

MACV RECONDO SCHOOL

Submitted by Dave Flores

Does that get your attention? I think everyone that was in a LURP/RANGER Company has heard of the school. Thought I would give a little info on the school.

MACV Recondo School was run by the 5th Special Forces Group, located at Nha Trang. This was in the Central Highlands area. The school ran it's first class 15 Sept. 1966. The course was three weeks long and the average dropout rate was 30% per class. The school graduated 3,357 out of 5,395 who started. The school held it's last graduation ceremony on 31 Dec. 1970. Most of the students that came to the school had prior field experience. The first two weeks of the school were comprised of both physical and classroom training. Some of the classroom sessions were combined with outside training like repelling or helicopter insertions or extractions. Explosives/demolitions and boat training was also fit into the first two weeks. The PT was the standard military exercises, along with some very tough runs with a nice thirty-pound sandbag the instructors would put in your rucksack. Oh yeah, you ran with all your web gear, magazines, water-filled canteens, etc. The instructors would weigh your sandbag before and after the runs.

They did this (weighing) when we would do repelling too, just to make sure we didn't lighten the load. We had one final run to stay in, 7 miles. I know there was a time limit, but I don't remember what it was. I thought the run was farther! The sand bag is how all Recondo School graduates got that wear mark on their back. It stayed there for quite awhile too! Competition was always present. Army, Navy Seals, Marine Force Recon, Air Force Commandos, and Koreans--seems someone always wanted to be first for their unit and their unit first among all

others. The Seals, Marines, and the Koreans pretty much took the lead as competitors. Army and Air Force pretty much just wanted to get through the school.

The last week of the school was spent out in the field, patrolling (under actual combat conditions). This was when we put what we had been taught into use. Each person took his turn being team leader, under the watchful eye of the instructor. The instructor would then grade each student on his performance, choices, and actions. Generally we spent about four days in the field to accomplish this. It wasn't out of the ordinary to make contact and be extracted. Sometimes teams were sent back into another location or you stayed in and wanted for all the other teams to come back. If you were lucky, your team got the latter choice. Once all teams returned to the school, we were debriefed as to our performance, and then, finally, graduation.

The school was damn hard physically and you had to learn a lot in a short time. Once we returned to our companies, we would share what we had been taught and hopefully make our operations better. Pretty much all Recondo School graduates became team leaders once back with their companies. I graduated on 16 Nov. 68, Recondo #1603.

Recondo School had ONE thing that put it apart from ALL other schools in the military, or the world for that matter. When we went out on that final training phase, IT WAS FOR REAL!! No blank bullets, no fake enemy soldiers, screw up and somebody could get hurt.

The info about Recondo School was taken from two books by Tom Halliwell.

He was the historian of the Green Berets at the time I spoke with him.

If you wish to get the two books, here's the info.

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