

For three straight days and nights Typhoon Bess unmercifully battered the hell out of my platoon with torrential rains and raging winds gusting in excess of 100 miles an hour. It was one of the worst storms to strike South Vietnam in many years, and to make matters worse random enemy small arms fire kept us stuck in our foxholes. Earlier, we had made contact with a small NVA patrol but the fast approaching storm caused both sides to dig in and wait it out. Our ammunition was dangerously low and what little food we took with us when we left our base camp was practically gone. The typhoon kept all aircraft grounded, preventing our helicopters from picking us up or even getting supplies to us. Our visibility was practically non-existent, and the howling winds made it impossible to hear any other sounds. The ferocious weather conditions also affected the NVA soldiers and lessened their ability to assault our positions, but it was possible they could try using it as cover to sneak close enough to toss grenades at us. We pissed in our pants when we had to urinate and cautiously crawled out of our holes to take a crap, hoping the trees we crept to would provide enough cover to keep our bare asses from getting hit by stray bullets. We were in two-man foxholes, and though we alternated standing watch, trying to sleep standing up in a hole filled chest-high with muddy water was just about impossible.

For me, those three days were some of the most nerve-racking I experienced during my entire time in Vietnam, even more than being in a firefight. When on a recon patrol or waiting to spring an ambush I always experienced some degree of anxiety, normally just the right amount to keep me focused and alert. The instant enemy contact was made and bullets started flying adrenaline would kick in, all thoughts got put on hold, and my training and experience instinctively took over. I reacted without having to think about what I needed to do, I just did it. But after a few hours in our water-filled hole, my foxhole comrade and I were all talked out, leaving us alone with our silent thoughts, prayers, and fears. My anxiety level was off the scale, yet if I hoped to stay alive, I had to keep vigilant and ready to act in spite of the pain, the stress, and the fear. I did my best to stay alert, but no matter how hard I tried it was practically impossible to prevent the same nagging questions from interrupting all other thoughts: Will I ever see my family again? Will I get out of here alive or is this it? Will this lousy hole in the ground become my grave?