

# Vietnam Zippos – Geschichte im Taschenformat (52)

von Rolf Gerster, Muttenz

## 1 Herkunft

Für sehr viele Veteranen ist es nicht klar, weshalb sich jemand von seinem eigenen Vietnam Zippo trennen kann. Es kommt jedoch immer wieder vor, dass Vietnam Veteranen diese besonderen Gegenstände im Internet anbieten. Das folgende Zippo ist eines dieser seltenen Originale:

You are bidding on a 1967 Vietnam lighter. I purchased it and had it engraved in Dak To in 1967 and I've had it ever since. The spring is broken and the pin wore out so I used a piece of paper clip to hold the lid on. I was going to send it in to Zippo for repair but I was afraid I wouldn't get it back. I don't smoke anymore so I have no need for it. If you would like the complete history I'd be glad to give you as much as I can remember.

Offensichtlich sah der ehemalige Besitzer keinen Nutzen mehr in diesem Feuerzeug. Den Sammler freut es !

## 2 Vietnam Zippo „DAVID TINCHER“

Die Vorderseite des Zippos wurde mit einem sehr verbreiteten Spruch graviert, welcher Hinweise für die Beerdigung des Besitzers macht. Zudem wurde Snoopy mit seiner Hundehütte sowie einem eindeutigen Kommentar angebracht. Die Rückseite zeigt den Rufnamen des Vorbesitzers sowie einen wandelnden Stinkfinger.



Abb. 1: Zippo „DAVID TINCHER“ (Vorder- und Rückseite)

Der Bodenstempel des Zippos besagt, dass es im Jahre 1967 in Bradford, PA. hergestellt wurde:



Abb. 2: Schematische Darstellung des Bodens (Herstellung 1967)

### 3 Ehemaliger Besitzer

Das Feuerzeug gehörte David M Tincher, welcher als Pionier während 14 Monaten von Dezember 1967 bis Februar 1969 seinen Dienst in Vietnam leistete. Während rund eines Monats war er zunächst beim 20th Engineer Battalion in Pleiku.



### 20th Engineer Battalion (Combat)

Arrived Vietnam: 1 January 1966  
Departed Vietnam: 31 August 1971  
Previous Station: Fort Devens

Authorized Strength	1966	1968	1970
Battalion	619	812	812

The 20th Engineer Battalion (Combat) was organized like the 14th Engineer Battalion and was a part of the 35th Engineer Group at Dong Ba Thin. It moved from Ninh Hoa to Ban Me Thuot on 5 October 1966 and on to Pleiku shortly after with the 45th Engineer Group. On 10 November 1966, it was placed under the 937th Engineer Group and stayed with this group until it was posted to the 35th Engineer Group at Cam Ranh Bay for departure from Vietnam.

Abb. 3: Daten des "20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Combat)" (Quelle: "Vietnam Order of Battle")

Dann wurde er zum 299th Engineer Battalion in Dak To versetzt, bevor eine weitere Versetzung innerhalb des gleichen Bataillons nach Kontum erfolgte:

I served 20th engineers in Pleiku for about my first month in country, then I was transferred to the 299th engineers in Dak To (thats where I purchased the lighter and had it engraved) and then I was transferred to the 299th in Kontum. At Kontum we had a section of the highway to mine sweep every morning and in the afternoon we usually pulled security for the guys clearing

the jungle with heavy equipment. I'll never forget the day we all looked up and the road grader was pushing a anti tank mine with his blade. Everyone was hollering at the driver to stop and he thought we were just waving at him. We did finally get him to stop before he set it off.

A few times they choppered us up to Bin Het, we stayed the night with the South Vietnamese and swept our way home. We had another sweep that was 20 miles, the road was full of punji sticks and some mines. When we got to where we were going they gave us a choice, build a sandbag bunker and ride the tanks back home or spend the night, build the bunker in the morning and sweep our way home. Needless to say we built it that night. I finally got a jeep driving job the last three or four months I was in country, I stayed 14 months so I would be discharged from the army when my tour was up. Driving was great and no more guard duty to pull, the jeep driver and the 3/4 ton drive took turns every other night sleeping in the tower with the star light scope. We just got woke up once and a while when someone thought they heard something.

