

## Full Time Mission Message #6

Dear Elder / Sister xxxxx,

As a missionary I learned that one of the most important things we could do was learn to listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. Many times He would prompt us to do things that we could not understand. However when we obeyed, later we often saw the wisdom in the prompting even though it did not seem logical at the time. I have no way of knowing if in fact some of those promptings may have even saved my life. There is no way to know if I had gone on ahead on my bike instead of stopping if I might have been hit by a car and killed. After my mission I realized that continuing to listen to the promptings of the Holy Ghost as my daily guide became the key to my success in all that I did, not just my success as a missionary.

I thought because this is Memorial Day weekend I would share with you one of the experiences I had in the military after my mission where my life and the lives of all the men in my platoon were actually saved because, as the Platoon Leader, I listened to a prompting I received from the Holy Ghost. It was a prompting that was contrary to all logic to obey. It was not a loud voice. Just an impression just like I had felt so many times before as a missionary to do something simple. I only heard the prompting one time and was left to decide if I wanted to obey or ignore the prompting.

Since that day I have many times been astonished as I had a prompting about something as simple as reminding me as I got into the car to go to work that I had forgotten my back pack, then realizing that voice I heard in Vietnam was no different than the voice I had just heard reminding me I forgot my back pack. But that day in Vietnam it was more a more important prompting than just reminding me I had forgotten something. That day, listening to that prompting saved my life. I can only assume that I was able to listen that day in Vietnam because I had practice listening to that voice so many times before in my life when it was just a simple thing that maybe was not even important at the time (other than helping me learn to listen no matter what).

I promise you that if you will listen to the promptings of the spirit you will be guided every day. Those promptings will help you accomplishing all that you were sent there into the mission field to do. Listening to those promptings will help you be a successful missionary as well as a success in all you do the rest of your life. But you have to be willing to lean to listen and then obey. That is not an easy lesson for any of us to learn especially when the prompting goes against what we want to do.

Brother and Sister Vail

(This is actually a chapter in a book I wrote about my experiences in Vietnam called "*In Harms Way: Divine Intervention On The Battlefield*". It is chapter 5 in my book.)

<http://www.cordellvail.com/vietnam/In%20Harms%20Way%20-%20MASTER%20version%208.pdf>

## CHAPTER 5

### ALMOST KILLED BY FRIENDLY FIRE

I had too many experiences, in Vietnam to relate them all in this journal; however I will record some of the most significant ones in hope that they will help to build the faith of my wife, children, family and friends in the dark times to come. These experiences have helped me realize that it was only by divine intervention that I was allowed to come back home. I feel that I was greatly blessed to have had the blessing I received from my Bishop and all the prayers on my behalf. If it were not for them, things might have been different for me. It is possible that I would not have come back home alive like so many of my friends.

One of my most vivid memories of Vietnam is about one of the very few times we were ever engaged in a battle during the daytime. I was assigned to the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and we were stationed on the border of Cambodia at Cu Chi. Our job, as a part of that Division, was to keep the North Vietnamese from bringing food down the Ho Chi Min Trail into Vietnam. Cu Chi is a place along the Cambodian border where a part of Cambodia protrudes way out into Vietnam for 10 or 12 miles. It is called the Parrot's Beak because it is shaped like a huge parrot's beak. If the enemy could come down the trail and up into the Parrot's Beak it would allow them stay in Cambodia for several miles before crossing over into South Vietnam where they would be confronted by us as their enemy.

These food-carrying activities, by the enemy, took place under the cover of darkness so that we could not see them crossing into Vietnam. From time to time, however, we had a few patrols on the border during the day just to make sure the enemy knew we were there and also for our own safety.

During the day the enemy would hide in the bamboo hedgerows along the way. Bamboo hedgerows are as much as 100 feet wide and some times as much as a mile long. They run in long rows down through the open rice paddies to create a windbreak for the farmers. Some of them are large enough for a small army of men to hide in. They were very useful to us as well. We slept in them during the day because they protected us from being seen.

For political reasons, we were not allowed to get closer than one mile to the Cambodian border. One day our sister platoon got too close to the border during a rare day time patrol. Because they had crossed over the no trespass zone, the enemy started to shoot mortars at them. Since the entire platoon was under fire no one could move even to get away from the mortar fire. Any movement across the open ground would have been sure death.

