

Sorry, Charlie

by Jeffrey Miller

“I think it was not long after Tet when Michael got hit and dusted off a hot LZ,” the man with the long hair in the faded, army fatigue shirt said. “Charlie fucked him up good. Damn near blew his nuts off which reminds me of this sweet little thing in Saigon, but that's another story.”

Three older men, standing around the veteran who was holding court inside Lenny Inda's bus company garage nodded and smiled. They had already been entertained with the veteran's physical feats—like how he could open a bottle of beer or puncture a can of Hamm's with his teeth—and got just as much a kick out of his war stories.

“So Michael's all fucked up and there's beaucoup Charlie coming through the wire,” the veteran continued. “That's when I let Charlie know who the meanest son-of-a-bitch was this side of the Mekong.”

One of the older men cleared his throat in a disapproving manner to get the attention of the veteran. The veteran looked down at the ten-year old boy chewing a mouthful of Bazooka Joe, realizing that he had stepped over the line with his colorful language.

“Sorry kid,” the veteran said. “Guess you had to have been there.”

“Charlie's my name, too,” the young boy said.