Zu seinen Aufgaben gehörte u. a. das Räumen der Strassen von Minen.



## 299th Engineer Battalion (Combat)

Arrived Vietnam: 23 October 1965

Departed Vietnam: 17 November 1971

Previous Station: Fort Gordon

Authorized Strength	1966	1968	1970
Battalion	619	812	812

The 299th Engineer Battalion provided combat engineer support and performed construction tasks, such as base development. It landed at Cam Ranh Bay, moving to Tuy Hoa under the 937th Engineer Group, and was transferred to the 45th Engineer Group in the Phu Tai Valley. On 29 July 1966 the battalion returned to the 937th Engineer Group and was posted to Pleiku. It moved to Dak To in 1968. On 20 May 1969 it returned to Qui Nhon and on 14 February 1970 located to Phu Tai. It joined the 35th Engineer Group in June 1971.

Abb. 4: Daten des "299<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion (Combat)" (Quelle: "Vietnam Order of Battle")



*Abb. 5: David M Tincher mit einem "Freund" in Vietnam.*

Der folgende Erfahrungsbericht von David M Tincher zeigt deutlich, wie nahe Leben und Tod bei einem Soldaten sein können:

I remember one other time I wanted to tell you about. We were on mine sweep during TET and got a message that a base up the road had been hit. We had some of our people that had stayed the night there and my LT. decided he wanted to go around the sweep and get to the base to see how our people were. We came to a small bridge and LT. had a feeling, he got out and guided me over as far the right as possible. We went through with no problems but the sweep coming behind us missed a mine that was planted at the end of that bridge and our 3/4 ton truck hit it. The guys told me the truck was blown at least 60 feet in the air. The driver lost part of his foot in the blast. If we would have hit it with the jeep we would no doubt be dead. From the bridge to the base the sweep found 9 other mines that we had missed by driving to the right instead of the center of the road. We were very lucky an I know we were being watched over by the good Lord.



*Abb. 6: Gradabzeichen „Corporal“ (links) und „Spezialist 4“ (rechts)*

Der Auszug aus der Veteranendatenbank ([www.militaryusa.com](http://www.militaryusa.com)) bestätigt die von David M Tincher gemachten Aussagen:

Name:	TINCHER DAVID M
Branch:	ARMY
Rate:	E04
Rank:	CORPORAL OR SPECIALIST
MOS:	12B
MOS Title:	Combat Engineer
State:	INDIANA
Race:	CAUCASIAN
Entered:	
Discharged:	
Service Number:	

Abb.7: Ergebnis der Suche nach "**TINCHER**" "**DAVID**"

Er lebt heute alleine im Staate Indiana, nachdem seine Frau vor vier Jahren unerwartet verstorben ist.

Falls Sie Fragen zu Vietnam Zippos haben oder weitere Informationen wünschen, stehe ich Ihnen gerne jederzeit zur Verfügung:



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- Jim Fiorella: "The Viet Nam Zippo 1933 - 1975", Schiffer Publishing Ltd., Atglen 1998.
- David Poore: "Zippo – The Great American Lighter", Schiffer Publishing Ltd., Atglen 1997.
- Shelby L. Stanton: "Vietnam Order of Battle", Military Book Club Edition, New York 1986.
- Diverse Informationen/ Homepages im World Wide Web.

## Unit history of the 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion

On 05 December 1965, equipment was loaded on the USNS Lt. James F. Robinson at the Boston Army Terminal. On 14 December, an advance party of the 20th left Fort Devens on a C-130 aircraft and arrived in Vietnam on the 18 December. The balance of the personnel were flown to Oakland, California where they boarded the USNS William Wiegel and sailed for Vietnam on 09 December. On 09 January 1966, the battalion arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam and were attached to the 35th Engineer Group to provide general engineering support for the I and II Corps. Stationed at Dong Ba Thin, the battalion, with the 584th Engineer Company (Light Equipment) was engaged primarily in construction work.

