

- 0. RESCUE - Story Preface
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During the night North Vietnamese killed wounded Americans. Jack Smith reported what he heard and observed:

All night long the Cong had been moving around killing the wounded. Every few minutes I heard some guy start screaming, "No no no please," and then a burst of bullets.

Most of the dead, from both sides, were unrecognizable. Private First Class David A. ("Purp") Lavender lost his best friends:

These were my buddies I had been in the Army with for two years. [The] majority of our whole battalion had been drafted at age twenty-one [and] had been in service for over eighteen months. All of us were near twenty-three years old. They became my brothers over time. Hearing these fellows scream, hearing them killed, stuck in my heart and mind ever since. The most critical part of this fight was the beginning. It was the surprise. They had us in a U-shaped ambush and they had us cut off with mortars. (We Were Soldiers, page 264.)

Sergeant Jim Gooden remembered those mortar rounds:

I braced myself against an anthill. Then we got hit by mortars. It was zeroed in right on us. I looked around and everybody was dead...They were closing in for the final assault. I was shooting, trying to break a hole through them, but didn't know which way to go. I went the wrong way, right into the killing zone. I found stacks of GIs. (We Were Soldiers, page 253.)

Don Cornett, executive officer ("XO") of C Company, was mortally wounded. His incredible courage, even while dying, inspired others to hang on. Jack Smith tells the story:

The XO was going fast. He told me his wife's name was Carol. He told me that if he didn't make it, I was to write her and tell her that he loved her. Then he somehow managed to crawl away, saying that he was going to organize the troops. It was his positive decision to do something that reinforced my own will to go on.

The Air Force was finally able to assist the surrounded soldiers. Their efforts, plus the support of artillery fire, saved the men who were still alive. Jack Smith:

Then our artillery and air strikes started to come in. They saved our lives. Just before they started, I could hear North Vietnamese voices on our right. The PAVN battalion was moving in on us, into the woods. The Skyriders were dropping napalm bombs a hundred feet in front of me on a PAVN machine-gun complex.

I felt the hot blast and saw the elephant grass curling ahead of me. The victims were screaming - some of them were our own men who were trapped outside the wood line. At an altitude of 200 feet it's difficult to distinguish one soldier from another.

The worn-out soldiers thought the fighting would never end. But after three days and nights the battle was finally over.

American casualties at LZ Albany were high: 151 killed, 121 wounded and 4 missing. (The bodies of the 4 missing men were recovered in 1966.) PAVN casualties were also high: 403 reported dead and an estimated 150 wounded.

Of the many heroes of the Ia Drang Valley battles, a few deserve special mention.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/RESCUE-We-Were-Soldiers)

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