sided ambush with me and the other men of our Mobile Riverine (River Raiders) Assault Force One. After giving successful medical assistance to the severely wounded casualty that is being rushed to the waiting medivac helicopter, my helmet and half facial image was captured in Shinton's photo as I returned to another casualty in the foreground, and that I later converted into this real life sketch of the Face of War.

The extensive story report of this fierce bloody battle was recorded in both Time, and Newsweek magazines. There were over two hundred casualties among my friends and comrades that day. Even though I was one of the wounded at its beginning, I managed to control the bleeding and remain thankfully able, throughout the length and breadth of that conflict, to remain directly connected as a field medical leader to so many who were struggling to survive - as they reached out for both my continued medical assistance and the spiritual and emotional encouragement that I was also able to share.

To the best of my ability and gradually diminishing physical strength, I was somehow able to provide this form of help as I moved across to different field locations for so many of my heroic wounded friends and also on that same picture frame of war, for the other courageous men that I was regretfully unsuccessful in my attempt to save as they breathed their last words and breath in my presence on that dark, cloudy, most unforgettable and longest day of my life.

In every form of honest evaluation, there is no adequate translation to the eye-to-eye bloody encounters that I and my courageous friends experienced in this and so many other engagements along the rivers and mangroves of Vietnam's Mekong Delta. Perhaps the most effective interpretation for me is reflected in the reality mix of courage and also the helpless fatigued "what's it all about" face image of the young man on the left side of this sketch. Both realities say it all!

Field Medical "Doc"
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1967-68