

## July 1968

July would prove to be one of the most significant months in the Squadron's history because of all the changes that happened. Consider the following: The 568<sup>th</sup> and 569<sup>th</sup> TC Detachments become operational with A and B Troops respectively. First B Troop and then A Troop relocate from Camp Enari as C Troop arrives from the States. The Goldbook database indicates that July was the first official time any Squadron element logged AH-1G time; A Troop logged 180 AH-1G hours and B Troop 60 hours in July. So as 'the boat people' are getting short, lots of new guys are joining the ranks.

### First Cobras Arrive

MAJ Florian "Sparks" Thiring, the Squadron Maintenance Officer, recalls: The Cobras did not come into Squadron Maintenance for reissue to the line Troops. I remember a small team of pilots and enlisted went to Vung Tau for training and they returned with these Cobras. A Troop got them a few weeks prior to B Troop.

On the 1st, B Troop began operating for TF South. During the month they would cover an area from the Cambodian border to the south China Sea, from almost as far south as Saigon to almost Ban Me Thuot in the north. They staged from Dalat, Bao Loc, Song Mao, Loung Son, Ling Conh, and many FSBs. B Troop made contact with the enemy 21 times and killed 27 VC, captured six AK-47s, one 60mm mortar with eight rounds, one ChiCom pistol, 11 lbs of documents, and captured or destroyed 3.5 tons of rice and three 5-ton trucks.

CWO Rob Woodside provides the following lively story about life in Vietnam: One day B Troop had four Charlie Model Guns going someplace out of Phan Thiet. I was near of the end of this gaggle and was really surprised when Dave "Mad Dog" Olson announces over the radio that he has an emergency and needs to land. He makes a fast running landing at some field and jumps from the cockpit even before the ship almost comes to a halt. The rest of us are following him and landing around his ship. Adding further to the mystery, we watch as he drops his pants and draws his 38. With his pants at his feet and pointing the pistol at that some invisible evil between his boots, he starts removing his feet completely from his pants. By this time most of us have exited our helicopters and have gathered around him - still not knowing the identify of his private enemy. We were a little concerning for a few minutes that he was trying to shoot himself. Once he got out of his pants, he kept the weapon trained on them; so we at least knew that the threat was localized. About this time a big old centipede, at least 6 inches long, with a really ugly head comes crawling out of Dave's pants. Everyone jumped back and immediately understood the full significance of Dave's previous actions. Someone ran up and stomped the thing to death. Then we started laughing. Dave still had that scared-to-death look on his face but the rest of us were almost in tears! It took a few minutes before Dave could laugh again. Soon Dave got back into his pants and we were off to the war again. Needless to say but that centipede was one much discussed guy in the Club for a long time after that!!

On the 2nd, A Troop worked an AO southwest of Pleiku and destroyed 34 new camouflaged hooches and killed one VC.

On the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-14394 flown by 1LT Glenn G. Rother as AC and CPT Ruben J. Munoz as CP, and an unnamed crew member. All three were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they sustained serious battle damage from an unknown source which hit the engine compartment, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The database indicates that 394 was a factory fresh replacement aircraft. For some reason or other it would take a few months for the maintenance records to finally remove this aircraft from the Army's inventory. CPT Carl King provides:

Ruben Munoz was the Scout Platoon Commander and Glenn out ranked me by a few days. I was third in line for the Platoon and as normal with scouts, moved into the Red 6 slot on the fourth when they went in. Both survived OK. Ruben was up in three weeks or so, Glenn took a year with back injuries. They did not receive a lot of fire, but it was enough to bring them down. The Gun Platoon commander, CPT Dick Bell, picked them up in a Charlie model. Rother and Munoz did not come back to B Troop.

Glenn Rother provides, I arrived in Vietnam about April 1<sup>st</sup> and joined B Troop about the 4<sup>th</sup>. I immediately started my OH-6A transition working with CPT Martin K. Peterson as the IP. After completing the transition, I only flew LOHs from then on. Ruben and I were the only ones in the aircraft when we were shot down near Bao Loc. I do not know any personal information about Ruben. He arrived in B Troop only a few days before the incident, so I never got to know him well. On this mission Ruben was functioning as my copilot/observer and becoming familiar with the scout mission and operations as the newly assigned Aero-scout Platoon Commander. Indeed the only solid information I have on him is from the Purple Heart orders we received at the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Long Binh. I have not seen or heard from Ruben since leaving the 24<sup>th</sup> Evac. I was medevaced to Japan and later to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC. I believe Ruben was one or two years older than me. One of the items I am trying to figure out is who was the OH-6A pilot on the recon team with CPT Ed Jansen (weapons platoon) that was immediately on the scene when Ruben and I went down. I remember him flying overhead but never knew who it was.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15205 at An Khe flown by AC CPT J.A. Jackson, pilot WO1 J.K. Rogers had minor injuries, CE SP4 J.M. McCune and gunner SP4 G.D. Quick. The Accident Summary: After preflight inspection, the aircraft departed for the area of operations at 0815 hours. After landing at Dak To, the aircraft was refueled, shut down, and a post flight inspection performed. During the morning flights, the aircraft flew approximately 3 hours and no malfunctions occurred. At 1500 hours CPT Jackson departed Dak To enroute to Camp Enari to pick up equipment needed to remain over night at Dak To. At approximately 1520 hours, while flying at 800 feet absolute and an airspeed of 85 knots, the crew noticed a hum from the engine compartment and felt a slight vibration through the floor. The aircraft commander checked the instruments and saw that the EGT was rising. The EGT reached 680 degrees centigrade. CPT Jackson called his wingman and told him he was doing a 180 degree turn and was going north to Plei Mrong Special Forces camp to land. Plei Mrong was only 5 minutes flight time from his location. Halfway through the turn the engine failed completely. CPT Jackson turned the aircraft to an east heading and autorotated towards the only open field he could reach. He started his deceleration at approximately 80 feet and decided to touchdown with zero airspeed due to the terrain. The aircraft touched down with approximately 10 knots of airspeed and on a heading of 120 degrees. The aircraft slid approximately 1/2 the length of the helicopter. The terrain was rolling and soft and covered with 2-3 foot grass and small trees. The aircraft hit a small mound of dirt on touch down which was hidden by the grass. The main rotor blade flexed and barely grazed the tail rotor drive shaft. The skids were pushed to the rear damaging the undercarriage of the aircraft. The autorotation was made with a quartering tail wind. The aircraft was evacuated to the 7/17 Cav maintenance area for inspection. WO1 Jeremy Rogers recalls:

I joined A Troop about 6 May after completing Cobra School immediately after the normal helicopter flight school, so I was one of those 'waiting for the Cobras' to arrive. In the meantime, I was learning how to be a Cavalry gunship pilot in II Corps. After reading the Accident Summary, I would say that it was rare of us to stay overnight away from our basecamp. I remember making the MAYDAY call on this day. After the landing, I have a clear picture of the damaged gunship resting low to the ground because of the damage to the skids and how lucky we were that only the cover

over the tail rotor drive was touched. I believe WO1 Peter Sadler was in the other gunship. Our Blues came in soon. Our crew was lifted out and I remember being on the flight line at Enari when the Hook returned our ship to the maintenance area. It was good to review the VHPA records that show this ship was repaired and even survived two tours in Vietnam.

Editor's Note: The VHPA Helicopter database record for July 5<sup>th</sup> for A Troop UH-1C #66-15205 is the last 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav record in the database for the month of July 1968. The next 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav record is dated August 5<sup>th</sup> and is for A Troop OH-6A #67-16028. While it might be true that during those 30 days no 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav aircraft received battle damage or was involved in an accident but it is more likely that some records are missing.

On the 6th, northwest of Dak To, A Troop's Scouts killed nine NVA during a day described as "sporadic contact with the enemy."

Also on the 6th, C Troop's advanced party arrived at Pleiku direct from Fort Campbell.

### **569<sup>th</sup> TC Detachment joins B Troop at Phan Thiet**

About the 8th, the 569th TC Detachment relocated from Camp Enari to co-locate with B Troop at Phan Thiet. SP5 Raymond L. Unger, recalls:

We were only at Camp Enari about three weeks and then it was off to Phan Thiet. Now this was a real paradise, the sandy beaches of the South China Sea. Who would have believed then that it would be a golf resort thirty years later? Once the tents were pitched, bunkers built and PSP laid we finally got to do what we were sent there for – maintain helicopters for B Troop. Now I have to tell you, maintaining helicopters in the sandy conditions at Phan Thiet was not easy and being away from a larger base camp it was not always easy to get the parts needed. Still, the 569<sup>th</sup> did their best to keep the availability up. Since we went over as a unit, most guys right out of AIT with no experience, and the fact that we would all DEROS at the same time, we had an infusion. I believe most of the men came to us from maintenance units at Camp Holloway. These men had the experience to get the 569<sup>th</sup> up and running and this is where our first team leaders came from. They passed on their experience to us and we passed it on to their replacements. The 569<sup>th</sup> had the same CO, XO and ISG as B Troop, and our maintenance officer was a pilot from B troop. We still had our own maintenance sergeant. We pulled the same duties as B Troop and shared all facilities. Some of our men also crewed and went on patrol with the Aero Rifle Platoon. When B Troop made the move to An Khe and then back to Phan Thiet four weeks later, we were right there with them. Some of us including myself made the return trip via an LST on the South China Sea, a very fun trip that was. I left country on 23 June 1969 leaving good friends there to carry on what we "original" members started.

On the 9th, A Troop's Scouts were harmlessly burning four hooches in a enemy base when they noticed an NVA soldier observing them from a tree. After killing him, the Scouts asked for the Blues. While screening the selected LZ, the Scouts discovered that the NVA had it nicely surrounded. After two airstrikes, the Blues were inserted. The Scouts reported heavy movement around the LZ. Then the Blues killed one sniper. Prudently, the C&C called for the Blues' extraction and ordered up some more airstrikes and artillery.

On the 10th, C Troop's aircraft were taken off the USNS Kula Gulf and were flown to Enari by pilots from other ACTs in the Squadron.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, **WO1 Eric R. Koeppen** of B Troop died. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 3 Apr 1968 and his MOS as 062B. CPT Bill Ipock and CWO Rob Woodside provided the following sad description about how he died:

Bill relates that the Troop had just returned to Phan Thiet from the day's operations. Eric flew that day in the left seat of Bill's UH-1C. The right side minigun was jammed, so Bill had radioed for the line sergeant to meet him at the revetment to work on the gun. At that time, the revets at Phan Thiet were simply "L" shaped mounts of sand that had been pushed up by the engineers' bulldozers. Bill put the ship in the revet, shut down the engine, and got out to work with the crew chief and line sergeant who had pushed the barrel of the minigun down to point into the ground. They opened up the gun to start clearing it. Eric had taken off his flight helmet, gathered his things, left the aircraft and walked around the front to the ship to the right side where everyone was working on the gun. Eric said that since they had all the help they needed he was going back to the hooches and started walking up the side of the revetment ... the direct path to the hooches. The rotor system was still milling down and Bill yelled: "The Blade! The Blade!" Rob had parked another Gun in a revet immediately behind Bill's ship and was working on that ship. Rob says: "I think everyone on that part of the flight line must have heard Bill yell. I certainly did and looked up to see what was going on." Apparently Eric did not hear or wasn't paying attention because a blade hit him in the back of his head about half way up his skull and knocked him over the other side of the revet with considerable force. Bill and the people with him ran over to Eric and saw that he was seriously injured. Someone ran to get a blanket so they could carry Eric. Bill remembered there was a stripped down UH-1C near by, so he yelled for his crewchief to go untie it's blade. Within seconds Bill had this other UH-1C running and Rob and several others loaded Eric into the back. Bill flew a closed pattern around the POL to the medical pad near the main Phan Thiet stripe. He remembers everyone jumped out and abandoned the running UH-1C while they carried Eric into the medical facility. (Someone from the 192 AHC was kind enough to shut the ship down for them.) They were in there some time while the medical team worked on Eric. After treating him as best they could, they arranged for a Dustoff to take him to Bien Hoa. B Troop learned that Eric died that evening. Bill says he can still remember his feelings at that time. "We'd been flying all day out in the AO, taking our chances against the enemy. Then to return home and have Eric died that way ... what a waste! What a waste of a good human being!!"

WO1 Gary Brydges, also in B Troop's gun platoon, provides these comments about this period of time. As mentioned earlier the 192nd AHC was based at Phan thiet when we arrived at the end of June. Since there had not been an air cav unit based there before us, this gave Task Force South a new opportunity that they'd never had before. During our first few weeks at Phan Thiet, I believe, we covered a fairly wide area, maybe scattered too large at first, looking for anything we could find. We didn't go to Bao Loc all that often, maybe once or twice. I don't remember going to Dalat when we had Charlie Models. We did go to Phan Rang a lot. I remember a specific incident there in a Charlie Model. WO Buddy Harp was the PC and I was the co-pilot in the left seat. We were covering the LOHs below when he suddenly made a violent diving turn. What looked like big orange basketballs were coming up at us! This was my first exposure to a big anti-aircraft weapon. I don't recall though that we generally drew a lot of fire because all we had around there were VC units. Initially they didn't understand who we were and maybe how bad we could be, because they hadn't encountered a cav unit that could call in big stuff so quickly. We quickly became friends with the Air Force guys and soon the FACs were actually following us around because they knew we could find something. I'd guess we found something for them almost every day. Initially I think we took the VC by surprise. I think we established a reputation in their minds, so they didn't shoot at us a whole lot because they learned they were going to get more than they bargained for.

1LT Mike Roney provides: I can remember this event as if it was yesterday. Everyone was gut sick over Eric Koeppen's death. After Armor Branch OCS and flight school I arrived at B Troop in early April 1968. I served with B Troop until I DEROSed in early April 1969. I was assigned to fly Scouts when I arrived and I believe I started my transition into the OH-6A within my first week in country. When I wasn't leading how to fly the helicopter, I was flying as an Oscar with more

experienced guys. On one of my first times in the AO I experienced something that I've never forgotten. We were in a mini-gun ship and the old timer turned it on without warning me. My God – the smoke and noise and flames and the sudden surprise! I remember thinking “I'm dead for sure but just don't know it yet!” When I had recovered somewhat I noticed the pilot was laughing at this new kid. I made a vow that I would never do that to someone else – and I kept that promise during all my time flying Scouts. Like many people, I have a MAJ Longhofer story. It was still early in my career as a Scout pilot. We were working an AO up north like Dak To or Ben Het. For some reason I arrived on station and didn't get a briefing from the previous Scout team. That didn't send up an alarm bell in my head at that time like it should have. I just dropped down and started working this valley where the C&C had told me to go. In just a short period of time we started taking all sorts of fire. I remember saying something on the radios like, “Wow this area is hot!” MAJ Longhofer replied something like – “Yes it is!” But I got the distinct feeling that he already knew that. As it turned out the previous Scout team had been driven off by the enemy fire and had sustained some damage. My good commander, however, hadn't shared that information with me! As a Scout, your speed over the trees is certainly influenced by how aggressive the enemy fire is expected to be. That made an impression on me and it wasn't a good one. A few weeks after this I was flying with a “new guy pilot” as my Oscar. We were flying fast. I have a vivid recollection of hearing enemy fire coming up at us from both sides of the ship. I also remember hearing the sounds of four different weapons – AKs, SKSs, plus a 50 cal and another machine-gun. Miraculously we didn't take any hits. I also had an experience in POL with a Skycrane that I will never forget. I was refueling hot at Phan Thiet's POL like we always did. A Skycrane came in and landed at another pump. We finished. The Oscar jumped in the ship and I quickly got up to an operating RPM. I may have just lifted off but I was still very close to the ground when suddenly a blast of the crane's rotor wash seemed to grab the LOH and almost flip us over! I don't know if the crane guys were playing with us or it was just a coincidence. Lucky for us the LOH reacts quickly. I was able to regain control and flit off safely.