My company commander called me on the radio and told me to wake up all of my men and get them into battle gear. He ordered me to move out to the border to help defend our sister platoon. The fire-fight that was raging was a couple of miles away from us across open rice paddies and through several rows of bamboo hedgerow trees that were so long we could not see around them.

My men and I stood up in the bamboo hedgerow where we had been sleeping and began to look around. We couldn't see where our sister platoon had come under fire because of the hedgerows between us and. We could only see the smoke rising from the mortars shells that were being fired at them. We didn't even know whether or not any of the men were still alive.

We quickly put on our heavy battle gear and started marching in a long horizontal column over the dry rice paddy toward and then alongside the first bamboo hedgerow that was about a half mile in front of us. I told my men to spread out about 20 feet apart, shoulder to shoulder, so if we took fire ourselves we would not all be hit at the same time.

We walked for about 15 or 20 minutes and could hear the mortar fire picking up out in front of us. We were about half way to the hedgerow walking across open rice paddies when my company commander called me on the radio and ordered me to get my men to start running. He wanted us to move on the double to where the fire fight was.

The Army had devised a small radio speaker that fit into each helmet so that all the soldiers in the platoon could hear what was being said to their platoon leader. That way they knew what they were supposed to do without my having to shout new orders to them in the middle of a battle. Each man in the platoon knew exactly what the company commander had just ordered me to do.

It was not easy to run carrying all our battle gear. We each had a heavy steel helmet, lots of gear plus a weapon. In addition each man had to help carry some of the machine gun ammunition so we had enough to last. We looked like Poncho Villa with

the belts of machine gun ammo across our chests. Everyone heard what the company commander's orders so when I gave them the move out signal they started a dog trot (running similar to a slow jog) picking up their pace.

At that very moment I had a very clear impression, in my mind, to stop. I knew that if we stopped I could be court marshaled. The company commander had just ordered me to run not walk and all my men heard the order as it was given. However I recognized the source of that impression. It was not a loud voice. It was just an impression in my mind instructing me to stop my platoon.

In obedience to the impression I immediately gave the signal to all my men to hit the dirt. Having been with me for a few weeks already I can assure you that when I told them to get down they had learned to get down no matter what they heard on their radios from the company commander.

We all hit the dirt causing a huge cloud of dust as we literally dove into the ground. As we landed we heard the loud booming sound of artillery being fired from our own fire base which was far behind us. We all knew that sound very well. It was our own men firing 155 artillery shells from the Jackson fire base. Within seconds the rice patty, about 100 feet in front of us, went up in a brilliant plumb of white phosphorus smoke and fire.

When the military fires artillery from a new location they always fire one white phosphorus marker-round first to see where the gun is aimed. Because it gives off a huge plume of white smoke that can be seen for miles, which allows them to see where the gun is actually aimed. Then they make adjustments from where the smoke goes up to where they want the actual rounds of ammunition to land on the enemy target. The white phosphorus round is not intended to hit anyone. It is just a marker round. However if white phosphorus gets on the human body, it doesn't just burn the skin, it will burn a hole right through the whole body.

If we had kept jogging ahead as ordered we would have been exactly at the location of the marker round when it went off. Because we stopped when we did, all of the white phosphorus went up into the air and came down about 20 or 30 feet in front of us. No one was hurt.

We all laid there in the dirt stunned at what had just happened. We were almost killed by friendly fire. Then I heard this little emotionally shaky voice on the radio. It was my company commander's voice. Everyone could tell that he was terrified. He asked, "Lt. Vail, Lt. Vail, where are you"? I stood up, took my radio headset in hand, and answered, "I am here. We are OK ". The company commander then explained that

they had a new artillery officer and he had just put that first marker round 1000 yards too close to us and because of his mistake, it should have landed right on top of us." I told him that we had stopped moving and that we were all OK. Then he said to me in a relieved voice, "Well then get going again".

Hearing our orders we stood up ready to start moving again. All my men stared at me. My platoon sergeant came walking over to me and asked, "Lt. Vail, how did you know that?" I replied, "God told me." He then smiled and said, "Well keep it up." I knew what he meant and I knew that all my men felt the same way. We started moving out with gratitude in our hearts. No more was said about it but everyone knew that only by the grace of God and the 'impression' that He sent to us by way of the Holy Spirit, we were all still alive.

~~~~~

Our prayers are with you in all you do. Be your best and the Lord will bless you.

Brother and Sister Vail

[Back To Index Page](#)