

Following a week long visit with Mike Wilson in 1998 (see The Dark Angry Secrets of Mike and Doc), Medic wrote a statement of support for Mike's VA disability claim. After a brief illness, Mike died in 2017.

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### Eyewitness Account

#### **Statement in Support of Claim for Charles (Mike) Wilson**

My name is Marc Levy. I was the medic in 3/6 platoon, Delta Company, 1st Battalion 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, Viet Nam/Cambodia, 1970. The following statement is made to substantiate psychological and physical service-connected compensation claims Mr. Wilson is making to the Veterans Administration.

When I first came in country (26 November 1969) I was immediately assigned from HHC to D1/7, at that time operating off LZ Compton, located near the Cambodian border. Mike was the RTO for the third platoon; I was the replacement medic. He helped to break me in during my first critical weeks in combat. I estimate that during the time I was in combat with Mike we engaged in forty (40) to fifty (50) firefights and ambushes, and were mortared and rocketed at least a dozen times. In Viet Nam we operated in Song Be Province, which included An Loc, Loc Ninh, Song Be, Tay Ninh and Bo Dop. On May 10th, 1970 our unit flew into Cambodia, where we saw almost constant action until we walked out, forty six (46) days later. Our unit was overrun on LZ Ranch in Cambodia, when Mike got one of three Bronze stars for Valor. I was with Mike the day he got hit. This is what happened:

About noon the CO, Capt. Leland Hyslop, ordered us to form a perimeter and wait for some choppers to drop chain saws. Tom Cleland, the M-79 man in our platoon had to be extracted. We were one platoon short, as 4/6 had been ordered back to Bo Dop. In the event, we were deep in the jungle when about six grunts started to saw down trees, using the chain saws that had been dropped by a Huey. The idea was to create an PZ (Pick Up Zone) just large enough for one bird to come in and extract Tom. The chain saws made a tremendous amount of noise. I joined a machine gun position made up of Larry Roy, Mike, Rudy Estrada, Larry Williams (E-6) and Joe Dorrio, a sniper who had gone out twenty meters on OP. The M-60 had been placed behind some fallen logs that served as cover. I set down behind a large mound of dirt and tangled wood formed by an uprooted tree. All of a sudden Dorrio came running in, yelling "Gooks!...Gooks!" I saw one run past and got off a few rounds. They were right in front of us, and started to hit us with AK fire. Mike yelled to me, "Doc, look to the left, they're gonna try to outflank us." Mike, Larry Roy and the E-6 would raise up and shoot from behind the fallen logs. Rudy worked the gun. Every so often I looked out to the left. The small arms fire was quite intense. Mike and Larry Roy were yelling and screaming at the dinks, cursing them, then yelling with hysterical glee when one of the dinks got hit.

Then there was a lull in the firefight and we heard 82mm mortar tubes popping. Capt. Hyslop came round, checking the positions. Then the mortars started to drop, crashing down in 2/6 sector. About



ten or twelve dropped, then someone screamed "Medic!" Then the dinks in front of us opened up again with AK fire and Mike and Larry Roy, Rudy and the E-6 would raise up and shoot, then duck down, the dinks were so close; we were all terrified. Then Larry Williams got hit in the foot and I low crawled over and patched him up, then crawled back and kept an eye on the left flank. There was an unspoken agreement in my platoon: the grunts gave me slack in case they got hit and needed first aid. The shooting continued, then we heard a short click or snapping noise. It was a Chicom grenade. Instead of pulling a pin, the dinks would pull a string, which primed it. They'd wait a few seconds, then throw it. Everyone yelled, "Grenade," and hugged the ground. About five seconds later it blew, falling short and blowing up the machine gun. I saw it. The gun was just mangled steel; dust and splinters of wood filtering back to the ground. Still, no one was hit.

There was more small arms fire. Mike and the others were worked up, screaming curses and shooting at the dinks all at the same time. The position to the left of ours got hit and was out of action, but we didn't know it till later. It may have been a B-40. Then Larry Roy yelled to me, "Doc, toss me a grenade," since I was the only one in the position that had them near to hand, and I threw him one and he pulled the pin, let it cook a few seconds, then hurled it into the jungle in front of us.