### **C Troop Arrives**

On the 15th, C Troop's main party arrived on a C-141 with their mascot "Groovy Louie" and on the 20th, the last of their elements arrived. Their aircraft arrived on the boat at about the same time. SP5 Bill Fenstermaker provides some details:

I was a crew chief in the scout platoon. Mr Kahl was my pilot at Ft Campbell. I also went from Ft Campbell to Stockton, CA with the choppers so that we could take them over with us. I went over with the troop on the merchant marine carrier with the helicopters. The ship was the USNS Kula Gulf. William (Doc) Holiday, Dave Tuomi, and Gary Plassman went over on the ship with me from the scouts. We left from Alameda and arrived at Qui Nhon after about an 18 day journey. Once we got to Camp Enari, Doc Holiday was transferred out to B troop at Ban Me Thuot and I didn't see him again until we both got sent to Hunter army airfield after Vietnam. We had gone to helicopter school together and then joined C Troop and were finally discharged together in Georgia but that's the last I heard of him. The OH-6A #67-16107 in the photo for the month of November in the 1995 VHPA Calendar is one of only two to ever have that paint job with the yellow stripes on the tail. OH-6As 107 and 108 (#67-16108) were the first two LOH C Troop got when we arrived in country. We could not take the ones that we had at Ft Campbell with us because they were not allowed out of the US. They were some of the first ones built and had a lot of flight restrictions on them. So we had to get new ones sent to us when we got to Vietnam. The first two got that paint job because we had the time to do it. We needed four to fly missions everyday. #107 was probably the one that Mr Kahl used to qualify other pilots since it didn't have the minigun mounted. In the scouts we flew in a rotation like the pilots because you never knew which choppers would be flyable the next day and some days we were lucky to have four of our nine ready by morning. If you weren't flying that day

you worked on whatever bird needed it. In the States we had our own bird just like the Huey crew chiefs but it didn't work out that way in Vietnam.

CPT Roger Black remembers: WO Mike Piccone, a SP4 whose name I've forgotten, and I went with the Troop's vehicles and equipment out of Mobile on a commercial freighter. The ship was designed for the North Atlantic, hence no air conditioning. This was really nice, especially around the Equator. I can't remember the name of the ship, but the Captain of the ship was named Bligh. At least, that's who he thought he was. He was not a happy camper taking his ship to Vietnam. He preferred the calm waters of the North Atlantic. To put it mildly, he was a grade AAA jerk. Ask Mike about the run in he had with Bligh over the shorts he wore to mess one day. The Captain and I had a bit of a run in over his chastising one of my men. Told him I wouldn't order his troops around and he certainly wouldn't order my men around either. He had possession of our weapons at that point and he calmed down.

CWO Mike Piccone recalls: I remember this long trip. I made CW2 while we were on that boat.

The Goldbook database indicates the following aircraft deployed with the C Troop: AH-1Gs: 67-15637, 67-15641, 67-15642, 67-15645, 67-15647, 67-15649, 67-15651, 67-15652, and 67-15653. OH-6As: 66-07907, 66-07909, 67-16073, 67-16083, 67-16096, 67-16106, 67-16107, 67-16108, 67-16110 and 67-16116. UH-1Cs: 65-09470 and 66-15245. UH-1Hs: 67-17322, 67-17327, 67-17328, 67-17336, 67-17341, 67-17346 and 67-17722.

CPT Mike Law, the gun platoon leader at the time, provides: Since we deployed with ten UH-1Cs and no AH-1Gs, the Goldbook may have agreed with the aircraft assignments on paper but not on the ground. Sadly, I do not have a list of the UH-1Cs but hopefully one of our maintenance officers like Bob Kinlaw will. I can certainly remember all our Charlie models arriving at Enari and that we flew them for a month or so as we were doing our in-country training. Clearly the Squadron and the aviation pipe-line knew we were coming and knew we had Charlie models so it seems logical that they would be assigning Cobras to C Troop. The rest of the aircraft assigned to C Troop appear to be correct to me.

Also on the 15th, A Troop received a change of mission to find a recoilless rifle position to the west of Plei Mrong that was firing on the CIDG camp. The Guns noticed the back blast from the rifles and expended on the positions. Results: no more RR fire and six dead NVA.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division states the following in their Operation Mac Arthur After Action Report: On the 18<sup>th</sup>, we received the information that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade would move from the Oasis to Ban Me Thuot in order to defend the city from suspected enemy attack. With the 66<sup>th</sup>, 320<sup>th</sup> and 95C NVA regiments surrounding Ban Me Thuot, deployment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde and all available assets to Ban Me Thuot was necessary. The Battalion assigned nine UH-1Hs and three UH-1Cs to support the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde at Ban Me Thuot. After spending some time at Camp Coryell with the 155<sup>th</sup> AHC, they relocated to Ban Me Thuot East. The report suggests they were at East from about 20 July to 23 August. They supported Operation Fearless.

### **A Troop Moves to Ban Me Thuot East**

On the 20th, A Troop moved to Ban Me Thuot East from Camp Enari for a period of two months. On the same day, A Troop's Scouts found four NVA with weapons moving along a trail. Three were killed and the Blues inserted to pick up their equipment.

Also for the 20<sup>th</sup>, the following article titled "Fighting Fourth Battle Briefs" appeared in August 11<sup>th</sup> issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The Battle Briefs column provided a brief summary of combat action within the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's AO. This article covered the period July 18 through July 24 and reads as follows: "July 20<sup>th</sup> – More than 5,000 Ivy base camp soldiers participated in Operation Cleansweep. The massive, day-long operation covered an eight-mile radius outside base camp, and was supported

by mechanized infantry forces and air cavalry gunships. Although no contacts were made with the enemy, the operation did account for four detainees, four hand grenades found in one village, and a rocket firing position located and destroyed. [The following sentence appears in a separate paragraph.] Cavalrymen of the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry spotted four enemy soldiers north of Ban Me Thuot, killing three.”

On the 22th, A Troop's Scouts observed some NVA in a bunker complex. The Guns, artillery, and an airstrike were employed and killed five NVA.

Also for the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Battle Briefs column mentioned above reads as follows: “July 22<sup>nd</sup> – Receiving fire from 10 NVA near Ban Me Thuot, gunships of the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> [typo error should be 17<sup>th</sup>] Cavalry, plus air strikes and artillery fire, poured fire on the enemy soldiers, killing three.”

On the 26th, A Troop's Guns were called to help a company in heavy contact. They were credited with five NVA killed by the grateful company.

On the 29th, Task Force 1/22 consisted of A Troop, two ground cav troops (D/7/17th Cav and B/1/10th Cav), the 1/22nd Inf, and D/2/35th Inf. A Troop's CO was the Mission Commander of a sweep. When the lead APC was hit with a B-40 rocket, D/7/17 quickly deployed and returned fire with their 106mm RR and machine guns. The NVA unit withdrew to the east carrying their dead and wounded. A Troop's Scouts discovered the fleeing enemy and killed five more. As the TF elements sweep the battlefield, they found 17 dead NVA and captured 16 packs, two 57mm RRs, nine 57mm RR rounds plus some other ammo and some documents.

SP4 Bill Jarrell provided the following: I remember the drive from Pleiku to Ban Me Thuot East. It seems that we did a lot of platoon patrols. I thought at the time that 3rd Platoon got more than its share but may be the others were pulling missions I didn't know about. Anyway, on this day we drove out of our compound into the beautiful countryside. I remember going up a hill with a winding road (if that's what you want to call it). I was in the third scout jeep back, when the point scout jeep came under fire. I remember CPT Hoyer yelling at us for sitting still. The column had stopped while the point was checking something out and that was when they got jumped. When we got up to the point's location, the firing was heavy and Charlie had booby traps in the trees, claymores I think. Like an idiot I stood up behind my M-60 still mounted on the jeep and started firing. SSGT Jerry Tade worked his way by my jeep in a very low profile and made some comments about my mental capabilities. I got my gun off the jeep and started up a hill on our right. Our vehicles were basically pinned when the 106mm jeeps came up. They each fired two flechette rounds and the battle was over. I can remember at least one scout helicopter and gunships firing during this battle.

CPT Jim Cunningham provides: I was one of a handful of pilots “waiting for C Troop to arrive” in Enari in July 1968. I never knew why I was assigned to C Troop because I had virtually the same DEROS date as the other pilots that were coming over from Fort Campbell and the goal of the “DEROS shuffle” was to relocate some guys with the same skills but different DEROS dates into a unit. Major Frost must have taken an instant liking to me because he had me flying in his C&C ship often during those early days. I remember once flying C&C with him at FB 29 near Dak To. We were mortared. I remember that 1LT Sterling Cox and I flew C&C together a few times and I also flew with CPT Jim Ray, the Troop XO. I don't recall that I was ever the Air Mission Commander but maybe I was because I'd flown so much with MAJ Frost.

SP4 Roy Damon Morris recalls: I served in A Troop from June 1968 until June 1969. I hadn't been in the unit very long before we moved to Ban MeThuot East. I remember we were told to bring a change of socks and underwear because we were going to go to the field for three days. Three months later we returned from Camp Bleakness which was at BMTE. When we got to BMTE it was just a bulldozed flat spot in the jungle. They had built up a berm and there was a spot on the berm

just big enough to drive a 2 ½ or a tank through. We immediately started digging bunkers and filling sandbags. I'd guess we were about 50 yards from the runway at the very most. We were very close to the runway. The only permanent buildings that were there – one was made into a shower and one became an Enlisted Man's Club. Those were the only two permanent buildings that I remember. They were made out of wood but there was a concrete slab in the shower. I don't know where the SF guys lived other than with the CIDGs. Those guys and the few ARVNs that were there – they sort of took over one corner and we took over the other corner. I don't remember any artillery there. But I do remember different days of the week there was a Mech unit in and around the perimeter. We got hit one of the first nights we were there and they opened up with these palm-palm 40-mm thing. It looked just like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Each platoon had their own tent. So I was with the weapons platoon. I don't recall anyone from the 569<sup>th</sup> being there, but I could be wrong on that. The Armors lived with the weapons platoon. Two of my best friends were Armors. Initially the weapons platoon only had four CEs, then we got five and then six. At the beginning we had more Cobras than we had CEs. We each had our own assigned ship and we all pitched in to cover the rest. We only had so many Cobras rated pilots at that time too. It wasn't like we had nine pilots flying all nine Cobras, we might have had only four pilots flying four aircraft. A Troop didn't have C Models down at BMTE but the Air Force had some interesting helicopters there. Dale Lorenzana, Steve Silva, Neil Stamp, then our line chief was Keith Jackson. Then we started getting other CEs. The Armors were John Garrity and Don Payne. I'd say Don was my best friend in Vietnam. We just clicked. He arrived in A Troop about the same time I did. In fact we'd DEROS together. He only lied to me once. He went on R&R to Australia three days ahead of me and told me he'd meet me at a certain bar on a certain day. I asked how I'd be able to recognize him in the place because it was supposed to be very crowded. He said I'll have a blond on this arm and a brunnet on the other. That's when he lied to me because when I saw him it was a blond and a red head! The Armors had their own hooch to work in but they were with us. The Armors worked on the turrets, the mini-guns, rocket pods, the chunkers. We had an excellent working relationship with those guys. I'm not certain how they were trained but they seemed competent to me. I remember once talking to Mr. Causey. He said that if you didn't fire off several rounds with the chunker, the weapon would jam. So he decided to put twin mini-guns in the turret. So my ship 577 had twin minis in the nose and hog pods on the wings. This seemed to work out well. The guys on the ground loved the minis to provide close support. He was one of the only pilots that I remember who like to have fleshette rockets in the outer pod. I seem to recall when he left, we didn't load that type of rocket anymore. I believe Mr. Causey stayed with A Troop about six months and then he was reassigned to a unit in the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav. He even wrote me a letter after he'd left. He was an interesting man. He had been a Marine for 12 years or more. He really wanted to fly the Cheyenne. He thought that step one would be to fly Cobras and then he'd get the newer armed helicopter. I also remember CPT Roger Black, LT Wagner, Mr. Tamm, Mr. Sadler, LT Osborn. We had nicknames for all of them. I have some notes here. Mr Causey we called Twiggy because he was short and stocky. LT Osborn was spotty body because he had black and white hair. LT Wagner was mud cat. Mr. Tamm we called Babe's because he always had a date with some nurse over at the 71<sup>st</sup> Evac. I remember our XO was CPT Rosenburger. 1SG Barber always met us at the helicopter when we'd get back to Camp Enari. He'd say that we'd been AWOL and now we were on guard duty. We'd complain because we'd been down at Camp Bleakness. I remember having to go get an M-16 and report to guard duty an hour late. 1SG Barber was a character. I don't remember too much about the mess in BMT. Dale would get C rations and we'd get Velveeta Cheese from home. We made grilled cheese sandwiches and cook Cs – if we were lucky we'd get LRRP Cs. Care packages from home were a big deal. So we seldom ate in the mess. The only mess hall I remember eating in was at FB Marylou. I don't remember too much coffee. I remember going to the mess hall for bread and butter so we could make grilled cheese sandwiches. We didn't think the mess hall food was all that appetizing and it didn't match our schedule very well. At BMTE, working at night with a light on a helicopter made

