

Chicom K-54, 7.62mm, Pistol, Serial No 13008709, manufactured in Communist China

My Name is Ronald A. Underwood, I was a U.S. Army, Captain, on duty in the military in the Republic of Viet Nam, from January, 1970 until December, 1970. I served in two different units during my tour of duty in Viet Nam.

- “B” Btry, 2nd Bn, 4th Field Artry in Ben Phouc – January 1970 until around June of 1970, when the unit, as a whole was reassigned back to the U.S.A. Officers like myself, that wanted to get credit on their military record, for their tour in Viet Nam were reassigned at that time. I was reassigned to:
- Hqtrs, 2nd Fld Forces Arty, in Long Ben – June of 1970 until the end of December, 1970

About mid-February of 1970 I had been assigned to and was temporarily acting as Battery Commander (Later made Battery Commander) of “B” Battery, 2nd Bn, 4th Fld Arty. In mid-May (approx. around the 17th), I flew into Tan An base camp where our 9th Division, and Battalion headquarters were located for a battalion staff call. At these weekly staff calls our four firing batteries and our headquarters battery usually received our orders for the next week or so and gave account of our activity/inactivity for the preceding week. Today, seemed different, there was an excitement in the air from the headquarters staff. My Commanding officer, Colonel Foreman motioned to me and handed me a sealed envelope and told me not to open it until I was airborne again in my Loach helicopter and I was to follow the instructions in the envelope.

Airborne and heading back to my unit, I opened my envelope as instructed. We were going to be a part of the invasion of Cambodia. My battery had been attached to the 1st Calvary Division (The historical Custer’s last stand unit) in support of their invasion of Cambodia, I was to call my battery headquarters and instruct my staff to CSMO (Change Stations and Move Out) to an undisclosed location and once airborne, give them the grid coordinates to fly to and set up our six 105, M101A1 Howitzer guns. While I was flying there myself with my advance party, an infantry company had air-mobiled into Cambodia and landed on top of a mountain and taken the top half of the mountain away from the NVA (North Vietnamese Army). My batteries mission was to set up six guns on top of the mountain approximately 10 kilometers inside Cambodia and with supporting artillery fire, support the main invasion force as they invaded the country and marched past our mountain and on into Cambodia.

It was a good plan, however, the ground (top of the hill), freshly taken still had a few hostile elements which we disposed of in short order. There were a few pockets of resistance that had hidden within our area of operation. There were Jungle caves, crevasses and spider holes in the mountain that we had to be careful of. A spider hole is a hole dug into the ground and covered with timber, branches, etc. and camouflaged to look like the rest of the terrain and at opportune times, the enemy will crawl out and sabotage our equipment, shoot sniper fire at us, etc. and then go back inside the spider hole and hide until the next time an opportunity presented itself. It was in one of those caves that a small weapons cash was found and ultimately this K-54, Chicom 7.62 mm pistol was found.

My NCO’s non-commissioned officers within my battery found this pistol and gave it to me as a present. It was obvious that it had been used before and hidden away until some North Vietnamese officer could come back, get it and use it again. I took the weapon presented to me and kept it for myself, later that year, I registered it with our CID (Central Intelligence Division) to take it home as a war trophy. I almost got into trouble as the CID staff told me that I should have registered the weapon within a day or two after I had confiscated it from the enemy.



Ronald A. Underwood, Capt, F.A. USAR

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Side story to this K-54 weapon the story of the Preacher's life-saving advice:

In remembering these stories that I tell, I've heard stories in the past that I felt may have been embellished somewhat by the story teller. This takes much of the enjoyment out of the story for me as I love true events, however, I remember being nearby to the John F. Kennedy assassination in Dallas, November 22, 1962, near enough to hear the shots fired quite clearly. I always believed that I heard four shots fired, but the media through the years has told me that, there were only two shots. With the understanding of that fact, I know that facts may change for one reason or another in one's mind, but my intent here is to tell the story as it was but only as I remember it.

About three weeks prior to this invasion of Cambodia, my pastor, Reverend J. C. Hibbard of Dallas, Texas sent me a tape recording. We often corresponded in this way. Pastor Hibbard often played the tapes at the church in our daily morning, prayer services as they would pray daily for us military people from our church. He would often send me sermons, testimonies, songs that he sang, etc. and it was a great source of comfort to me.

In one of those tapes that Reverend Hibbard sent me, he warned of some danger that I was going to encounter. He'd had a dream or a vision, I don't know which. He had seen me flying in a helicopter, onto a hill top somewhere landing with my artillery guns and he said that, I would see a glint or small flash or reflection of light from the sun on something in the jungle. He said that I should pay close attention to what this may be as that, was the danger that I was to watch and guard against as this was my enemy waiting in hiding to kill me and my men in an ambush. He said that he saw my artillery pieces lined up on the ground in a "W" shape formation and that I should take the gun on the far left of the "W", to the far right, away from that area and watch that end of my battery as there was danger there. He didn't know when this would happen but he said it would be soon and the Lord, within my heart would let me know when. The following encounter happened about three weeks later during the 1st Cavalry Division's invasion of Cambodia in mid-May of 1970:

As my advanced party and I were flying onto that hill-top that 1st Cav's infantry had just taken and was still fighting to hold below us, I watched my six guns landing in the open space of the jungle as shown in the aerial maps and as our orders had told us to do into what the Army calls a "Lazy W" artillery, gun formation. We would often fire two or even three missions at the same time. This formation of the guns gave us an easy 6400 mill (360°), firing capability at all times. As we were flying in I saw that flash of sun on a piece of metal that Reverend Hibbard had told me to watch for, at one end of the jungle near where my left gun was about to be placed. The light hit my eye and immediately my heart started pounding and somehow I knew this was it as it is not normal to see flashes like this in a green jungle. I picked up my radio microphone and called my "Chief of Smoke" (Sgt 1st Class, Gun Chief) and told him as soon as that left hand #1 gun had landed, do not stake it in where it landed, but immediately, have the men push it to the far right of the formation, to the right of the #6 gun and let the #2 gun be our #1 piece and to load a bee hive round in the breach of the left piece and point it at the jungle to the left side and wait. If any NVA came out of the jungle to attack, he was to open fire with a muzzle blast of a "Bee Hive" round. "Bee Hive" is an anti-personnel round with about 8000 tiny darts (like 8 penny nails with fins), I've literally seen men pinned to the jungle trees from these kinds of rounds.

Seconds later, an NVA officer did run out of the thick jungle with his men to where our #1 gun had been. Surprised, he turned and looked at us. Too late, our Chief of Smoke commenced firing. 16 NVA soldiers and their officer died that day because of a preacher's life-saving advice. Admittedly, when Pastor first told me about this I felt a little ridiculous for listening but in the end, I do have to say that I was wise enough to listen to the preacher's advice, I truly feel that it saved American lives.