On 15 June, the 20th was subsequently attached to the 45 Engineer Group. In support, the battalion's highest priority was to bring the entire complex of Dong Ba Thin to grade, 6.5 feet above main sea level using over one million cubic yards of fill. Other construction included interceptor ditches, bridges, runways, taxiways and helipads. During 03 to 10 September, the 20th supported two companies of the 101st Airborne Division in search and destroy operations in the vicinity of Ninh Hou. On 05 October, "A" Company was reorganized as infantry, attached to the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division and moved to Ninh Hou for defensive operations. This operation was terminated on 13 October.

In October, the battalion was deployed in the vicinity of Pleiku where it immediately began construction of a base camp for the 4th Infantry Division. Combat operational support was provided for Operations Paul Revere II, IV and V. In support of the airborne operations, the battalion constructed 12 major airfields. Continuous effort was directed at maintaining, constructing and keeping the main overland supply routes open by the construction of bridges, clearing of mine fields and the building of new roads through the jungle.

On 01 February 1967 "C" Company relocated to Duc Lap to begin construction of a new C-130 airfield. Part of the effort included the moving of a village that was located in the center of the proposed airfield. The use of prefabricated elements greatly accelerated the accomplishments. By 15 February six C-130 aircraft landed at the partially completed facility. On 07 April, with the completion of the airfield "C" Company returned by conveyance to the Dragon Mountain Base Camp.

Throughout the operations, the heavy rains and the resulting flooding required the continuous attention of the battalion to maintain bridges, roadways and airfields. In November 1967, the battalion received the mission to upgrade the Ban Blech airfield to Class II Criteria (C-130 operations). In December a special assignment to build an airfield at Tier Atar for the 5th Special Forces Group presented a somewhat unusual problem in that the area was unaccessible by land transportation and all equipment and supplies had to be airlifted in by CH-47 and CH-54 helicopters. Airmobile equipment was obtained from the 9th Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.

During 1968 and through 1969, significant emphasis was placed on land clearing operations along transportation routes in addition to remote spots in order to deny the VC areas to set up ambush operations. Acceleration of the airborne operations increased the requirement for airstrip runway and landing zone maintenance. The in-

crease in landings and aircraft loading caused extensive damage to the touchdown and turnaround areas which required complete upgrades of the subgrade and taxi surfaces.

From January 1970 to August 1971, the 20th Engineers and its attached units, the 584th Engineers (LE), 15th Engineer Company (LE) and the 509th Engineer Company (PB) provided nearly all the support for the Central Highlands. Situated near Pleiku, the battalion pursued its mission from Dak To in the North to Ban Me Thout in the South and from the Cambodian Operations in the West to An Khe in the East. During the initial phases, the battalion was in process of changeover from the primary mission of providing combat support to the 4th Infantry Division to a mission with emphasis on Lines of Communication construction. Consequently, the unit was in a highly fluid state. On 20 August 1971, the battalion returned to United States and was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

## Unit history of the 299<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion

The 299th Engineer Battalion was constituted 8 February 1943 in the Army of the United States as the 299th Engineer Combat Battalion. Activated 1 March 1943 at Camp White, Oregon. Inactivated 18 October 1945 at Camp Shanks, New York. Allotted 28 March 1947 to the Organized Reserves. Activated 27 May 1947 with Headquarters at Hempstead, New York (Organized Reserves redesignated 25 March 1948 as the Organized Reserve Corps; redesignated 9 July 1952 as the Army Reserve). Inactivated 31 July 1950 at Hempstead, New York. Redesignated 11 October 1954 as the 299th Engineer Battalion; concurrently withdrawn from the Army Reserve and allotted to the Regular Army. Activated 3 December 1954 in Germany. Inactivated 17 November 1971 at Fort Lewis, Washington. Activated 21 December 1975 at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. (Company D [inactive] withdrawn 16 April 1989 from the Regular Army and allotted to the Army Reserve; concurrently activated at Pine Bluff, Arkansas; inactivated 15 November 1993 at Pine Bluff, Arkansas). Assigned 16 October 1992 to the 4th Infantry Division. Inactivated 15 November 1995 at Fort Carson, Colorado. Activated 16 January 1996 at Fort Hood, Texas.

