

Lenard Schwartz interview by Richard Killblane at Fort Eustis, VA 17 June 2009  
119<sup>th</sup> Transportation Company  
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Lenard Schwartz graduated from Penn State in 1967 with a bachelor degree in Education. He had also completed ROTC and was commissioned in Transportation Corps. He arrived in Cam Ranh Bay Vietnam in June 1967 and wanted to go to a truck company, but ended up as a replacement officer in the 119<sup>th</sup> Terminal Service Company. The 119<sup>th</sup> was then stationed at Vung Ro Bay when he arrived, but he remained at Cam Ranh Bay for two days.

The 119<sup>th</sup> had been at Vung Ro Bay since January 1967. The company barracks at Vung Ro Bay were overcrowded and the company had a mess hall, orderly room, and maintenance shed. The DeLong Pier was already installed where the barges tied up, and the LCMs, LCUs, and LSTs discharged their cargo at the beach ramps to the left (north) of the pier. The pier was for offloading ammunition, food and construction materials. Just up from the beach was the yard for other classes of supply than ammunition. The ammunition was stored between berms beyond the class yards.

CPT Luther Royal was the commander of the 119<sup>th</sup> and the company had four lieutenants. The four platoons were divided into two working in the ship and two worked the pier. The company ran 24-hour a day operations, and each platoon worked 12-hour shifts, which rotated at 0600 and 1800 hours daily. Every 30 days, the platoons would rotate. The day shift woke up at 0515 hours, showered, shaved, and ate breakfast. A few minutes before 0600, the platoon met with their platoon sergeant and walked over to the trucks. They drove to the ship and their shift ended at 1800 hours. Len worked in the ship three to four days. Shore duty was much better. Later the shift change was at 2400 hours.

The first ship to arrive was loaded with 10,000 tons of PSP [perforated steel planking] used to build the runway at Thuy Hoa Air Base. The reason the terminal operation was established at Vung Ro was to shorten the supply line to support the air base at Thuy Hoa, and an infantry battalion, artillery battery, combat engineer, and signal units, whose barracks were around the hill away from the ammo yard.

The 24<sup>th</sup> Transportation battalion was in charge of Thuy Ho and had a light truck company (2 ½-ton) and a medium truck company (5-ton cargo and S&P). The 119<sup>th</sup> fell under the 26<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Group, Thuy Hoa Subarea Support Command (THSSAC). The 26<sup>th</sup> QM Group also had the 555<sup>th</sup> QM Company (Service and Supply), a maintenance company, an Ordnance company to run the ammunition yard, a finance company and a POL Company to run the pipeline from Vung Ro to Thuy Hoa.

At Vung Ro, they offloaded almost 2400 short tons of concrete in less than 24 hours. The standard was 720 short tons in 24 hours. It was hard work but the norm. In the middle of January 1968, the whole company assembled in the mess hall. An Air Force captain in charge of ammunition said, "We are at a critical point. We have less than 5 days of ammo left. There is a ship coming tomorrow. We want you to make every effort to insure we

have enough ammo to drop bombs.” The Victory ship held about 8 short tons of ammo. The problem was the electric forklifts that handled the bombs. People did not know how to service them to keep them running. That Christmas the 119<sup>th</sup> had received a soldier who was an electrical engineer in college. Once he took charge, they had no more problems with the electric forklifts. The 119<sup>th</sup> offloaded the Victory ship in three days and “heavy” loaded (overloaded) the 5-tons with six pallets of 500-pound bombs for a total of 9 tons. They stacked bomb bins up high. The boxes weighed almost nothing.

Len worked at Vung Ro for 9 months then transferred to the 124<sup>th</sup> TRANSCOM at Cam Ranh Bay as the assistant operations officer for South Beach, the beach ramp where shallow draft vessel offloaded. There were also four or five DeLong Piers at Cam Ranh Bay. One was for ammunition. The USAT Page, LCTs, LCUs, LCMs and barges pushed by tugs offloaded at the beach ramps. Cam Ranh Bay also had one floating barge and one reefer barge. Alaska Barge and Transport (ABT) was the prime contractor and hired Korean and Vietnamese stevedores with American overseers to handle all the cargo. Cam Ranh Bay Support Command (CRBSC) did the documentation, scheduling and supervising. ABT probably picked up the contract in the beginning of 1967.

COL Robert Shidler was his first commander of the 124<sup>th</sup> TRANSCOM. Len could not remember the name of his second commander, but the man was good.

Officers worked their shifts then went to the club and drank. Len felt officers should be with the men.

Len’s tour ended in January 1969.