us feel rather insecure. We'd use our flash lights and then they had the large portable light arrays. I remember when we turned on that large light, these huge bugs would fly into you. Their wings sounded like you were shuffling a deck of cards. Within a minute, you'd have bugs all over you! Our tent was pretty good because we had all these rocket boxes to work with. We'd dug a hole and put our cots down then put the rocket boxes down to walk on because it was so muddy in the monsoons. Our floor was drier than most everyone else's. The mud was terrible there. I tell everyone you could walk six feet and you'd be six inches taller! There were no revetments. The helicopters were just parked here and there. The parking area had been tarred. I remember once WO Causey flew some general or senior VIP in the ship. Afterwards I had to clean all the mud out of it! I was in the tent right next to the mortar pit when the sappers came into our area. There were three CIDG men in the mortar pit. One of them was a double agent I guess that's what you'd call him. He shot the other two guys – bang, bang. When I walked out of our tent, I had my 45 in my hand. When I cleared the sandbag around our tent, the shower building blew up. That knocked me to the ground. I came back into the tent, grabbed my M79. By then everyone else was up. They all back into the bunker right outside our 12 man tent. I took the M79 and went to the perimeter bunker. It was pitched dark. I remember trip flares going off plus flares that we'd sent up. But when the flares went out, it was pitched dark again. Someone pulled a 2 ½ truck up to the left side of my bunker with the lights facing out. I spent the rest of the night in that bunker. I remember seeing the two bodies in the pit that night and also seeing two bodies in the perimeter. I learned they were trying to get back out of our perimeter when they were killed. They had tried to blow up our TOC and did blow up the shower building. What I was told is that someone on the inside was passing information to Charlie on the outside. Prior to that there were indeed guys sleeping in that building but they had been told to move out. Charlie didn't know that it was empty. Luckily there was no one in it. As far as I know, no one in A Troop was hurt in the sapper attack. I was at BMTE for 3 months solid – no break. I remember someone did parts runs and brought our mail to us. Anything major (engines, main blades) was done back at Camp Enari. I don't recall any of our ships being slung out so we did most everything locally. The funniest thing that happened to me in Vietnam was when we were at BMTE. Our platoon sergeant was SSG Rohr. We called him our Den Daddy. He had 30+ years in the Army. I think he was an E-6 so he must have been up and down for some reason. There were four of us CEs. We'd spent all day either working or flying and then all night fixing and repairing in the rain. I remember 1SG Barber saying he wanted to have a Troop formation. There was a lot of flack about that – having a formation in the field. We didn't want to get involved in those arguments. SSG Rohr told us – I know you guys are tired. If you want to sleep in and skip breakfast, fine – but you need to be in formation at 0630. I remember laying on my cot and hearing the report – Infantry, all present – Scouts, all present – Lift, all present – Weapons, all accounted for. 1SG Barber yelled, “Where the f#@& are your guys, SSG Rohr?” Then he answered, “I don't know but where in the f#@& could they go in Vietnam?” Anyway, life was a little difficult for us for the next couple of weeks. SSG Rohr was getting ready to retire so he didn't much care.

## **August 1968**

August was the second to the last month that B Troop logged any UH-1C time, 53 hours. They had logged 60 hours of AH-1G time in July but in August it was 814 hours. The Goldbook database indicates the following were the first B Troop AH-1Gs: 67-15607, 67-15609, 67- 15610, 67- 15616, 67- 15620, 67-15624, 67-15626, 67-15629, and 67-15630. B Troop would fly UH-1Cs 734 and 735 in August and, according to the Goldbook in September but none after that. The Goldbook database indicates that B Troop turned in the following UH-1Cs during this period of time: 66-00731, 66-00732, 66-00733, 66-00734, 66-00735, 66-15003, 66-15004, and 66-15066. Since B Troop had lost three UH-1Cs during 1968 and the Goldbook lists only eight UH-1Cs turned in, it can be assumed that there were at least two more UH-1Cs belonged to B Troop.

WO1 Gary Brydges states: We were flying Charlie Models at Phan Thiet for about three or so weeks when we started getting Cobras. That was near the end of July. In my weekly letter home I wrote that I had my in-country Cobra check ride at Pleiku on August 1<sup>st</sup> and flew a Cobra down to Phan Thiet on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. I never made Aircraft Commander in the Charlie Model. The guys that were PCs and ACs at that time had been through Tet and many had come over on the boat with the unit from Ft. Knox. They had been together a long time. In my opinion they had an infinite amount of experience and certainly deserved to still be the AC's and not us. There were several of the old gunship pilots that I enjoyed flying with. They were chosen (as the unit was being formed up) from their flight school class with last names in the 'O' through 'S' letters of the alphabet. I remember Charlie (Charles W.) Rhyne, (James L.) Reeder, David 'Mad Dog' Olson (he had a big handlebar mustache), Denny Reed, and Gerry (the 'Rabbit') Raver - those are the guys I especially remember. Charlie Rhyne was probably the one that I admired the most and I aspired to be able to fly a Cobra as well as he flew a Charlie Model. When we started receiving Cobras in August I don't think we had more than half a dozen AH-1G rated pilots in the unit. So we were the only ones that could legally fly in the backseat. The other gun pilots had more combat time than us. They flew in the front seat. We called them the 'Directors.' They would teach us the tactics from the front seat while we flew the aircraft from the back. We did the manual stuff and they did the thinking, the tactical stuff. This went on for a few weeks certainly. There were some of us that caught on faster, and I'm not saying I was one of them. There were some you could count on and some that, well, needed more time. It was a gradual process for the senior guys in the front seat to transition us to be ACs and team leaders in the backseat. There was a sense of urgency in this because the old guys that had come over from Knox were all getting ready to leave - their time was up about September. So we had to be 'on board' or we'd be in trouble. It was at this time that those of us who were Cobra rated came of age, so to speak. When we started receiving AH-1G aircraft, the pilots that were already Cobra rated were 'given' an aircraft. Mine was 626 (the full number is 67-15626). I think my crew chief's name was Don Engle. He was really a nice guy and did a lot of things for me. I think he had been a Charlie Model crew chief, but he was also fairly new in country like myself. Maybe he learned on Cobras and was assigned just like me. I'm not certain. I can't tell you a whole lot about the enlisted men. We worked mostly with the crew chiefs, of course. Naturally we didn't fly the same ship all the time. If our ship was in maintenance, we'd fly someone else's. Now I'd like to talk about my other job in the gun platoon. B Troop had a planning meeting the night prior to flying a mission. The aircrews were designated at that meeting. There was a designated lead for each team and a wingman. The Scouts did the same thing. This way we knew who would be in our aircraft and whom we were flying with on the team. Near the end of August, I became the permanent crew scheduler for the gun platoon. I did this on a daily basis for months. I remember having a big board to keep track of everyone. I remember I would plug-in the platoon leader's name and then wait to learn if he wanted to fly or not. We always tried to balance teams so that at least one of the pilots had lots of experience. I also tried to pair up the crews that were more compatible with each other. I don't recall anyone that wasn't compatible at all. But there certainly were guys that worked well together and preferred to fly together. I tried to honor that whenever I could. I had one serious and memorable experience in a Cobra during our first stay at Phan Thiet. experience prior to this one. One of the old guys, CW2 Rick Schoeny who had flown mostly with the Scouts, was in the front seat. He was getting ready to head back, getting short and had eased back on flying LOHs but wanted to fly in a Cobra. We were working an AO only about 20-25 miles away we called 'The Toilet Bowl.' I was the low bird that day and flying inside the rim of The Toilet Bowl. This place was open on one end so it was more like a horseshoe. We were flying left-hand circles, as always, over the LOHs working the bottom of The Toilet Bowl. My wingman was high above me. I had just passed the open end of the bowl so that was now behind me. All of a sudden the RPM started bleeding off and I heard the engine noise change. I got a low RPM warning light as I recall. I remember thinking 'This is bad!' Now the bowl is pretty high relative to Phan Thiet and this

becomes important later on. So as soon as I felt this, I started making a sharper left-hand turn toward the open end of The Toilet Bowl thinking that if I had to get out of the Bowl with low RPM that would be the only way I could do it. It kept bleeding off and sure enough that is what I had to do. I recall that I could pull a maximum of 25 to 27 lbs of torque without it bleeding off. It would maintain RPM at or below that power setting. But 26 lbs was not enough to keep from losing altitude. I was able to complete the turn and go out the open end of The Toilet Bowl and head toward Phan Thiet Airfield. Of course I made a call to the C&C and everyone to tell them what was happening. They pulled off the mission and sort of escorted me back. I was reluctant to go to emergency governor, though that might have solved the problem, because I still had power and the engine hadn't quit. I didn't have any other warning lights on and I was still flying. I judged that I could continue to lose about 200 feet per minute and make a running landing at Phan Thiet with the 26 lbs of torque. And sure enough it worked out just perfectly. I ran out of everything – altitude and air speed and everything right at the end of the runway. I just greased it onto the PSP, we came to a stop and that was all there was to it. As it turned out, it was some fuel control malfunction and we didn't hurt anything. When they changed out the fuel control, we were back flying a few hours later or the next day, whatever. That was the end of it. I was still pretty young as a Cobra pilot and I had one of the old guys in the front seat. As I recall he was a little nervous about this – ‘Oh my gosh, what have I done?’ I don't know if there was a plague or something at the time but within a week or two later, it happened to someone else. They were off to the west as well but not in The Toilet Bowl area and they tried the same maneuver but did not make it. They put it down in the sand just outside our perimeter wire not too far from our mess hall. They didn't make it to the POL area. I think that was Dave Marks. [Editor's note: His full name is Arthur D Marks, but he goes by Dave.]

These were *tough times* for the Charlie Model crews. One day an Aircraft Commander, the next a "sand bag" in the front seat of a Snake because you weren't qualified to fly in the back. Everyone had lots of learn about the new gunship.

Consider the following from CW2 Larry Vieley: After flight school, I went to Germany for several months. Finally the Army caught up with me and sent me to Cobra IP school enroute to Vietnam. You can imagine my surprise when I arrived in-country in June, was assigned to the 7/17th, and learned they didn't have any Cobras! I remember flying down to join B Troop with CPT Denny Vaughan. They had enough Charlie Model pilots so I flew Hueys with the Lift Platoon for about three months. We started turning in UH-1Cs and receiving the brand new Cobras just before we moved to An Khe. I remember “illegally” flying one of our Cobras to the New Equipment Training Team (NETT) at Vung Tau to get my in-country IP check ride. I had to do this about every 90 days – visit one of the CW3 or CW4s Standardization IPs. Everytime I'd go there, one of their maintenance techs would inspect our ship and find about a million things wrong with it. Then we'd fly one of their ships – it was factory fresh and perfect. When I was finished, I'd get back into the B Troop Cobra and return to the war at Phan Thiet. The first time I went there they offered me a job flying for the NETT. When I returned to B Troop, the CO said words to the effect, “That's nice but I'm not releasing you. You can fly for the NETT after your year tour with B Troop is finished.” The AH-1Gs had a relatively serious defect that could "make a true believer" out of anyone! If you picked one up to a hover in even a light quartering tail wind, the ship started a spin and you didn't have enough left peddle to stop it. It was especially pronounced if the Snake was at gross weight or overgrossed - like just after refueling. One day a good Charlie Model pilot and friend of mine, WO Paul Uster, talked me into letting him fly back seat and we got into a spin. With each successive revolution it became a little faster until at last we had no choice but to chop the throttle. We came down fully loaded, bent the skids good but didn't tip over! It looked a lot like a '57 Chevy that had been raked and lowered. MAJ McCracken chewed my butt hard for letting an unqualified guy fly back seat.

SP5 Hoyt L. Inman says that he was given one of the first B Troop Cobras to crew as a way to 'keep me on the ground' until I could DEROS. I'd crewed the UH-1Cs, especially 732, since we arrived in country and I guess this was sort of my reward.

CPT Bill Ipock flew his first Cobra in Vietnam on August 1<sup>st</sup>. He would fly them almost everyday until he took over the 569<sup>th</sup> TC Detachment.

On the 1st, A Troop reconnoitered an abandoned village and took five NVA under fire, killing three. The Blues were inserted to collect two AKs and six new packs.

Also on the 1st, B Troop conducted a screening operation which netted a large VC force. The 3/506 Abn Infantry was notified and lifted units into positions surrounding the VC. The combined effort resulted in 14 VC killed and 11 weapons captured.

Also on the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16028 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo door and fuel cell, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 9th and 10th, A Troop worked an area that had tunnels and fresh bamboo camouflage. Eventually the Scouts found three NVA to kill. On the 10th, C Troop's vehicles and conexes with the weapons arrived. Prior to this time the ACT had been taking compulsory in-country training from the 4th Div, receiving initial in-country check rides and orientations, constructing building, etc. The Squadron decided that the best way to get C Troop operational was to have it fly with first A Troop and then B Troop. CWO Bob Reyna provides some insight as to what was going on at this time:

I was an AC in A Troop's gun platoon until they turned in their Charlie Models in July. Man I hated to see them go! Because I was short and because C Troop needed experienced gun pilots, I was transferred from A Troop. We knew C Troop would be getting their Cobras in a few weeks; so everything was changing for them. New to Vietnam and just about the time we become operational, exchange people and gunship; so we'd get to start all over again. When they came to Ban Me Thuot it was like "mama I'm home" because I was flying a Charlie gun again. Man, did we have Air Cavalry!! A Troop would fly with their full compliment of Scouts and Cobra guns plus their Lift and Infantry and so would C Troop. We staged out of the Ban Me Thuot city strip and the refuel was crowded with the 155th and all of us! We lived at the SF Camp at Ban Me Thuot East. We called it "Camp Bleakness" because of the mud, the cold water showers, the mud, the lanterns in the tents, the mud, the 175s that fired HI all night long, the mud, and the mud. It was really rough on the maintenance guys and crew chiefs. What little PSP we could scrounge we'd put out where we parked the aircraft so at least the maintenance guys could stay out of the mud some while working. D Troop was also working the road between Ban Me Thuot and Duc Lap. And one day, the NVA decided to ambush D Troop's convoy. D Troop calls for help and both ACTs come running. I can still see it!! D Troop's 106 RRs shooting up the front of the ambush and a solid stream of Cobras and Charlie Models pouring s\_\_t from above with more LOHs then you could count screening the flanks looking for guys trying to get away. It was beautiful!! Finally the ceiling was almost on the trees and it was getting dark, so we left; but I'll bet the NVA were sad that day for having ambushed that convoy.

On the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16003 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the skid, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

## **B Troop Relocates to An Khe from Phan Thiet**

On the 15th, B Troop moved to An Khe from Phan Thiet and was opconed to the 173rd Abn Bde based at Bong Song (LZ English). This cut short C Troop's training time with B Troop. C Troop went back to Enari. Because B Troop could occupy some former 1st Cav billets and maintenance areas, they became operational in only 30 hours. For the next two weeks they conducted area reconnaissance, road convoy coverage, BDAs, and acted as a quick reaction force for the 173rd.

WO Gary Brydges states: We had done a lot to improve our positions at Phan Thiet, like sand bagging and digging trenches. We were doing pretty well and getting settled when we were rather suddenly sent to An Khe. We were at An Khe for about three weeks as I recall. We were setup in a former 1<sup>st</sup> Cav area that had hard billets. We had been living in tents, GP mediums with dirt floors, at Phan Thiet. At An Khe we were living pretty high there because we had the former 1<sup>st</sup> Cav's area with billets, mess hall, and the whole shot. It was a nice change. It was no country club, but it was nice. We were getting established at our new digs when, boom, they sent us back to Phan Thiet. Again I think we were at An Khe about three weeks. We did a fair amount of convoy cover while we lived at An Khe. There was this huge agricultural area that was green, lush, and flat for miles. We flew in the hills around that area often. I don't recall that we got into any big firefights during that period. It was just routine stuff. We primarily worked between An Khe and the coast. We didn't go to the west because I believe other units were working them.