Units Attached to the 299th Engineer Battalion (22 October 1965 - 17 November 1971)

Unit	Previous Location	Arrived RVN	Attached to 299	DEROS	Authorized Strength	Typical Location
35 LCT	?	?	1967 (Op Marshall)	?	?	?
542 Det (PD)	?	?	?	?	?	?
614 Det (PD)	?	?	late 1970	?	?	?
15 EC (LE) 1st tour	Ft Campbell KY	24 July 1967	permanently	29 Aug 1971	186	Plei Ku
513 EC (DT)	Ft Wood MO	11 June 1965	- 1971	16 Jan 1972	113	Qui Nhon
538 EC (LC)	RVN	26 Dec 1968	??	26 Dec 1971	132	Nhon Co
553 EC (FB)	Ft Campbell KY	2 Sep 1965	Sep 65 - 71	29 Jan 1972	225	Phu Hiep
585 EC (DT)	Ft Belvoir VA	15 Sep 1966	- 1971	29 Jan 1972	113	Plei Ku
610 EC (CS)	Ft Irwin CA	31 Aug 1967	(Sep 71)?	20 Mar 72	164	APO96297
630 EC (LE)	Ft Bliss TX	23 Oct 1965	- 1971	28 Aug 1971	186	Plei Ku
643 EC ( )						
C/70 Bn	Ft Campbell KY	22 Aug 1965	OPCON 17 Nov 1967	21 Nov 1969	?	Bailey Bridge

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**A Brief History of the 299th Engineer Battalion (Combat)**

1 March 1943	Activated at Camp White, Oregon
6 April 1944	Sailed from New York aboard the SS Exchequer, arriving at Cardiff Wales on 16 April 1944
6 June 1944	0633 hrs D-Day Eight Assault Teams land at Omaha Beach (Easy Red, Fox Green and Fox Red) B Company landed on Utah Beach
10-17 June 1944	La Valle, France
17 August 1944	St. Martin le Tallevend, France
14 September 1944	St.Trond, Belgium
6 February 1945	Lictensbusch, Germany (Siegfried Line)
14 March 1945	Remagen Bridge
11 June 1945	Nurnberg, Germany
18 October 1945	Inactivated at Camp Shanks, New York
3 December 1954	Reactivated in Hoechst, Germany (Pioneer Kaserne)
July 1958	Task Force 201, Beirut, Lebanon
September 1958	Returned to Germany
16 July 1963	The Battalion relocated to Ft Gordon, Georgia
22 October 1965	Deployed to Qui Nhon, Republic of Viet Nam
July 1966	Relocated to Plei Ku, Republic of Viet Nam
June 1967	Relocated to Dak To, Republic of Viet Nam
20 July 1969	Relocated to Camp Adams, Phu Tai, Republic of Viet Nam
June 1971	Relocated to Phan Rang AFB, Republic of Viet Nam
17 November 1971	Inactivated at Ft Lewis, Washington
21 December 1975	Reactivated at Fort Sill, Oklahoma part of 3 Corps, 214th Arty Brigade
1991	Participated in Operation Desert Storm as part of 20th Engineer Brigade
April 1991	Redeployed to Fort Sill, Oklahoma
1992/ 93	Relocated to Ft Carson, Colorado and attached to 4th Infantry Division
1993 / 94	deactivated at Ft Carson, Colorado