

Covering MEDEVAC Maniacs

by [Ronald L. Huber](#)

I was an AC, though not a flight lead yet. Among the myriad things I don't recall, I'm uncertain who flew lead, though I think it was Don Wallace, Mad Dog 38. As I recall, we took off from Bearcat with the intent to head south toward Rack Kien for a day of supporting the 9th in CA's. We weren't too far when a MEDEVAC called for any gun cover for a cable extraction of three WIA for a unit working north northeast of Bearcat about 15 clicks. The call had that disciplined urgency of dedicated warriors, in this case those special gods of mercy who'd do what had to be done, gun cover or not. We had an assignment, yet, as we slowed our airspeed and listened, nobody responded to the call. The MEDEVAC pilot repeated his call several times, finally saying that he was going to pick up the WIA's, but he figured, due to the heavy ground fire (The unit was in a run 'n' gun.) that he'd fail to get them out and end up with them. Lead cracked the send key.

"21?"

"Go, 38."

"You monitoring this?"

Click, click.

"What d'ya say?"

"Somebody's gotta do it."

Lead advised the slicks and enroute of the situation, and 6 (Maj. Bill Overholser) released us to tend the need.

38 rogered with assurance that we'd advise when we were clear and enroute to join the flight at Rack Kien. We turned north as 38 answered the MEDEVAC. Particulars exchanged regarding location and distance with ETA, and we rolled the cyclics as far forward as those ol' C's would tolerate. Shit-far! I betcha we wuz lickin' out 95 knots, sorta straight 'n' level! Har!

When we arrived on station, 38 and the MEDEVAC AC talked up the situation. He'd been hit already having tried solo. A moment here. Note that I wrote SOLO! This over-endowed totter of watermelon gonads had been workin' solo while taking lots of heat and hits. How on earth, one might wonder (This one did.), where the hell did he place the cyclic in a cyclic climb?!?! "Where do we get men such as these?" We worked up a plan to provide cover, but it was a potential pisser. I'd never covered or seen cable extractions, but I figured it would be slow work in a hot oven. I was right. I remember our separate conversation between and within aircraft. Odd, sorta. We didn't fly in a democracy, but, on this mission, 38 advised that we ALL agree to do the mission. In fact, I recall this

vividly, we talked on my aircraft and between aircraft. Fast talk, of course, but this was done with all eight crew committed to the chore to a man. 38 advised that this MEDEVAC driver was certifiably insane, and we didn't HAVE to die with him in his madness. Unanimously, we agreed that we did if that was demanded of the event.

An impromptu strategy was arranged requiring the friendlies to pop lots of different smokes as we worked. The idea was to prodigiously conserve ammo while making as many passes as we could while the MEDEVAC held hi treetop hover working the cable. The area was forested, reminding me of my time with C Trp., 1/9th when we worked the Parrot's Beak, Fishhook and points east in that phoucin' intimidating triple canopy chit. I shudder at the recall! I digress. We figured/hoped that our passes would leave enough doubt combined with intimidation that Mr. Charles' concentration on the MEDEVAC bird would be distracted enough to give him a chance to string up his ambulatories. This brilliant strategy was conceived by men under twenty-one with little to no strategical IQ. Wingin' it? Youbetcherass! Hope springs eternal.

We laid back while the MEDEVAC approached, waiting for him to call taking fire. Amazingly, he got the first stringer on and nearly all the way to the bird before the ground fire rose to him. I s'spect those glorious bastards in whatever the grunt unit was were doing titanic and heroic deeds to protect the flying hospital that offered their Mates the chance to survive. "Where do we get such men as these?" The MED pilot held till the first PAC was grasped. Then, he hauled all the collective he could muster in that steroid (Compared to a C) H model, and he didi'd. We made two passes, I think, lobbing a pair of rockets from each bird with a shitpot of mini and lotsa .60. We impressed them lightly, at best.

The MED pilot chattered with 38 about his next route in while the grunt 6 advised that he'd be moving and popping new smoke. He didn't move too far. The MED pilot headed in to purple smoke. As soon as he came to his high hover the popcorn started. He, simply, stated, "Mad Dogs? Charley is makin' a racket. I could use your noise for a bit."

38 rogered, and advised me to go left of the MED AC as he went right when we got "close." We hosed the area with a couple pairs each and lotsa 7.62. One of my minis locked, so we had a little less noise to make. Sumbitch! Each of us broke to our respective sides and Wally had an idea on the fly.

"21?"

Click, click.

"Do a 180 from your current heading, and make a run facing me. I'll do likewise."

GULP! "38? We'll be firing in the direction of each other!"

"Roger, 12. You make it as wide as you can and, still, hit the area. I'll do likewise."
(Sheeeeeeeeeeeet!!!!)

We rolled out, facing each other at a distance, and he went left of me as I went right of him. I pooped of a couple pair, one mini and lotsa .60. I hoped he'd be considerate enough to, just, make faces and curses at them, so's to not shoot in my direction. ;-)

As we completed the opposing pass, the MED pilot yelled, "Way to go! We got another one!" He pulled pitch, and flew to a distance.

One more to pick. We had a check-up conversation. All three AC had taken hits. The MED ship had taken the most. What a F'n' surprise! We agreed that we were flat outta unique strategies. The best we could muster was for the MED ship to take a new route, and we'd make a bigger noise with what we had left. Both our ships were set up with seven shot tubes and minis. Wally's mini's worked; one of mine did.

By now, we were way low on 2.75's, 25% light on mini's and had our .60's, which were good on my AC since the crew could link the dead mini's feed, or so I thought. It gave me courage. Har!!!!

All three AC had gauges in the green, so away we went. By this time, Mr. Charles was raggin.' He got more aggressive, if that were possible; we got more aggressive in response. They were on the MED ship now. He was chattering, "Taking fire!" as fast as a fat lady sweats at a polka. We returned to what we knew. Two ships running the same direction, hard break to a 180 and give 'em what we had. It got a bit radical WRT to angle of attack for the blades 'n' all dat. I'm sure we were 110 degrees or more to make a quick git' round, so we could return as fast as possible. I dunno how we made it, particularly the MED ship, but the third WIA was up, and the MED AC transmitted a "Thank you, kindly," and he didi'd, I presume to Hotel 3. WTH do I know? I know this. Our last pass(es) were on empty. It was one of those rare times I unholstered my sidearm, popping it off to "make an impression. Har!!! Also. I shouted all the virulent curses I could muster. That'll teach 'em!

I took the time to write this novel for a couple reasons. One? Frank? You provoked me. Two? In all the forgotten memories of flying guns in Nam, I, never, witnessed greater courage, dedication or commitment to one's Mates than I witnessed when that MEDEVAC crew refused to be denied. I have no freakin' idea what the end of this adventure was. I hope all three survived, healed and returned to the land of the big PX, unfettered tits and merriment. Finally, I scribe to advise you and all medical crew how much reverence respect and awe I own for you, all of you. Most of us, I surmise, me, certainly, were bent on killing as many and as often as possible. You and yours dedicated your whole being to nursing our broken long enough to recover, hopefully, and return, either to battle or home. "Where do we get such men as these?"

Thank you, medics and MEDEVAC crew. Thanks over and again! Finally, I certify that this TINS is, at least, 5%, no, 10% true. I hope it's more, but WTH do I know? My memory's length is as long as . . . Well, you know how it is. This I know. It's worth what you paid to read it.