WO Paul Uster recalls: I was part of B Troop's Enari, Phan Thiet, An Khe, Phan Thiet moves and I DEROSed from Phan Thiet. I was not Cobra rated but I stayed in the weapons platoon the whole time. When we started getting the Cobras I was an UH-1C AC and team leader. I went into the back seat of the Cobra. I'd been flying in the back seat for some time when we went up to An Khe and went into the old revetment area that had not been mowed in months. I think this was our first day at An Khe. It was 6 to 8 foot tall elephant grass. We had rearmed and refueled and were going into the revetment area. CW2 Larry Vieley was in the front seat. He was our unit IP at that time. We had a right cross wind. We came into a hover and were going to turn into the revetment. As I started to make the turn, the aircraft started going and I went full pedal but the aircraft kept turning. We went around. I said to Larry, 'Hey, I'm at full pedal right now and we are starting to bleed off.' He said, 'That's OK let it go around and we'll catch it with the wind the next time.' I said to myself, 'OH BS! No way!' So I said, 'OK fine!' and around we went. We are down to under 6,000 RPM at this time. So Larry said, 'Well, OK, you'd better chop it.' I was thinking that I should have done that a while ago. Anyway, I chop the throttle. We came down through the elephant grass having no clue how far away the ground was. So I just dropped it down until I thought we were near the ground and sucked up what I had left. We hit flat and bounced back up and back down again and the aircraft stayed right like that. We were so fortunate that it was level ground and that we didn't roll it. This broke the front cross tube. This was the only damage that was done. After the investigation, they found out that the tail rotor had been removed and replaced during a 100-hour inspection. In essence they put a Charlie Model tail rotor back on the aircraft so instead of having 19 degrees of pitch we had 15. This caused the whole thing otherwise it would have worked out as Larry had said it was going to do. After that unless you were checked out in the Cobras, no longer in the back seat – you had to ride in the front seat. Then I became a Tactical Aircraft Commander logging CP time because you couldn't log AC time anymore. The leadership told me, "Well, we'll send you down to Vung Tau to get a Cobra transition." I had three months left in country about that time. "Oh, but you'll have to extend for six more months." Forget that! I'll ride in the front seat for the rest of my tour. I think I DEROSed in January or maybe February. I think all the old Charlie Model ACs flew in the back seat. We only had a few new guys that were actually Cobra rated. They were: Dave 'the nose' Marks, Gary Brydges, Larry Vieley, Wally Carpenter and John Stafslie.

At the 2007 VHPA Reunion Gary Brydges got to shake hands with CW2 Paul Uster for the first time since both left Phan Thiet. Gary showed Paul a photo of SP5 Herron, CWO Uster, WO JD Adams standing near a Cobra. Gary mentioned to Paul that there was a period of time when a Cobra rated pilot was flying in the back and the AC was flying in the front. Gary stated, "Now if this picture was taken during that period of time, it shows the top name was the AC who might not have been Cobra rated." Paul said, "Now that you've said that it restores a little bit of memory for me. It seems to me that JD did fly the backseat with me in the front and I know that Dave Marks did for sure. Because by that time I was getting pretty proficient in the front seat." Gary said, "Oh, yeah. You guys that were not Cobra rated flew a heck of a lot better in the front seat than those of us who were rated because we all flew in the back and you all flew in the front. That was just the best thing that happened." Paul continues, "I wanted to tell you one thing about Dave Marks. We were at Phan Thiet and coming out of a revetment when I said, 'Oh look – let me take it from up here?' He said, 'Are you sure you can take it from there?' I said, 'Heck yes.' So I picked the aircraft up and it started going all over the place. I said, 'Dave did you forget anything?' He hadn't turned the SAS on! He yells, 'Oh, yeah!' and punched the SAS button; everything smoothed out. I know that I flew the backseat on some missions because I distinctly recall being on a gun run with the miniguns on the side and I got, well I didn't get target fixated per say but I was just concentrating on what I was doing and I looked down and I was doing 220 knots. The red line was 190! So I yelled and then pulled it out. I know that was not from the front seat. I'm not exactly certain of the time frame on all these things but it had to be in the July, August, September period."

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, SGT George Murphy from A Troop's Blues recalls: My MOS was 11B. I went over on the boat and served in HHT until March 16, 1968 when I was assigned to A Troop's Blues. I drove a forklift and moved conex containers for the unit supply. I don't remember the names of any of the men I served with in HHT. SGT James McNabb was my squad leader in the Blues. I was a rifleman most of the time. Like everyone I had to help out from time to time on the M-60. I don't remember too much about this day but my medical records state that I broke my left arm between my elbow and wrist when I landed in some brush after jumped from a helicopter that was under hostile fire. I clearly remember seeing the bone sticking out of my arm and must have gone into shock immediately. I remember receiving an injection in Cam Ranh Bay but I don't recall how I got out of the bush or who helped me. The next thing I remember was getting off the airplane in the States. I'd spend the next 9 months in the Army hospital and had three major operations. I wasn't satisfied after the first two because my arm was bent, so they broke it and reset it. They inserted some pins and plates during the third operation and my arm was straight again. In 1975 they removed the metal and I've been fine since. I was due to ETS in September but my injuries kept me in the Army several months after that.

On the 21st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-14412 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at level flight in the AO, they took five hits from an unknown source which hit the engine compartment, they made an emergency landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was recovered and repaired in theater.

Also on the 21st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17789 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine compartment and tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also for the 21st, A Troop's unit history states their Blues and D Troop were conducting a cordon and search of a village. A LOH was shot down while screening the flanks but no one was injured. Higher added A/1/10 Cav to the "fun" and soon everyone had made contact. By the end of the day, the NVA had lost 22 men, 12 packs, over 300 pounds of explosive and some weapons.

SP4 Bill Jarrell recalls: There was a plantation that we couldn't go in or call in redleg even though we knew Charlie was in there. Our jeeps laagered that night with the tracks (A/1/10<sup>th</sup> Cav). The next morning we moved out online toward a fence and what looked like a field on the other side. As we got to the fence Charlie threw down heavy fire. We call for air support from the snakes, but instead of strafing Charlie they hit us with minigun fire. To my knowledge, no one was hit. We got that stopped and began to move out again. We reached the edge of the open field and an NVA jump up out of a hole. We were very close and immediately started firing at him. He just blew up! I was blinded and got shrapnel in my face, arms and legs. I was dustoffed to the 8th Field Hospital in Nha Trang along with several others from D Troop. The surgeons there give me my sight back. Great guys, my heroes for sure. That was August 21, 1968. A day or so after that I remember CPT Hoyer visiting us in the hospital - I could hear his voice. They did such a good job of patching me up that I returned to Enari until I got the stitches removed. I returned to the D Troop in the field in September and DEROSed in October. Sometime in early September I wrote this poem. It was published in the Stars & Stripes in late September, 1968.

To The Medic's by Bill Jarrell.

We got in a fire-fight the other day  
and I've got a few things to say.

I was wounded and in pain,  
not a second too late the medic came.  
The medic eased my pain and clamed my fear,  
and in his eye I thought I saw a tear.

For it is this man, no matter where or when,  
he won't be late,  
it's to him this poem I dedicate.

I've never seen a medic run,  
from mortar, rocket, or machine gun.  
He'll stay by the wounded's side,  
and he'll take it all in stride.

He tends the wounds as best he can,  
in this land of Vietnam.  
God bless the medic's for the job they do,  
they saved me once, they may save you.

Also for the 21<sup>st</sup>, (the article mentions several dates but the action for the 21<sup>st</sup> mentions the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav) the following article titled "Ivy men Fight Back Co-ordinated Attacks" appeared in September 8<sup>th</sup> issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth:

Camp Enari – Following several weeks of quiet, the Central Highlands erupted in battle last week. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, vast stretches of Highway 14, between Pleiku and Ben Het Special Forces Camp, came under enemy attacks. The NVA began their co-ordinated move with a post-midnight attack on a fortified bridge site 15 kilometers northwest of Kontum. The strategic span, guarded by a platoon of Ivy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and regional forces was hit with enemy 82mm mortar rockets, and small arms fire. Enemy sappers came floating down the Krong Poko River in an attempt to destroy the bridge. When the attack was over, five NVA bodies were found in the perimeter. Throughout the day a rash of mining incidents kept the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry and other friendly

units bustling along several highland roads. By noon of August 14<sup>th</sup>, word of enemy activity had penetrated the villages and towns along Highway 14. The normally bustling village of Tan Phu was reported deserted and silent. The town of Tan Canh, just east of Dak To, was also reported boarded up. On Highway 19, east of Pleiku, a convoy was ambushed by an unknown-size enemy force. Four NVA soldiers were killed in the action, two light machine-guns, and an SKS were captured by the Ivymen. On August 16<sup>th</sup>, the enemy continued his push with a large-scale ambush attempt on Highway 14. Forces of ARVN 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry and reactionary forces of 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry killed 31 NVA soldiers in the abortive Communist attempt to disrupt the Ivy supply line. The ARVN and American forces, who were assisted by gunships and artillery fire, captured four B40 rockets launchers, a light machinegun, nine individual weapons, and detained two enemy suspects in the fight. The Ivy Division's 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (Airmobile) killed 21 enemy soldiers in a cordon and search mission 35 kilometers northeast of Ban Me Thuot on August 21. The fight continued for about two hours. The Cavalrymen captured one crew served and four individual weapons. The 4<sup>th</sup> Division's 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade base camp at Dak To came under enemy rocket fire on August 22. The camp was hit with 21 rounds of 122mm rocket fire. Air strikes and artillery were called in on the suspected enemy positions. Also that afternoon the Dak To section headquarters, seven miles northeast of the camp, received eight rounds of 60mm mortar fire. No casualties or damage were reported. Later in the day an NVA soldier was killed six kilometers northwest of Dak To by an IVY LRP team. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry reported finding four Russian anti-tank mines along Highway 14. The Ivymen found two more mines later in the same location. The mines were destroyed in place.

Also for the 21<sup>st</sup>, the following article titled "Fighting Fourth Battle Briefs" appeared in the September 8<sup>th</sup> issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The Battle Briefs column provided a brief summary of combat action within the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's AO. This article covered the period August 15 through August 21 and reads in part as follows: "August 21<sup>st</sup> – Ivy's 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (Airmobile) killed 22 enemy soldiers in a cordon and search mission northwest of Ban Me Thuot. The the two hour fight the Cavalrymen captured two AK47s, an SKS, two Chicom grenades, a pack-full of medical supplies, and 300 rounds of ammunition."

Additional for the 21<sup>st</sup> (though the date is not given with the photos), three captioned photos appeared in the September 8<sup>th</sup> issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. One photo shows three infantrymen wading a swiftly flowing stream. This photo does not have a caption. Beneath this photo is a second photo showing three jeeps traveling down a water covered road. The lead jeep has a 106-mm RR. The caption reads: "Monsoons – After the dry season finally leaves, the monsoon rains become a way of life. Swollen rivers near Ban Me Thuot (top) are just a few of the obstacles that face the men of D Troop, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. But the rains are no match for the cavmen's jeeps (above) as they play through a newly sprung stream. These two photos are credited to SP4 Jack McMains. The third photo is credited to John Stidham. The caption reads: "Platoon Leader – Sergeant Terry Lappe of Omaha, Neb., a platoon leader with D Troop, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, reflects the strain of his job during action near Ban Me Thuot."

The following article titled "Cavmen Sweep Through NVA Rubber Plantation" appeared in unknown issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth (the official Vietnam era newspaper of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division). The date assigned to this event is 21 August 1968 because it matches Bill Jarrell's description of D Troop's action in the Ban Me Thuot area. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

'Cavmen Sweep Through NVA Rubber Plantation' by SP4 Larry Hogan, Ban Me Thuot - An abandoned rubber plantation and its surrounding villages had long been a have for the enemy. But 'Charlie' can no longer feel safe in the area. In a one-day raid 22 miles north of Ban Me Thuot, combined units of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade moved into the relatively unknown area, scattering

the enemy, capturing two NVA soldiers and seizing assorted documents and weapons. Moving out at first light, the men of Troop D, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and Troop B, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry mounted their vehicles and began the hour-long drive to the plantation. The heavy tanks and APCs of the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry "Buffaloes" led the way, with the "Rat Patrol" of D Troop following close behind in their jeeps and trucks. Some of the "Rat Patrol" vehicles were armed with 106mm recoilless rifles while others carried machine guns. The plan called for the cavalry units to close in on the objective from the north while a leg element moved in from the south. The two units would eventually converge, crushing the enemy between them. Reaching the rubber plantation, the "Rat Patrol" stood sentry as the armored vehicles began breaking trail through the overgrown acreage. Huge trees fell like blades of straw under the weight of the iron monsters. Positioning themselves on line, facing the abandoned rubber processing plant, the Ivymen waited for some sign of the enemy. Acting as aerial eyes for the unit, LOHs buzzed above the area like oversized bees. Slowly reports began to come in from different points around the plantation. "Fifteen to 20 individual observed running through a field." "One individual in khaki uniform seen observing operation through field glasses." "Possible bunker complex spotted by aerial observer." There was little sound except from the radio reports and the drone of the aircraft. Suddenly a burst from a .50 caliber machine gun shattered through the peaceful plantation. "Niner-two, seven-four, are you in contact?" "Seven-four, niner-two, negative. We had movement to our front." "Roger. Understand. Keep me advised." After a short time, the Ivymen decided that if the enemy would not come to them, they would have to go in and get him. Kicking open doors, the soldiers stepped into the plantation buildings and began the search through spider webs, garbage and rusting machinery. The scene was reminiscent of World War II. "Hey Sarge. I've found something," called an Ivyman. The man had uncovered the body of an enemy soldier and an AK47. The man had apparently been killed a few days before in a contact with a local ARVN force. Leaving the plant, the men headed for a bunker complex uncovered by the choppers. Approximately forty fresh bunkers offered mute evidence that the enemy had, indeed, been in the area only a short time before. As they completed checking the bunkers, gun fire erupted a short distance away. An element on the outer edge of the plantation had made contact with the enemy. Cutting through the foliage like a ship slicing through a turbulent sea, the Ivymen soon reached the scene and began sweeping the area for any sign of the now fleeing enemy. Methodically, they combed the area. "Hold it," shouted SP5 Larry Smalling of Tulare, CA, senior Buffalo medic. The deadly tracks of the APC had narrowly missed crushing a wounded NVA who was lying under a bush. As his buddies covered him, SP5 Smalling grabbed his aid bag and jumped to the ground. After treating the man, the medic carefully loaded him aboard the APC. Rumbling through the jungle the vehicles soon arrived at a clearing where their human cargo was loaded aboard a 'dustoff' chopper and taken to a hospital. A short time later, another prisoner was apprehended. However in this case the man was in excellent health and not as cooperative as the first. As the men passed a tree, they spotted the enemy lying face down in the brush. The man was only feigning injury and held his AK47 tightly under him. "I don't think he expected us to be riding APCs" said SP4 Smalling. "He may have been waiting for American ground troops to pass within rifle range." However, when the enemy looked up rather than seeing foot soldiers, he found himself looking down the barrels of a .50 caliber machine gun, two M60 machine guns, three M16s and an M79 grenade launcher. A few moments later the man found himself airborne and on his way to a POW compound.

