

Marino

By James R. Teller



I stood at the top on the canal bank looking down at a soldier who looked more like a drowned rat than anything I had ever seen before. The fact that he was still floundering in the water told me he was alive, although he looked like he had tried to drink the canal dry and the last gallon or so had

gone down the wrong pipe. He was coughing and spurting and trying very hard to make it to shore.

I descended the bank, walked out to the soldier and got a hold on him and brought him to shore. He wasn't a large man but being water logged he was all dead weight. He laid with just his head and shoulders out of the water, unable to move and get any further up the bank. He continued to cough and spurt while trying desperately to breathe. He looked like a drowned rat more than ever. I took my helmet off and using it for a seat squatted down and watched his recovery. I also scanned what little I could see of the surrounding area hoping that Charlie wasn't aware of what the two of us were doing.

The soldier's name was David Marino and he was on his first patrol. We were making a sweep off of LZ Thunder when we'd encountered some sniper fire. We had swung on line into the direction of the fire in an effort to flush the sniper out. We had made a rush and then had halted to regroup. I counted heads and came up one short. I was told that it was Marino that was missing and he was having trouble crossing a canal. It was a canal that the rest of us did not have to cross. I immediately went to the canal and found David

was indeed having “trouble” crossing it. Why he had been left there was beyond me. Perhaps, being new had something to do with it but still ... I just couldn’t figure that out.

When Marino had regained his breath I asked him what he was trying to do. He said he was attempting to stay on line with the rest of us when he encountered the canal. Not wanting to fall behind he had tried to walk underwater to the other side of the canal. He had not made it; had taken in some water and the rest was pretty much history. During his fight to stay alive he had lost his weapon and some other equipment.

When he had regained his senses and was strong enough to pull himself out of the water I gave him my weapon and told him to stand guard as I took off my boots and fatigues and went into the canal to search for David’s M-16. The idea I had was to bounce along while feeling the bottom with my feet. In this way I was able to locate the weapon and after making a couple of dives were able to retrieve it.

To this day David is convinced that he would not have made shore without my help. I maintain that he was pretty much there on his own and that the

only thing I saved was his weapon. We rejoined the platoon and I'm pretty sure I had some words for the two guys who had left Marino. Thinking back on it I can understand what Marino did a lot easier than figuring, out what those other two were thinking of.