There was another brief lull after it blew. Then, unbelievably, the dinks opened up again, and there was another snapping noise, and everyone yelled "Grenade!" and this time it fell just past the logs and Dorrio and Larry Roy and Rudy and Larry Williams scrambled over to where I was and threw themselves on top of me. The explosion seemed to lift us up maybe an inch or so off the ground. Everyone got hit, though Mike was last and he and Williams got it the worst. I thought they were both dead. I rolled everyone off of me and started spraying my 16 into the woodline. There was no return fire and we could hear 105mm shells coming in from Bo Dop and the whir of a Cobra not far off. Then Blue Max came in and the dinks retreated and it was all over.

Before going out to recon I helped Medivac Mike and Larry Williams, using my GI hammock as a litter to get them onto the first Dust Off. Dorrio had shrap around his eyes but I wouldn't let him go back, we were down to nine men in the platoon. Rudy and Larry Roy were concussed but it wasn't serious. Dorrio cursed me out because I wouldn't let him go and complained to the head medic, Roy Abbott, who sent him back on the next evac. A day or so later I found a few small slivers of shrap in my shoulder. I was so lucky I never said anything.

I remember patching up Mike's eye before he got hit because it was bothering him. I recall that it had something to do with getting cut by bamboo. I used drops and ointment, but nothing worked. Roy Abbott, the Head Medic may have taken a look at it and that may have been how Mike got sent back. My understanding is that if it hadn't been treated in the rear he would have lost it. Then they sent him back out to us.



Mike had been pretty brave that day we took two grenades. He got another Bronze Star when LZ Ranch got overrun and he and Capt. Hyslop went *outside* the berm and killed a few dinks in the wire. They were sappers who'd gotten past the trips and Claymores in 4/6 sector because the woodline was less than fifty meters away and 4/6 hadn't butterflyed their trips. A guy named Froggy saw them coming and ran and the dinks killed a guy named Dawson, who was atop a bunker with an M-60. A grunt named Heaton picked up the 60 and started to shoot from the hip, but one of the dinks caught him with a Chicom full in the face. Mike told me about that because he witnessed it. Heaton went down, though his legs kicked in the air till he died a few minutes later. Mike killed another dink with a satchel charge, though they had already blown up one gun crew and were inside the TOC. My friend Dave Berkshire, a male nurse, ran for his life inside the TOC, and was lucky to escape with Chicom sharp to the leg.

One of the remaining gun pits opened up with direct fire, using Beehive and HE, but we took twenty-five (25) WIA and at least five (5) KIA that night. They had our number that time. A recon patrol hauled in maybe ten more bodies killed by the treeline shelling. There were another ten or twelve inside the perimeter, still clutching their AK's, satchel charges and whatnot. They were hardcore NVA. We dug pits just outside the berm, heaved them over the top, shoveled lime on them, then buried them. During the action I was holed up with two RTO's in a small foxhole right on the berm. We were shaking so badly we could hardly move. Then someone inside a bunker got hit by rifle fire and I ran over and patched him up. I was lucky. Almost all of the fighting took place in 4/6 sector. Still, the whole thing lasted all night and it was the most terrifying event of my tour.

Mike was a good solider. He never complained and he was exceptional under fire. He saw more combat than I did, as Delta got mauled in a ground attack on LZ Eagle two months before I came in. At that time the company was known as Dying Delta. Mike and I and all the grunts in D 1/7 saw our share. The war changed from year to year, from unit to unit, from AO (Area of Operation) to AO. As I say, we saw may fifty or so firefights or ambushes. We'd walk into them or they'd walk into us, or we'd walk into each other, or they'd walk into our Automatics (Automatic Ambush, consisting of trip wire detonated Claymore) and so on and so forth. We killed a lot of people. We all changed. I became like Mike. The first time I saw dinks get killed I cried. Later, the way Mike used to say it, the way everyone said it, the way I would come to say it, "We got to kick ass and take names."

Here is an example: On 1 January 70, 2/6 platoon had set up a command detonated ambush on a well used trail. Three dinks hit the tripwire in broad daylight. The GI's blew the Claymores and then it turned into a turkey shoot, as the mines had blown the legs off of the dinks and they were just screaming and hollering to each other while the grunts picked them off. 3/6 platoon ran up just as it was over. I watched them die, and kept crying as the others went over the dead for souvenirs.



It was getting late and the idea of digging shallow graves was given up for booby trapping the bodies. A fuse from a frag was replaced with a fuse from a smoke grenade. The former took three or four seconds to explode; the latter was instantaneous. The pin was pulled and someone piled the bodies up and put the live grenade under the corpses. Any dinks that came to police up the bodies would get blown to smithereens. After we moved out, maybe two or three clicks later, we heard a loud explosion. We'd killed a few more.