The following photo captioned "Contact" and the article titled "Cavmen Bag 17 Enemy" appeared in unknown issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth (the official Vietnam era newspaper of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division). The date assigned to this event is late August 1968 since D Troop was working with an armored troop from the 1/10<sup>th</sup> Cav in the Ban Me Thuot area. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

CONTACT - As airstrikes come to their aid, troops from the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry take refuge behind a jeep, in a contact with the enemy near Ban Me Thuot. (17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Photo by SP5 John Stidham).

'Cavmen Bag 17 Enemy' by SP4 Obelit Yadgar Camp Enari - Ivy Soldiers bagged 17 NVA troops in a recent, day-long operation against an estimate two-company enemy force southwest of Ban Me Thuot. Operation Fearless was kicked off by combined elements of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division as a sweep of a suspected enemy base camp near the Central Highland City. A small armored convoy of 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry set out on an old road to move into a blocking position, as other Ivy elements swept the area. About 10 miles south of Ban Me Thuot a reinforced enemy platoon lay in ambush in well camouflaged bunkers. An NVA sniper's well aimed bullet apparently was to have been the signal to spring the ambush as the convoy reach the kill zone. A freak accident primed the NVA to pull their ambush prematurely. They lost 12 men. A cavalryman perched on the lead APC. A bump on the dirt road suddenly jolted the soldier. His rifle flew out of his grip, crashed to the ground - and discharge a round by itself. The sniper, possibly thinking he had been detected by the Ivymen, opened up with his AK47. Then the tree line on both sides of the road burst into a screen of smoke and muzzle flash. Bullets and rockets slammed into the road, all short of their targets, as the lead APCs fanned out and rumbled straight for the enemy, their machine guns coughing fire. The APCs overran the enemy position, crushing their bunkers, as armed jeeps and trucks in the convoy opened up on the enemy with recoilless rifles and machine guns. Without stopping, the APCs pulled back - and the gunships of 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry broke into dive after dive to riddle the enemy with miniguns and rockets. Then jets screamed in and leveled what was left of the enemy position. The cavalrymen made a sweep of the shattered ambush sight, finding three 60mm rockets, five chicom grenades, five packs and a B40 rocket launcher loaded and ready to fire. Gunships were called in again when the NVA fired at the convoy a mile farther up the road. But the enemy had only enough time to fire one B40 rocket at the lead APC. The rocket missed its target. The operation continued, but Ivy soldiers made no further contacts with the enemy. Earlier that morning, however, gunships of Troop A, on a reconnaissance patrol, caught a platoon-size enemy force in the open. Five more enemy soldiers were killed. A sweep of the area by the squadron's aero-rifle platoon yielded four NVA packs, a pistol, a radio, plus numerous documents. One NVA body was believed to have been that of an officer.

Also on the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17787 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while enroute they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Finally on the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #64-14180 flown by an unnamed crew who had one fatality [there were no known 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav fatalities on this date] and one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while approaching the target area, they took one hit from 12.7mm and 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, cockpit, cargo section, and tail section, they made a precautionary landing and completed the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater. The VHPA databases indicate that 180 was a replacement UH-1C that would serve with an unknown 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav troop until August when it was turned in for repairs.

On the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07826 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo door, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 31<sup>st</sup>, MAJ Terry Glover assumed command of A Troop replacing MAJ Dick Doty. Terry deployed with C Troop where he served at the XO.

## Sapper Attack at Ban Me Thuot East

The exact date of this sapper attack on Ban Me Thuot East is unknown but it is estimated to have taken place some time during August or September 1968 while A Troop was still resident at Camp Bleakness.

CW2 Jose Martinez recalls: The first thing I remember is waking up from a sound sleep and asking myself 'What am I doing here?' I think everyone's mind plays tricks on them periodically. Well, I was aware that I was moving through the air above my cot - but I didn't know why I was up in the air. All too quickly I realized that some sort of explosion had gone off in or at the corner of my tent. The next thing I remember was scrambling to get out of the tent and into our bunker. As I exited the tent I saw three sappers walking between my tent and the bunker. I froze and let them pass. They couldn't have been more than three feet from me. Initially I thought these three might be some of the Montagnards who manned the perimeter but then reality set in. They were carrying rifles and had large bulky packs on their backs. Later I remember thinking that it was good that I didn't have a weapon. If I'd have shot at them, they'd have killed me for sure. My tent was the second in the row where the pilots bunked. I believe the Scout pilots had a tent of their own and maybe the Gun pilots, but mine was a mix of pilots from different platoons. WO Gohagen, a gun pilot, was a tent-mate of mine. He had some type of injury to his right eye or face due to the attack and I believe he got a Purple Heart out of it. Later we'd kid him for running into a tent pole and getting a 'cheap' award, but he may well have been hit by some of the blast debris. I believe several EM got Purple Heart for their injuries that night. We could date this attack if we could find a copy of the award orders. I don't recall that anyone was seriously hurt but our tent was shredded. Just before I ducted into the bunker I looked up and saw the bad guys fire a bazooka type weapon at our Commo Bunker. Others, including WO Steve Bligh, also mentioned that they saw this team fire at the Commo Bunker. You might wonder why A Troop wasn't running to man the perimeter. When we took up residence at Camp Bleakness the Special Forces team that ran the place told us that in case of an attack we were to stay in our bunkers unless they came and got us. They had trained the Yards and worked with them very well. They didn't want any of us mistaking some of their people for bad guys or having us walk into something we knew nothing about. So our SOP was get to a bunker and talk about it. That night I'd guess we stayed in the bunker about 30 minutes. The battle was still on when we came out. I remember watching the flares drift over the camp. We got our easy chairs and sat on the bunker watching the explosions and gun fire. Finally someone with brains said, 'You know this is ridiculous. We aren't too far from a real battle and could get hit with a stray round.' Not long after that the shooting stopped and it was morning. I recall two conflicting tales - one that the sappers were stopped before they made it to the parked helicopters and one that they damaged two of our Cobras and one of the Air Force Green Hornet UH-1Fs. Maybe someone else can talk about that.

CPT Dave Huston recalls: Probably my biggest memory of my tour in Vietnam is of this sapper attack. The squad tent next to ours was shredded by one of the charges which were set or tossed by the sappers. Probably the best luck for myself and some of the others was the fact that we had moved out of a building that we had slept in for a few weeks. This was to be used as a shower but they didn't have the pipes for awhile. When they got the plumbing we moved into a tent. Then one week later the attack occurred. The sappers blew up the building we had been sleeping in only a week earlier. There were four identical buildings and they only hit the one we had been in. I felt that they must have had some inside intelligence, but luck for us it was a week old! I was in a small GP tent which was not damaged. I remember just getting down on the floor and hoping nothing would hit me. Afterwards lots of people had "scramble injuries" from running and crawling around in a dark tent half asleep. I remember the Special Forces CO was highly pissed that this attack was as successful as it was. He even took film away from some who had taken pictures of the barbed wire

which the sappers had cut and tied back to get through the wire. I remember hearing that they figured it took as long as three hours to get all the way in. This would have meant that the guards in the towers weren't very alert. I don't think any of our helicopters were damaged. The story I heard was that the sappers were surprised before they could get to them. In fact they may have actually thrown some of their charges earlier than they planned and that blew up the tents we all remember. I don't know who named Ban Me Thout East Camp Bleakness, but it was one mud hole. I have a slide which shows this sign over the entrance to the A Troop area.

James G. 'Gary' DeWitt recalls: I am sure the attack was in September, but can't give you a date. Although I was in HHT at the time, I logged a bunch of hours between Enari and BMT, including several RONS with A Troop. Several things come back to mind: 1.) Wooden artillery pallets used as flooring in the tents. 2.) The 175mm guns based at BMTE firing max ord that seemed to suck the air from under the tent as the shell passed over. 3.) Resupplying D Troop in their "mud hole." 4.) Landing at city strip with who knows what in the back and me telling my CP, who was at the controls, to slow the aircraft down and him saying "I can't -- I don't have any more aft cyclic!" Then as quick as the words came from my mouth the crewchief and gunner were moving stuff to the rear. None too soon, I might add! 5.) I had heard A Troop guys talk about the engineers and Vietnamese shooting at each other from one compound to another and when I heard the firing during the sapper attack. My first thought was 'So this is what they were talking about?' Wrong again! It was the night the sappers got inside. 6.) That little ole snub-nose 38 was worthless. When I got back to Enari I went looking for something better! 7.) Shooting my first pinnacle approach to the little log pad where D troop was. 8.) Landing in the mud hole with the pay officer for D troop -- somewhere. Someplace I've got a picture of Tony Hoyer standing in the mud -- gotta find that one for him. Fortunate for me that I had a boss like MAJ Bruce Wilder who didn't mind me flying as much as I could and I did.

Another A Troop happening about this time frame is related by CW2 Bob Glomb, A Troop Maintenance Officer at Ban Me Thuot East:

About those night flights, the story on those is that as maintenance officer, I asked Terry Glover for permission to check out the crew chiefs on dropping flares which none of them had actually done. They had learned about it in school and that was all. At the same time I told him we would make up fire pots to use as runway lights and then if we ever got a night mission they would be ready. He told me that A troop would never, that is NEVER be called upon to fly a night mission. Anyway I used a trick I had learned in the Air Force with No. 10 cans from the mess hall, filling them up with sand or dirt and then pour in JP-4 and presto, instant airfield perimeter light. My guys made up I don't know how many and they worked great. I arranged for missions to support the LRP's and we'd take off, home in on them with FM homing and contact them on FM. We'd drop a flare and they would give us corrections. I was always in awe of those brave lads as when they answered us on FM, they had to whisper, they were so close to Charlie. Anyway I was really glad to be able to get my crew chiefs and gunners trained and help out those LRP's at the same time. Needless to say, it wasn't three weeks after we finished our night flare training that A troop was called on to perform a night mission and everyone was so surprised to come home and find the field lit up for them. I think we flew at least half dozen night missions or more. God, after talking about it, it's like it was just yesterday.

SP5 Robert 'Bob' Chase provided his biographical information to Heycav. The following is an edited version of his material:

I joined the Army in June 1967. After Basic, I went to Fort Eustis VA for rotary wing repair and graduated with the MOSs 67N20 for Hueys and 67N30 for Cobras. I was sent to Hunter Army airfield for several months where I served as a crewchief. I was sent to RVN in July 1968 coming in country at Saigon, went to Nha Trang and on to Pleiku where I arrived at A Troop and the 568<sup>th</sup>

Maintenance Detachment. I was the first Cobra trained person to arrive. They had just gotten three new Cobras and some very excited crew chiefs. After a week or so I went to Camp Holloway to visit the Hydraulics shop to see if we could set-up our own shop at Enari. I received a basic overview on making hoses and repairing valves and cylinders. I missed my ride back to Enari so I had to stay at Camp Holloway overnight a guest of the 189th AHC. I had spent the day with a Black hydraulics specialist; I can't remember his name. He had perimeter guard duty and invited me along. We were in a bunker on the perimeter on the opposite side of camp's main gate. We were sitting around talking when about 1:00 a.m. we heard a WHOSH, felt a shock wave and were thrown around inside the bunker. Since I was new to Vietnam I had an M16 and the others had M14s. I was told since I had greater firepower to take the opening slot facing the perimeter as Charlie was probably prepping for a visit. We spent all night watching the perimeter and watched the flares light up the area, occasionally hears the tower 50 cal open up. I was really expecting the worst. However Charlie stayed home and when daylight broke we stepped outside and found a hole about 3 feet from the bunker that was about 10 feet deep and 4 foot wide made by a rocket. Looking to our left the POL dump was on fire and I noticed a one-holer latrine laying on its side. I also heard that a rocket hit a barracks building killing two soldiers I don't know if this is true or not. This was my introduction to rockets in Vietnam - an event that repeated itself several times during my tour. Back at Enari, I worked line maintenance for a while. Then, since I had some knowledge of electricity, I worked with a guy named Evans who was DEROSing soon. I took over his job. Eventually the Army changed my MOS to 68F20 because of OJT. We traveled to Ban Me Thuot several times. I got to fly front seat in a Cobra and as a Huey door gunner once or twice. I also flew in LOHs but not on combat missions.

//Need to date this event// SP5 Robert 'Bob' Chase provides: The second time I was almost killed by rockets you can see on the A Troop Web page. Go to weapons 1969 page 1 picture 6 Mike McCarthy picture "another Cobra takes a hit" - I was on the flight line less than 100 feet from impact and was working on an LOH. It had a wiring bundle shot up and I was splicing the wires back together. I got hungry and went for a sandwich across the great ditch to the mess hall. The rocket landed on a Cobra next to the LOH I was working on. Both became Swiss cheese. If I was still there I probably would have been killed. I remember the great ditch between the hooches and the flight line. One day we were rocketed and at the time I was in the wooden building used for the electric shop. I ran out the door over to the ditch about thirty feet away. Just as I got to the ditch when one landed in the maintenance area. A piece of shrapnel put a hole in the door were my head had been moments before. There were several other attacks but these were the close calls I had. I wasn't a Christian in Vietnam but God was looking out for me anyway. The rest of the story and my Camp Holloway experience has an interesting twist. When I was at the Hydraulics shop I met a technician, Clarence Searfoss Jr. or 'BO' as he was known. I returned home leaving RVN July 11<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am and arriving in Fort Lewis WA at July 11<sup>th</sup> 09:30 am. When I came home I was assigned to Davison Army Airfield outside of Washington DC attached to Ft Belvoir, VA. Clarence and I were both newcomers to Davison. Towards Thanksgiving he had KP and I was going home to New Hampshire. He asked me to give his sister a ride from New Jersey on my return trip as she had a week off and was going to visit him. I not only gave her the ride but also my heart - we have been married 32 years this coming July. Small world, huh?

## **September 1968**

September was the last month that B Troop logged any UH-1C time, 88 hours in 66-00734 and 66-00735.

On the 1<sup>st</sup>, C Troop became operational and started working the same 4th Div AOs from the Ia Drang Valley to Dak Seang that both A and B Troops had "enjoyed" earlier in the year.

