

“MY PURPLE HEART 1”
(a True account)
by Ken Daniel
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Source: War Stories Collections, Dr. Ralph R. Chase West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas The following document has been reformatted from its original version and partially edited.

A friend from Sundown asked me why I didn't write about my Vietnam tour. I laughed, almost like Caesar I came, I saw and I got shot with an 82mm mortar. It nearly ripped my right shoulder off, cut the axial artery and shocked my three nerves partially severing the medium. My lieutenant and I were secretly tapping into the artillery's generator so we could have electric lighting in our bunker. He was readying the light fixture we had stolen and I was splicing into their power line. About twenty mortar rounds landed on our fire base which our Commander named "Toughie" (not for the grunts defending it, but after a pet name for his wife and her cooking) and silly Kenny ran to fetch his rifle. As I reached for it a round landed within the killing zone of our 81mm which they used when they could, but I lived because this round was made in China one mm larger out of cast iron instead of the wire we wrapped our mortars in to do more killing. I stumbled into the bunker and told my Lt I hope he was happy, his yankee, Republican, war just got me shot.

Then I fell face down on my bunk with my right arm dangling down. A medic came in and told the Lt I was dead because he couldn't find a pulse in the right wrist. The Lt laughed and said I was most certainly alive because I was razzing him about the war. By then I rolled over and told the medic myself. The medic gave me all three shots of morphine, probably just to shut me up. Then he put splints on both my arms like they were broken, which they were not. They put me on the dust off helicopter where I told the gunner my street address in Tacoma, Wa where Inge, 8 months pregnant with Scott waited for me. The gunner claimed they would not be flying me home even after I explained that we were promised if we got shot we got to go home. I woke up in the hospital naked with only a woolen OD blanket to cover me and some guy trying to take my billfold with forty dollars script out of my clinched fist. I asked him if he really wanted my money badly enough to die for it. He called my first sergeant who drove the forty miles so I could surrender my fortune to someone I trusted. Some major pinned my purple heart on my pillow and I promptly threw up on it. The nicest person I ever met in my entire life, a bald-headed black SFC medic, cleaned up my mess and bathed off three weeks of filth. There is much more but I'll save the rest for your next birthday.