It was Mike who'd booby trapped the bodies. Later on, during the Cambodian invasion, after Mike had gotten hit, we killed some dinks and reconned the area. One of the dead suddenly jumped up and Chieu Hoi'ed (surrendered) and we took him prisoner, but I was mighty angry that we had done that. I'd walked right past him; he jumped up a few moments later. If it was me I would have shot him dead. I'd changed.

I didn't know Heaton had been killed until Mike told me. I didn't know he'd booby trapped the bodies till he told me. I didn't remember certain things about a massacre on 1 January 70 until he told me. We'd set up an Automatic Ambush on a well used trail and it blew some time in the early morning. It was just us, 3/6 platoon and 1/6, the other's were at another position. We were maybe forty meters from the trail. When it blew all five Claymores went off at once. Mike told me later that the one POW we took, a woman, said they were the lead element of a battalion of NVA. When it blew they screamed and screamed, like animals, like wounded animals, and I was still an FNG and will never forget that night and the way they howled in pain.

We reconned in the morning and found a line of them just dead in their tracks; we'd heard many more running off down the trail in the night. Mike told me they fired into the woodline to draw us out, but we stayed quiet, since we were only two platoons. We surrounded the dead. One fellow, with a huge timber saw wrapped around him, had apparently sat down on a tree stump and bled to death. Like the others, he was perforated from the buckshot rounds of the Claymores. One of the people we thought was dead rose up and the Lieutenant from our platoon, Lt. Steve Sharp, who now lives in Bloomington, Indiana, walked over and told the dink to Chieu Hoi (surrender). I had always thought the guy was raising his SKS to give up, but Mike told me he yelled "Fuck You, GI!" and was turning to shoot the lieutenant, who then shot him point blank. At the same time everyone opened up, and when the smoke cleared this guy's head had been blown off. After we'd scavenged the bodies and evaced the POW we walked past the dead and you could look down into that one guy's neck and see the top of his spinal column; shards of scalp with hair still on it were dangling from what was left of his jaw. Mike told me that someone stepped in his brains and cursed, words to the effect of, "Goddamit, I got brains on my damn boots," and that had a big effect on him. It made him start to wonder about what we were doing in Viet Nam.

Mike told me these things after I'd gotten out of PTSD psychiatric unit in Montrose, New York in 1996. I had backpacked in Southeast Asia for six months previously, going to remote parts of Laos, Thailand and Cambodia, then to Viet Nam, actually returning to An Loc and Loc Ninh. But something had already snapped in Hanoi, and when I got back to this country I was in bad shape. While in the hospital I put an ad in The Veteran, the newspaper of Vietnam Veterans of America. Mike found out about it and we made contact by letter, then by phone, then I visited him later in 1996. I was glad to see him because I never knew what happened to him after he got hit in Cambodia. But I was astonished to see how clearly the war has taken it's psychological toll on him. They say medics had it hard, always having to take care of the wounded. Maybe so. And presently I receive 100% disability compensation for PTSD from the VA and Social Security. Still, I don't think I'd be here today if it wasn't for Mike and the rest of the men in 3/6 platoon. Please think on these things when you reconsider Charles (Mike) Wilsons' present comp rating.

Respectfully,

*Marc 'Doc' Levy*

Marc 'Doc' Levy

D 1/7 Cav 1st Cav

Viet Nam/Cambodia 1970

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## Terms

RTO	Radio Telephone Operator.
CO	Commanding Officer.
M-60	American belt fed machine gun.
Chicom	Chinese Communist manufactured hand grenade used by VC and NVA.
M-79	40mm single shot grenade launcher.
B-40	Hand held rocket launching device, similar to but more effective than the American LAW (Light Anti Tank Weapon)
Cobra /Blue Max	The Cobra gunship, which was armed with rockets, miniguns and 40mm grenades.
LZ	Landing Zone. Often referring to an American Fire Support Base (FSB), or base camp from which grunts operated.
TOC	Tactical Operations Center. The hub for the telecommunications of an LZ. Usually heavily fortified.
Beehive	An artillery round consisting of thousands of flechettes, or small steel darts, which, when fired from close range, created a swarming cloud of steel which shred anything in its path.
HE	High Explosive
Frag	The American 'baseball' fragmentation grenade.
FNG	Fucking New Guy
Smoke	An American smoke grenade, used to mark either friendly or unfriendly positions, depending on the color.