## C Troop Becomes Operational

On the 2<sup>nd</sup>, MAJ James A. McCracken assumed command of B Troop replacing MAJ Jim Longhofer.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17794 flown by pilot WO1 Joel D. (JD) Adams and Observer SP4 Rich Hefferman at grid BR281398. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 200 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they had more than 99 (the database code for destroyed) holes from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was destroyed and lost to inventory.

SP4 Rich Hefferman provides: This incident happened on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The pilot was WO JD Adams. I was the Observer. We were working a hillside outside of An Khe. We had received fire and were back in the hunt. I had spotted a large cave hidden in the hillside. I had just pulled the pin on the WP grenade when the ship began taking hits. We broke right and began to pull out. I could see the tops of the trees through the overhead glass. We began to back away from the trees. I hit the floor button and was telling JD to get us out of here. Just then the ship nosed into the trees. I recall the blades breaking and it really did sound like a weed whacker hitting the trees. The ship crashed on my side. I must have hit my head on impact. We landed on some large boulders. JD kicked the glass out on my side and was trying to pull me out. I handed him the WP with the pin pulled still in my hands. He threw the WP as far as he could. We both appeared unscathed at the time. JD was going through the ship looking for whatever he could find. I had the CAR-15 and chunker with me. We went down not far from where we originally had taken fire. We set up a 2-man position overlooking the hillside below us. I think JD was on the emergency radio. I sent a few rounds at what I thought was movement 50 meters below and to the right of us. We did not receive return fire. Our wing ship was flown by the crew of WO Royal "Buddy" Harp and John Steflein(sp). I think one of our lift ships came in and was fired on. We decided to move further up the hillside. I reached to collect up my ammo and the M79 but I couldn't get up. I was unable to sit up. My neck had locked up and I couldn't move my arms or legs. After a time I recall a medevac ship was brought in. JD went up in a harness or a rope ladder but I wasn't able to see him. I think that two men from the medevac came down with the basket. They worked on me a bit and then rolled me into the basket. I think they went back up using the harness. I was hoisted out in the basket. I had forgotten all these years that the NVA had fired on the ship and the basket while I was being hoisted up. I was evacuated to the 71st Evac at Pleiku. I remember them cutting my clothes off. I told them not to cut them off as they were the last good set that I had. The nurse looked at me and smiled. I have to admit that I was scared to death that I was now paralyzed. They took me back for X Rays and other tests. While I was waiting in a hallway on the gurney I was able to move my feet and then legs. Within an hour or so I was able to use my arms and hands and could lift my head. The doctor came in and told me that he thought it was a concussion. After a few days I was able to return to the unit. The flight surgeon okayed me to fly. Several days later I was climbing into my ship and suffered a grand mal seizure. I was out cold and thought I had just fainted. Unfortunately for me no paperwork was sent from the field hospital detailing my seizure. Consequently a few days later I was wounded by that short round incident at Phan Thiet. I never gave it much thought but I do wonder why no Purple Heart was awarded for my 2 Sept 68 shoot down and evac.

CPT Bill Ipock provides: MAJ McCracken assumed command of B Troop while we were on that three week sojourn to An Khe. Those of us not flying were in formation and the Squadron Commander was handing him the guidon when someone ran out from Ops and yelled that we had a red bird down in the AO. Everyone took off running to the aircraft. One guy even started up an aircraft that did not have a tail rotor. Fortunately someone got him stopped before he pulled pitch. McCracken was left standing there pretty much by himself. Heck of a way to start a command tour. We lost the LOH but the Dustoff guys winched the crew up from the bottom of a very steep cliff

while taking fire. We put the guns between the Dustoff and the guys shooting at them, but that was one of the most courageous things I ever witnessed.

WO1 Gary Brydges provides the following from his letter to his folks dated 3 Sep: What a hell of a day! We had a LOH crash today in a 'hot' area infected with VC. He went down about 12:30 just as my team had come into An Khe for dinner. We 'scrambled' all the ships we could get off the ground and went out there to provide cover for him and his observer who were on the ground. It took about 45 minutes before we could get a medivac into the area and get them out. The helicopter was a complete loss – wreckage scattered all through the 200 foot trees. But the pilot got out with only some bruises and scratches and his observer had a badly injured back and couldn't move. That medivac pilot was fantastic – he went in, hovered over the trees, dropped a hoist and lifted the injured man out on a stretcher. The pilot climbed up a rope ladder and both were saved. This situation was catastrophic enough, but I had a pretty sticky situation on my hands that (this) morning. I was made AC (Aircraft Commander) a couple days ago. This means I'm responsible for the aircraft, what it does, where it's at, when it fires, etc. So I'm no longer just in a co-pilot status. Now I'm the man who makes the decisions. Today was my second day flying as AC. At any rate, this morning another one of our Scout birds had received fire in the same area as the one who crashed. Our job in the Cobra is to protect them and put in suppressive fire when they get shot at. So I rolled in on a gun run, firing rockets. One of the rockets hung up in a tube and the whole pod caught fire. (If you look at my model, you can see what I'm talking about – it's the outboard wing store, left side.) This presents a rather dangerous situation, as you can see. Fortunately, we're provided with an emergency jettison switch and I didn't hesitate to use it. It worked. I dropped approximately \$5000 worth of wing stores into the jungle – with one flip of the switch. Nothing will come of it except that I'll have to make out a statement saying what happened and under what conditions. I was back into An Khe, had new rocket pods put on, re-armed, and was back out in the area within an hour. Shortly after that the LOH crashed. All in all, it certainly wasn't a monotonous day. I've really been busy flying as have all the Cobra pilots. Including tomorrow, I will have flown eight out of the last ten days. This is quite a change considering we used to get every other day off. I really enjoy it though and I'm not complaining at all. We're still at An Khe, of course, and have it relatively soft. We have one cold water shower, one hot water shower, and even have a steam bath.

At the 2007 VHPA Reunion Gary Brydges got to shake hands with CW2 Paul Uster for the first time since both left Phan Thiet. Gary showed Paul a photo of SP5 Herron, CWO Uster, WO JD Adams standing near a Cobra. Gary provided the following details: JD and I roomed together when I came back to the States to Ft Hunter. We got to be pretty good friends. I stood up with him when he got married. We stayed in touch for a long time but I've lost track of him now. I know he had a heart problem. I went through his hometown last spring and stopped to ask about him. I found out where his ex-wife works and I still need to follow up on that. He was a sales rep from Augusta Helicopter. JD was in B Troop when I arrived, but he hadn't been there too long before me, about a month. Maybe you, Paul, can remember this. JD was a Scout pilot originally and got shot down early on in his Scout career. He wasn't hurt physically too bad but it was fairly traumatic and he said, "I'm done flying." So they put him in Maintenance and he ended up being a very good Maintenance Officer. That was what he did for the rest of his tour, Maintenance. When he and I got to Savannah he was in Cobra Hall in Maintenance and working his tail off to keep all of them flying for the school. After being in the Scouts, he did fly with the Guns for a while. I'm guessing that he might have gotten an in-country transition or maybe he was Cobra rated before he came to Vietnam – I don't know for sure. While he was in B Troop he was the Cobra Maintenance pilot as I recall.

For the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, Dan Schuette's Diary records that it was very windy and very wet again at Camp Enari so there was little or no flying. Though this was normally near the end of the monsoon season in the Pleiku area this year there was a lot of rain, wind and mud.

## **B Troop Relocates to Phan Thiet from An Khe**

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, B Troop was reassigned to TF South and moved back to the "sun and surf" of Phan Thiet from An Khe. Since someone had been kind enough to completely bulldoze "The Morgue", they started over and built "The Second Morgue" is illustrated in the camp diagrams section.

CPT Bill Ipock provides: I became the Weapons Platoon commander on the 9<sup>th</sup> which was also the day B Troop returned to Phan Thiet from its three weeks stay at An Khe. MAJ Jim McCracken had just assumed command of the Troop. Our designated base camp area was just to the south of the POL and ammo bunkers for LZ Betty. The airborne battalion and the 192<sup>nd</sup> AHC occupied all the good housing around the airfield, so we were assigned some open ground in and around a Vietnamese cemetery. The engineers bulldozed up some sand to form the berm and that was about it. We called the place "The Morgue" and adopted cemetery related call signs. I christened the callsigns: the Gun Platoon became the "Undertakers," the Scouts became "Scalphunters," the Lift "Pallbearer," and the Troop leadership was "Embalmer." Prior to this time B Troop's leadership used "Typhoon." The Blues and Maintenance did not have callsigns. The berm basically defined a large rectangular. The north side was nearest the POL area, called the "Blood Bank." Maintenance set up in the northwest corner which was closest to the main part of the cemetery. There was about 75 yards over open land on the east. Most anyone who lived at Phan Thiet got to fill sandbags again. I seem to recall that we ambushed a VC tax collector not long after returning to Phan Thiet. We turned him over to the MACV guys but we kept the money and used it to hire Vietnamese to fill sandbags for us. We had a 40mm duster and 106mm recoilless rifles in jeeps on our perimeter. We also got some Jamesway huts. They were a portable and easy-to-assemble hut originally designed for arctic weather conditions but they worked well in Vietnam. It was a variation of the famous Quonset hut. The Jamesways had wooden ribs and an insulated fabric roof covering in 4-foot-wide lengths made with plastic-treated cotton that was water-, vermin-, and fire-proof. The ribs formed an arch that supported the roof. The kit included plywood storage/floor sections. B Troop eventually had at least half a dozen to these huts. I lived in one with MAJ McCracken, 1LT Ken Philley, and CPT Howard 'Pete' or 'Skip' Newhouse. Not too long after we move back down there Pete was bringing a LOH back under a Huey. He wasn't high enough coming across the perimeter berm near the maintenance pad and the LOH hit it, flipped over and was a bigger problem!

1LT Joe Shepherd provides: The Scalphunters came about after we moved to Phan Thiet. 1LT Mike Roney was Scout Platoon Leader at that time, and then turned it over to CPT John Durden. Many remember John as "Magnet Ass" because he couldn't fly a last light RV without taking fire. John turned the platoon over to Larry Smith because John was artillery and only armor guys or those who were willing to branch transfer were allowed to stay in the Cav. Right around that time the Scouts came up with the Scalphunter call sign. I think that Larry was the first Scalphunter 16; I was 15, 1LT Rick Richard was 18, WO1 Bob Caples was 14, and 1LT Cliff Welding was 17. Those are the only call signs I can come up with.

A Troop had plenty to do during battles that started about the 10th around the SF camp at Duc Lap. The Scouts found a bunker complex and received intense AW fire. The Guns and two airstrikes results in 12 NVA killed and approximately 30 bunkers destroyed.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, B Troop experienced a "short round" incident. SP4 Rich J. Hefferman, who was a Scout Observer and Crew Chief from January 1968, recalls:

B Troop soldiers pulled some guard duty every night during both our deployments to Phan Thiet, even after the ARVNs took the area near the East perimeter tents. I was in the Scout platoon and we

took the South perimeter. On 11 September, we were at the bunkers. It was fairly early in our watch when we received one incoming mortar round inside the perimeter. I remember thinking - only one round - that is strange. Two guys were hit by shrapnel - myself and a guy we called Mac. I think his last name was Mac Allister or Macnamra. He took a piece in the back of the head behind his ear. I was hit in both arms, both legs, both feet, and the abdominal area. My right arm nearly severed at the arm pit. The guys around me lifted me on a cot, placed it on a jeep and drove me to the flight-line where, I think, LT Janson flew me to the Aid Station. From there I was medevaced to the 36th Evac Hospital in Vung Tau. I spent the next year and a half in different Army hospitals and was medically retired in Apr 1970.

SP5 Raymond L. Unger, who served with the 569<sup>th</sup> TC from June 1968 until June 1969, recalls: I was with the advance party on B Troop's first trip to Phan Thiet. I remember the incident on Sep. 11, 1968 involving Rich Hefferman because the bunker that was hit was near the back side of my tent. There was another short round incident later by the 101st (possibly early 69). It hit a 101st bunker which was located on the north west perimeter and adjacent the last bunker manned by the 569<sup>th</sup>. It was the first 101st bunker outside our perimeter. I also remember that we always manned our own perimeter with ARVNs on the south perimeter and for a short time (can't remember when exactly) we also had a squad of Koreans who helped man our west perimeter.

SGT Jim Bailey, was on his first of two tours with B Troop. His first tour was March 1968 - March 1969. He was a door gunner on the UH-1Hs and UH-1Cs. About the time they turned in the Charles Models for Cobras, he started flying with the Scouts and served with them for nine months. While preparing this history the author interviewed Jim and several others who were positive that the above mentioned "short round" incident resulted in a KIA. We are grateful for all Rich Hefferman has done for B Troop as its webmaster and for providing the details that help correct Jim's memory. Jim recalled: B Troop had only been at Phan Thiet a few days. Many remember that the engineers bulldozed part of the old cemetery and just pushed the sand up to form a perimeter and leveled space for the tents and aircraft parking. B Troop had to provide its own perimeter security for a few days because the Infantry Battalion from the 101<sup>st</sup> at LZ Betty wouldn't give them any troops for guard duty. EVERYONE pulled some guard duty until something could be worked out with MACV for the local ARVNs to help out. It was during this first few days that the VC probed B Troop's sand pile perimeter at night. The Blue platoon leader was working with the 101<sup>st</sup> guys to fire mortars outside the perimeter. Sadly there was a short round that landed near one of B Troop's manned positions. This Scout CE suffered sever head wounds and possibly back wounds. He was medevaced immediately (maybe to Vung Tau or the aid station at LZ Betty) but died en route. He was about 6 foot tall, dark hair, with an acne face.

On the 12<sup>th</sup>, A Troop's Guns were called to support a recon platoon. One ship took five 50 cal AA hits which damaged the tail rotor controls. The pilot was able to make a safe emergency landing at Ban Me Thuot. Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15485 flown by an unnamed crew near Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they took five hits from 14.5mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom tail section and the main rotor blade system, they made an emergency landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was recovered to Ban Me Thuot then repaired in theater.

Finally on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #66-14381 at Phan Thiet flown by 1LT J.D. Durden and Instructor Pilot WO1 C.W. Ulsaker, both had minor injuries. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was turned in to the 388<sup>th</sup> TC CO, repaired, and then issued to another unit in Vietnam. The Accident Summary reads: The instructor pilot had been giving transition training for the better part of the day and had completed approximately twenty power recovery autorotations without incident. At approximately 1620 hours, while instructing

LT Durden, WO Ulsaker initiated another autorotation. He rolled off the throttle at an altitude of 600 feet absolute and immediately saw that the N1 continued to drop below 60%. The engine power out warning light and audible warning signal came on. WO Ulsaker rolled the throttle back on but it had no effect. He continued the autorotation to the ground and zeroed out the airspeed before touchdown. Approximately three feet above the ground, he ran out of right pedal and the aircraft hit on the rear of the left skid in a slightly aft attitude. The aircraft had a ground run of approximately three feet before coming to a stop. The instructor turned off the switches and exited the aircraft. At no time during touchdown was the instructor pilot aware of the fact that the tail boom had been severed. On the downwind leg of the flight pattern, prior to entering autorotation, the instructor pilot had monitored all instruments and found that they all were in normal operating ranges. There were no personnel injuries involved. The damage to the aircraft consisted of damage to the four main rotor blades caused when they severed the last two feet of the tail boom. The two foot section of the tail boom was thrown approximately 25 feet to the right rear of the aircraft.

