

# When the Machine Gun Jammed And How We Fixed It



**L/Cpl George Brown**  
**Gunner**  
**Machine Gun #1**  
**1st Platoon, E 2/1**

Back in the states, to make sure the machine guns were inspection-clean, we'd take the guns into the shower and scrub them down with soap and hot water. Vietnam was different because of the hot climate and we spent a lot of time keeping the guns clean

and operational. Still, one day while under enemy fire, one of the two machine guns attached to the 1st platoon malfunctioned.

The previous night, 1st platoon had passed through the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines outer perimeter on an 11:00 pm patrol. Single file the next morning, 10-15 meters apart, the platoon was returning to the battalion when an automatic weapon opened up

from a treeline to our left. Machine guns #1 and #2, midway down the line, immediately fired back with steady 6-8 round bursts, one gun after another. But Gun #1, after shooting maybe a quarter belt of ammo, stopped dead.



We pulled the bolt back to eject the spent cartridge, let the bolt chamber another round, and pulled the trigger. The round fired but that was

it. No automatic. We did it again, chambering another round and firing, but it was still single shot.

The good thing was that whoever had been shooting at us had quit so we had time to fix the gun. Why wouldn't it fire automatic? We eyed the gas cylinder, pulling the barrel out of the gun and unscrewing the gas cylinder cap. Normally, the gas piston inside the gas cylinder slides back and forth easily, but this time it was stuck good. We needed a tool so we picked up a stick and

poked it into the gas cylinder to loosen the gas piston but it remained stuck tight. We picked up a rock and banged the stick with the rock. The piston budged a little so we squirted some oil into the cylinder to loosen it and a few more pokes with the rock and stick and it came free. We pulled the piston out and wiped it off and pretty soon it was sliding easy in the gas cylinder. We put the barrel back together, slid it back into the machine gun, pulled the trigger and...full

automatic fire.

Machine gun training is clear about no oil in the machine gun's gas cylinder but—don't tell anyone—ever after, we put a light coat of oil on the gas piston as part of routine gun maintenance. It worked good.

*M-60 training dictates no oil in the gas cylinder*



**The stick and the rock**

**Machine Gun Barrel**

**Gas Cylinder**

**Gas Piston**

**M-60 Machine Gun**



**L/Cpl George Brown**

*"A rock and a stick did the trick"*