

..... PARTING SHOT



Photo courtesy Marvin Wolf

‘Anyone Is Welcome to Use This Latrine’

When you gotta go, you gotta go, even in a warzone. And as anyone who served in South Vietnam during the war knows, the facilities often were rudimentary. That included the one at LZ Dog near Bong Son in January 1966. One morning, while covering Operation Masher/White Wing, the famed photojournalist Henri Huet had to go, and headed for what Marvin Wolf, then an Army combat correspondent, described as “an odorous slit trench offering no privacy, but plenty of flies.”

Huet, though, was shooed off by a pushy Master Sergeant, who officiously let the

Frenchman know that that crappy latrine was for U.S. military personnel only. At which point, Maj. Charles Siler, Wolf’s boss, intervened. He ordered Wolf and his other men to build “the finest shithouse in Vietnam,” Wolf said, telling them to, “scrounge what you can, buy what you can’t, and I’ll cover your out-of-pocket.”

The men scrounged up two toilet seats, a bunch of white pine 105mm howitzer ammunition boxes, plastic aerial rocket tube clusters, commo wire, and a 55-gallon oil drum that had been cut in half. They built their latrine with wood from the ammo boxes, in-

stalled a rudimentary two seater, and placed the drum tubs underneath. They managed to include a Coleman lantern, a shelf with scrounged magazines, and incense sticks to cover the stink.

Huet was given the honor of being the latrine’s first user. That’s him in the photo after he finished his business, coming out of the new shitter.

As for the “Tom Tee-Dee Sat Here” sign, Wolf says it refers to a not-well-liked war correspondent who had the habit of “avoiding battlefields in favor of field hospitals.”

— Marc Leepson ♦