On the 13<sup>th</sup>, both of LOHs on an A Troop team were hit by AA fire while on a VR near Duc Lap. OH-6A #66-14412 flown by **WO1 Thomas Carlyle Jacobs** and **WO1 Curtis Lee Andersen** crashed at grid YU862813. Both men were killed. The Wall database gives the following tour start and MOS data: Andersen, 11 Jun 1968, 062B; Jacobs, 10 May 1968, 062B. The VHPA record states that 412 was recovered to Duc Lap but declared a total loss. The other LOH made a safe emergency landing. The Lift ships were used to take the wounded to the hospital at Ban Me Thuot.

CPT Charlie Rayl, who had been the A Troop Scout platoon leader, recalls: These two men had previously been UH-1C gunship pilots.

1LT Bill Brewster of C/4/503<sup>rd</sup> 173<sup>rd</sup> ABN remembers: My company arrived in the Duc Lap area about the 25<sup>th</sup> of August to provide security for an artillery battery located about 2 Kms south and west of the SF Camp at Duc Lap. We ran cleaning patrols morning and night around that location. About the 6<sup>th</sup> our A Company relieved us and we made a CA at Bon Sar Pa which was about 2 Kms west of the town of Duc Lap. We made no contact but found a base camp with a mock-up map made of bamboo of a 105 artillery position. It had little blocks of TNT laying all over the ground. You could tell they were planning to overrun that artillery position and spike those guns. On the night of the 7<sup>th</sup>, my friend CPT George Taylor was killed when the NVA did overrun that base. For the next several days we operated north and west of Duc Lap. On the night of the 11<sup>th</sup>, we were in a little fire-fight about sundown and I saw my first Cobra. He came in behind us firing minigun over our heads onto the enemy about 200 yards to our front. I remember rolling over on my back to look up at the helicopter firing and I was impressed. On the afternoon of the 12<sup>th</sup> we were north of that position along a road. We were heavily engaged most of that day. On the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>, we were again moving north along the same road. Our B Company was about 1 Km west of us moving on the same axis but a little north of us. The Air Cav was over us. The LOHs had been screening for us in the morning. It was slow going in the area because of the heavy vegetation. A B-52 strike had been through the area so there were bomb craters and a fair amount of blowdown. By about 10:30 a.m. we'd moved at least one Km when I heard a short burst (5 or 6 rounds) from an NVA machinegun. The C&C ship called us to say that the LOH was down. I was on the road with men all around me. I sent our point squad (about 5 guys that we called "Ranger") to try to get to the crash site. They got there. They estimated they were several hundred meters in front of us, so we started moving the company forward to close that gap. The next thing that happened was a single shot that killed one of my guys in the third platoon. It came from an NVA in a spider hole along side the road. Almost immediately we were engaged by a machine gun - the same one that had shot down the LOH. It hit about five of our guys. I remember moving up with my RTOs to a large tree. We could peek around it and see the gun without any trouble. I remember a strange sequence of events at that point. I was still checking out the gun when suddenly one of the guys from my old platoon, a

Canadian kid, walked up behind me with a LAW. I told him that was a good idea and he peeked around the tree to see the target as well. Once he determined what he was going to do, he put the LAW on his shoulder and stepped out to sight and fire it. Suddenly he was shot in the hand and was bleeding badly. He stepped back behind the tree, took the LAW down from his shoulder, and just looked at his hand. Without saying a word, he simply handed me the LAW, turned and walked away to get his wound attended to. I said to myself – I'm the company commander here – I guess I'll have to fire this thing. I put the LAW on my shoulder and stepped out from behind the tree. All I could see of the NVA gun position was the tripod – the gun crew had taken the gun and fled. Lucky for them because they were about to be smoked. That was the end of the fire-fight. We secured the crash site and started evacuating our guys. The bodies of the two crew members were badly burned. I recall that it took some time to get them into body bags. We salvaged part of the minigun and some of the radios but there wasn't much left. Later that day both B and C Companies moved back toward Duc Lap. The next morning about day light they put in 18 strings of B-52s starting about where the LOH went down and moving progressively to the north.

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, while working near the Ban Don SF camp, A Troop spotted about 100 NVA on top of a mountain. The Guns ships and numerous airstrikes were expended until dark. The next day a CIDG element swept the area and estimated from the blood and flesh left there that at least 30 people were killed or wounded. The Scouts followed the trail and found 30 to 40 NVA. Two airstrikes were put in resulting in six secondary explosions that sent smoke rising for more than 100 feet. Later intelligence revealed this was an NVA heavy weapons company.

The following article titled "Cavmen Kill 30 Foe in Dan Dun Battling" by SP4 Larry Hogen appeared in 13 Oct 1968 issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The date assigned to this event is mid-September 1968 because A Troop's unit history mentions a similar action in the Ban Don versus Dan Dun area. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Ban Me Thuot - When the battle for the city of Ban Dun ended, an observer said the enemy body count reached 30. Reports of possible enemy movement near the Vietnamese city had led 4<sup>th</sup> Division pilots of the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry into the area. Each unit was assigned an area and the choppers began combing the terrain. The 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry worked the western portion with the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry operating to their east. CPT Fredrich Rosenberger of New Rochelle, NY controlled the operation from his chopper. In the afternoon a light observation helicopter buzzed low over a hilltop when the pilot spotted a small group of men moving through the jungle foliage. Seeing the choppers, the men broke into a run, heading for the protective cover of a nearby clump of bamboo. A bright sun flashed down on the running figures revealing their uniforms and their weapons. The men were carrying AK47s. They were the enemy. Immediately, the scout ship gunners opened up on the panic-stricken NVA regulars. Circling over the crest of the hill the chopper was about to move in on the enemy when a much larger target came into view. A company-size enemy force had positioned itself on the rise. Spotting the scouts, the enemy crouched low in the grass, anticipating the Ivy attack. As the scout scrambled for altitude, the Cobras came screaming in on the position. As gunships from both cavalry units smashed the area, an innocent-looking FAC plane from the Air Force 21<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron, hummed above the contact. In a few moments he would send fighter-bombers hurling down upon the enemy. The choppers pulled out and the deadly jets began their attack. (Continued on Back Page) Sweeping in like birds of prey, the fighters unleashed tons of devastating ordnance on the enemy. Night was now rapidly falling and the aircraft were forced to withdraw. As darkness closed in on the jungle, the fires left by the air attack illuminated the hill with an eerie glow. Then, with the first light of dawn, Ivy troops returned to the area, hungry for another crack at the enemy. The NVA had taken a beating. The enemy lost 30 men on the hill but there was simply not enough left of the bodies for an accurate count. Major Jack Glenn of Summerville, GA mission

commander from the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry scanned the area from his Cobra. Major Glenn is one of the few commanders in Vietnam who employs a Cobra as a command and control (C&C) ship. He is a Cobra pilot. Moving away from the hill, the Ivymen were checking a nearby woodline when the remainder of the enemy force appeared and the battle began again. With fierce determination the NVA opened up on the choppers. As before, an Air Force FAC was on hand. The moment fighting broke out, the word was flashed and jets were on their way. Automatic weapons fire came flying up to meet the gunships as they flew pass after pass into the heart of the communist position. Toward the end of the battle, a light observation helicopter followed a Cobra into the area. It was his job to assess the effectiveness of the Cobras' attack. The "snake" came screaming through a ravine, the scout hot on his tail, and released his lethal fire. As the observation ship moved through the gully, the faint sound of weapons fir could be heard by the pilot. "I think I'm taking fire," reported the pilot. In order to confirm his suspicion, the scout pilot made a second, but shower pass through the ravine. This time there was no question. The time had come for the Air Force to go to work. A fighter bomber rolled in on the target, dropped his bombs and pulled up. The ordnance crashed to earth. There was the usual explosion, a momentary pause and then a second explosion, even more vicious than the first. Black smoke curled upward 150 feet. Suddenly another blast erupted from the target followed by black smoke. A supply of enemy rockets had been destroyed. The air attacks continued and so did the secondary explosions. By the time the jets had made their final run, six secondary explosions had been ignited, an enemy heavy weapons company destroyed and the tiny Vietnamese town of Dan Dun saved from almost certain destruction.

On the 15<sup>th</sup>, LTC Bob Reuter assumes command of the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav replacing LTC Stephen Cameron.

Also on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #66-16010 at Pleiku flown by AC CW2 R.A. Schulte who had minor injuries. According to the Goldbook database this aircraft was serving with the 201<sup>st</sup> CAC during this period of time. There is no evident that this aircraft served with any 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav unit. It is possible the Helicopter database record has either the wrong tail number or the wrong unit. The Accident Summary reads: The aircraft made a normal takeoff. At 40 feet altitude, the aircraft commander saw the RPM at 5700. He lowered the collective, but RPM did not build. An autorotation was completed. The nose of the aircraft hit a parked truck and damage the nose.

The following article titled "Cavmen Fight Hard, Kill 22" with a subtitle "Lasts 4 Hours" by SP4 Peter Call appeared in 15 Sep 1968 issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth (the official Vietnam era newspaper of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division). The exact date assigned to this event is unknown. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Ban Me Thuot – It started out to be a normal cordon and search operation covering three villages about 12 miles northwest of Ban Me Thuot. The pilots of Troop A, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry flew over the area and noted the villagers were formed in a triangle shape, two being located almost side by side and one located to the south of the two. Troop D waited to be inserted in the two villages to the north. They had left their armed jeeps behind this time and were acting as an aero-rifle platoon. Upon landing, Captain Anthony Hoyer of Haverstraw, NY, Troop D commander, split his men into two platoons to search the villages. In one village the cavalymen found out from a villager that, just before their arrival, 30 Viet Cong had fled to the north. "It was about 12:15 p.m. and I had one platoon to the east and one to the west as we moved to the southern most village," said Captain Hoyer. "When we neared the village out scout choppers reported two enemy running south, out of the village. We spotted them and opened fire. Then things began to break around us." Continued Captain Hoyer. "One of our scouts was damaged and had to land and at the same time the platoon to the east was brought under light fire." As gunships softened the area, Troop D entered the village. Troop D moved south, following fresh trails in the elephant grass. Captain Hoyer moved his men farther south, they spotted two NVA. "We brought them under fire and they went down," he said.

Gunships continued to pound the area as Troop D turned east and followed the contact, each step closing the distance between them and Charlie. Troop A, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was called from a nearby mission for support. The combination of air power, armed vehicles and foot soldiers broke the enemy's back. The contact ended after hour hours of hard fighting. The enemy suffered 22 killed. Captured articles included 20 packs containing clothes, cooking utensils, 20 chicom grenades and about 300 pounds of sachel charges. Documents and a large medical kit were also found.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for C Troop UH-1H #67-17336 at Camp Holloway flown by AC CPT Bob Davis and pilot 1LT Dan J. Schuette. Both pilots had minor injuries. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was repaired by C Troop. The Accident Summary reads: The aircraft had been operating in an area northwest of Pleiku, performing troop lifts into a landing zone, along with other aircraft. At approximately 1800 hours, CPT Davis reported low on fuel and was released to return to Camp Holloway, Pleiku for refueling. Weather and visibility in flight was poor. Upon reaching the refueling area, known as the Christmas Tree POL area, CPT Davis, who was at the controls, landed beside a refueling outlet. He noted that there was no fuel nozzle at that outlet and picked the aircraft up to a hover to move to another fueling point. At this point, he received a radio call from his troop commander that the rest of the flight was inbound, with low fuel warning lights on, and requested that smoke be thrown to mark the refueling area. Red smoke grenades were thrown by the crew chief and door gunner. The rotor wash blew one grenade against a refueling hose. CPT Davis, seeing the smoke grenade against the refueling hose, immediately moved the aircraft toward it in an attempt to blow it away from the refueling hose with his rotor wash. At this point, the tail rotor struck a metal shell casing used for housing the refueling nozzle. The tail rotor and 90 degree gear box were severed and the aircraft turned approximately one and one half to two times to the right. CPT Davis closed the throttle, lowered the collective and struck the ground hard, spreading the skids. Switches were turned off and the crew evacuated the aircraft.

1LT Dan Schuette recalls: I joined C Troop fresh out of flight school on 27 August just prior to C Troop becoming operational on the 1<sup>st</sup>. The monsoon weather made things difficult for the Troop and I went several days before I started flying with CPT Davis who was due to ETS from the Army in a few weeks. This morning we'd gone out to the staging area and sat around on standby. In the afternoon we inserted our Blues and then extracted them. We were under OPCON to one of the 4<sup>th</sup> Inf Div's brigades. So we left our Blues at the staging area, then lifted an infantry company into an area where another US unit was in contact. The weather was really bad and we made three lifts into the area. MAJ Frost had to lead us in each time because of the weather. Three low fuel warning lites came on on the way back. We were the first ones back to the refueling area and were told to pop smoke so the other aircraft could see the area. One of the smoke grenades was blown up against a fuel hose and as CPT Davis hovered over to try to blow it away, he hit our tail rotor on a fuel nozzle holder. The tail rotor broke off the aircraft and we spun around before we got the aircraft to the ground and got out of it before something flew up! Nobody hurt, but one helicopter won't be flying for awhile. I was grounded the next day because of the accident and had to take a flight physical. The doc just asked us if we were OK. We also had to turn in a report of how the accident happened, factors involved, etc. Earlier in the month I was given the additional duty of Motor Pool Officer. I remember this day off wasn't all that bad because I got a few things done like going to the PX, getting my helmet fixed, and picking up a few manuals on maintenance and motor pool management.

On the 17<sup>th</sup>, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop, UH-1H #66-16013 flown by an unnamed crew. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was repaired by A Troop. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance other aircraft mission, while departing the area, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade

system, cargo section, tail section, and engine compartment, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

[Check date on this material relative to MAJs Glover and Marshall.] CPT Joe Laehu recalls:

Even though I was A Troop's Maintenance Officer, periodically I would fly in the C&C ship. On this day I was with MAJ Dick Marshall. The Huey we were flying was crewed by a black sergeant but I don't recall his or the gunner's name. The AO had been in the Dak To area. It was late in the afternoon and we had stopped to refuel at Kontum on the way back to Enari. One of our H models, 013, had landed about 30 minutes or more prior to our arrival. I don't remember all the details about what had happened to 013, but when we arrived it was sitting all by itself in an exposed area of red dirt and the crew had already been evaced. We had been told that a mortar round had exploded very near the front of the ship. Only small pieces of jagged Plexiglass remained from the windshield and chin bubbles. The battery cover was gone as was at least one of the pilot's door and the blades had been peppered with shrapnel. I remember Dick and I talking over the situation as we were landing. We just knew that 013 would be totally destroyed if we left it there overnight, so the plan was for me to see if it could be saved. Dick landed a few yards behind 013. I jumped out and ran to the ship. I expected to find one messed up Huey but I was worried about the fuel and hydraulic systems plus the blades. As I was running up I kept looking at the dirt under it for fuel leaks, but didn't see any. I looked in the view ports for the engine area but didn't see any signs of hydraulic fluid or fuel. The blades seemed to be intact, so I decided that it might fly. I started it up. What was left of the gauges didn't tell me much so I had to rely on vibrations and the feel of the controls to determine if it wouldn't fly. Naturally the sounds and rotor wash beating on me were totally different because so much of the front of the helicopter had been blown away. The Huey hung together, so I did a quick hover check and eased it into the air. Dick was cool. He knew I didn't have any radios so he flew alongside me where we could exchange hand signals. I don't think we even went faster than 40 knots. We just kept going until I landed on the PSP back at Enari. I still have pictures of that ship and I'll bet lots of people have some. Believe me - it was the center of attention that night and the next morning until a Chinook came to take it away.

So long as I'm telling war stories, I've got to tell you this one. Not long after I arrived with the C Troop Service Platoon Leader, I was transferred to HHT to be part of Squadron Maintenance and then I went to A Troop. Well, most every night I'd get me a bottle of Matuce wine and before too long I'd be sound a-sleep. Another maintenance pilot, WO Davis was somewhat famous as a practical joker. Actually MAJ Terry Glover tells this story better than I can! Anyway, I was out of it one time, sleeping on my back and Davis comes into my place with two raw eggs. He cracks them and puts one over each of my eyes. I didn't wake up immediately but when I did, I couldn't open my eyes. I yelled, 'Oh my God, I'm blind!' as I got out of bed. Everyone had a good laugh at my expense. Needless to say but I didn't drink anymore wine for a few days!

On the 18th, A Troop's Scouts found an NVA rest area complete with ponchos and fresh sleeping mats. Then one NVA was killed as three tried to flee the area.

The following article titled "Helicopters Break Up NVA Chow" also appeared in 13 Oct 1968 issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth (the official Vietnam era newspaper of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division). The date assigned to this event is 18 September 1968 since A Troop's unit history mentions a similar event. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Ban Me Thuot - Helicopters of Troop A, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, became the uninvited guests of the enemy when they went down to investigate a partially concealed NVA canoe resting on the bank of the Ea Krong River. "We were on a normal visual reconnaissance when we spotted this 16 foot craft lying on the bank," said MAJ William Glover, Troop A commander. "An effort had been made to hide it, so our scouts and Cobras went in and destroyed it." As the choppers circled around,

one of the scouts spotted a fresh trail and began following it. Below, a few hundred meters from the river, four meals sat growing cold on a table. The diners, having heard the gunfire had decided to skip dinner. "We then saw four enemy soldiers running away from the direction of the camp," continued Major Glover. "One was separated from the other three by about a hundred meters." Moving in with the scouts and the Cobras once more, the pilots hammered the area and visually counted one killed. Upon closer inspection, the camp was seen to include sleeping bags and mats, cooking utensils, ponchos and pontoons for constructing river crossings.

On the 19<sup>th</sup>, Dan Schuette's Diary records that C Troop's Lift and Blues sat around the staging area most of the morning. 1LT Dan Schuette wrote: We only had three lift ships versus our normal four. I was flying as Blue 6 again as CPT Bob Davis was getting close to leaving. In the afternoon we dropped three squads of Blues into a really hairy LZ. We could hardly see the red smoke they popped. The first time our ship made a go-around as did one other ship, but we both made it in the second time. MAJ Frost was mad at me once when we were on standby and he couldn't get me on the radio. A couple of aircraft were landing and I went outside the tent where the radio was to see who it was. Just then he called me several times and was upset when I finally answered.

On the 21st, a friendly unit made contact near Duc Lap and had three wounded. The only PZ was not large enough for a UH-1; but the A Troop OH-6As were able to hover down and perform an emergency medevac.

On the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16108 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 24<sup>th</sup>, WO Jose Martinez of A Troop was involved in an event that earned him a DFC. The awards citation reads: '... piloting a UH-1H command and control aircraft in support of a friendly infantry unit, which was in heavy contact with an unknown size enemy force, near Duc Lap. Having sustained heavy casualties, and with a medevac unable to enter the contact area due to the heavy volumes of fire, the ground force was in dire need of help. WO Martinex volunteered to attempt the evacuation at tree top level to insure minimum exposure time to enemy fire. The aircraft was safely landed in the pick-up site and the wounded men successfully evacuated. Upon subsequent inspection, the ship was grounded from further flight due to the numerous hits taken.'

WO Jose Martinez provides: TAPE RECORDING

Forty one years ago today (24 May 2009), I arrived in the tropical paradise known as the Republic of Vietnam. I never realized just how eventful and life changing that year would be. I had bad times and good times there, but mostly I served with men I would grow to respect and with whom I would forge a unique bond. The bond continued to form with others who served in the same unit but at different times. This bond would lead to what we as a group have today, an organization dedicated to the brotherhood of brave and honorable men. We now meet once a year to celebrate that one year in our lives when we gambled with our health, sanity, and lives in defense of ideals we still hold dear. I never enjoyed the conflict but I did enjoy the join effort it took and the relationship with the men who shared the experience with me. I prayed and continue to pray that no other generation would have to experience war, but with the world make up, there is always need for men willing to risk life to face and subdue and oppressor. Several of my family's next generation have already served in combat areas, something I had hoped would never happen. That they did it with courage and honor makes me proud. Sorry if I ramble, but realizing what this day was made me remember that day 41 years ago when the young man I was faced the most eventful year of his life. I wish I really was as tough as I though I was back then. With what I know now, I still would not hesitate to do it all over again facing the same hardships, joys, and heartbreak I did back then. I hope each of

you has a great Memorial Day and celebrates the memory of the brave men we all knew who paid the ultimate price for the life we enjoy today

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #66-07907 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission, they took one hit from exploding weapon which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was recovered to recovered to Dak To and repaired in theater.

### **412<sup>th</sup> TC Detachment joins C Troop at Camp Enari**

During this month, the 412th TC Det deployed to Vietnam and would team with the C Troop for many months to come.

CWO Paul Kunkel provides the following details: The 412th was one of several dozen small but important aircraft maintenance detachments raised in the States and sent to Vietnam because the Army had learned *the hard way* that the aviation units needs more maintenance support. CWO William Olds was the officer charged with forming the 412th at Ft Benning during the summer of 1968. The unit deployed by air to Pleiku without its weapons! Their weapons arrived two days later. Really no one in the Pleiku area was expecting them - nice to know the Army was only a little disorganized in those days! Anyway, somehow the 412th got passed to the 7/17th and to C Troop. I joined the detachment just as many of the "originals" were leaving and would spend most of my tour at An Son with C Troop.

General Creighton W. Abrams presented CPT Denny Vaughan of B Troop the Distinguished Service Cross at an awards ceremony held at Camp Enari in either late September or early October 1968. The 5 Oct 1968 issue the Army Reporter describes the awards ceremony. The award related to B Troop's actions on 18 April 1968. SP4 John Stidham, the Squadron's PIO photographer, took photos at this event. In addition to General Abrams, these photos show LTC Bob Reuter, the Squadron CO, and COL Smith, believed to be a Deputy Commander at the 1<sup>st</sup> Avn Bde HQ.

The following article titled "Ban Me Thuot – A Kind of Living History Book" also appeared in the 27 Oct 1968 issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. Though this article does not specifically mention the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav it provides some interesting details about the area where the squadron spent so much of its time and energy.

Ban Me Thuot – The city of Ban Me Thuot is a living history book. Its streets tell of past emperors and kings. The buildings tell of its people's eternal struggle for freedom. The citizens speak of hope for a better tomorrow. Ban Me Thuot is a major Montagnard center. Much of the city's life is a strange blending of the ways of these ancient people and the demands of a modern world. Many Montagnards believe the Ban Me Thuot area is the site of the Bang Dran, a passageway through which the Montagnards came from their original home, deep within the earth, to this present location on the surface. Until the early 1930's, Ban Me Thuot was exclusively a Montagnard hamlet. At the time French and Vietnamese began to move into the area. The fertile lands gave birth to many successful rubber and tea and coffee plantations. Some of the largest plantations in the world are not in operation near Ban Me Thuot. Religious leaders soon introduced Christianity to people of the area. Today, the residence of the Bishop of Ban Me Thuot rivals many state-side cathedrals in grandeur. Even with the modern appearance of the Bishop's residence, the people of Ban Me Thuot have not forgotten their city's Montagnard heritage. As with many prominent buildings in the city, the church is topped by a high, sharply pointed roof, patterned after the Montagnard long house. Another building with the long house look is the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) bungalow, which was built at the turn of the century for the emperor, Bao Dat, as an imperial hunting lodge. President Theodore Roosevelt was once a guest at the lodge and hunted tigers in the surrounding jungle. Across the street from the MACV bungalow are the

grounds of the imperial summer palace. The palace is now held in state for visiting dignitaries. Sections of the building and its grounds still bear scars of the vicious Tet offensive. The population of Ban Me Thuot is 62,000. During Tet, the highland hamlet people turned schools, churches and office buildings into refugee relief centers. Allied forces, including many units of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, came to the aid of the stricken city. Ban Me Thuot came to life again. Where structures of wood and tine once stood, modern brick buildings appeared. Throughout the city signs of a brighter future may be seen. A Montagnard teacher's college will open its doors next year. A dormitory, classrooms, dispensary and cafeteria are but a few of the solid brick buildings making up the "campus." The school will have its own electricity and water supply and will be the only Montagnard teacher's college in the world. Everywhere one turns in Ban Me Thuot, the city tells a story. For years, the Montagnard and Vietnamese have lived separately. In Ban Me Thuot, today, Vietnamese and Montagnard children are seen walking hand-in-hand. Yet to be completed are the final pages of a history, written on the streets of an ancient city, and in the faces of an ancient but fascinating people.

About this time the last of "the originals" that deployed from Fort Knox and had not extended were getting very short. The following section is reserved for parting comments from these soldiers.

CW2 Wayne Miller provides: I flew in the Lift Platoon when I deployed with A Troop. I'd guess I flew with them about three plus months before spending seven months flying Scouts. I was Red 17. My last month of so I flew in the front seat of a Cobra. During Tet of '68 I flew as a co-pilot in a gunship rather often. Sadly I can only remember one enlisted man by name – SFC Rose or "Rosey" to most of us. We saw a lot and did a lot. I often wrote letters home providing some details. Recently these letters came back to me when my mother passed and I did some serious "remember when." I remember one really funny (now incident) that happened when A Troop was at "Camp Bleakness" (our name for Ban Me Thuot East.) There was mud every where. The weather was terrible. We couldn't fly. I must have been in a bad mood – everyone was because we were just sitting around and couldn't fly. This absolutely huge cockroach suddenly appears from no where and starts heading towards me. I wiped out my 38 and shot him! Needless to say but that freaked out everyone. A Troop flew most of its LOHs with a minigun. I remember giving a ride to a replacement guy once. The Oscar was up front with me while our passenger was "stuffed" in the back with the minigun's ammo tray. My Oscar and I decided to "play with this new guy" so while we were flying fast and low down the dirt road, I turned on the minigun. The rocks and dirt were flying up, hitting the ship. Naturally without a helmet on the noise must have been horrific! He freaked out as well. Today I fly EMS ships and I try extra hard not to freak anyone out.

## **October 1968**

For the 1<sup>st</sup>, Dan Schuette's Diary records that C Troop captured two VC packs with clothes, rice, cooking utensils and other items.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1LT Dick Cross recalls: My flight records show that on my birthday I had my first flight in Vietnam – a Huey ride with MAJ Mac. I was an Armor officer. In July of 1968, after flight school, I was sent to a unit at Ft. Hood with too many pilots and no aircraft. That didn't get it. But it still took me several months to get out of there. I arrived in Vietnam about 9 Sep 1968 and worked my way through the system until I got to B Troop at Phan Thiet. Once I started flying, I was assigned to the Lift Platoon under 1LT Richard L. Montgomery. About that time someone who was going home and sold me their Super-8 camera. About 2000 I transferred all my film rolls to a DVD. It basically starts and ends with my flying time in Phan Thiet with B Troop. At the beginning you can see photos of WO Gene Plummer (full name Leslie G.) now deceased. The guy had super handlebar mustache! He was an 'old timer' and taught me the ropes. We did a lot of "interesting things" in those days under MAJ Mac. I believe someone in B Troop had a brother who was in an Engineer unit down in III Corps near or with the 11<sup>th</sup> ACR at Blackhorse. They could get beer and other things that were a little difficult for us

to get. I remember several flights of 3 going down there to bring back palets of beer and lumber. Being an Engineer unit they could get construction timbers 4x4s, 6X6s without too much trouble. I don't have any pictures but can clearly remember our Hueys looking like fixed wing coming out of there with these long timbers sticking out both sides of the cargo doors. About December I started catching rides in the OH-6A with WO Mike Piccone, 1LT Joe Shepherd and 1LT Rick "Uncle Knut" Richard. I'd guess by January 1969 I'd moved from the Lift Platoon to the Scouts.

On the 4<sup>th</sup>, A Troop's ARP performed a cordon and search of a village. The Scouts noticed two NVA escaping and killed one and wounded the other. The Blues captured the wounded man, both weapons and their packs. Later in the day, the Guns fired on four NVA, killing one. The airstrike killed another and during the post strike, the Scouts killed a third.

The following article titled "Ivymen Battle, Then Kill 8" with a subtitle "Centers Around Ban Me Thuot" appeared in the 27 Oct 1968 issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The date assigned to this event is early October 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Camp Enari – Fourth Division forces were credited with eight killed and one detained in combat action in the Central Highlands. The majority of the action was centered around the southern flatlands near Ban Me Thuot. In two separate contacts, aircraft from the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, killed seven NVA soldiers about 20 miles north of Ban Me Thuot. The NVA were spotted in a village and began firing at the chopper while at the same time trying to flee. The aircraft also received heavy automatic weapons fire. Several small elements from the Ivy division made contact with small NVA forces. A Camp Strike Force (CSF), about 20 miles north of Ban Me Thuot came in contact with two NVA, killing one and detaining the other. The NVA soldiers were reported as wearing new uniforms and carrying new equipment. Just nine miles west of Pleiku, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry recon patrol came in contact with a lone Viet Cong. Small arms fire was exchanged resulting in another VC death. Near Duc Lap Special Forces Camp, Ivymen of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry, found a wide assortment of weapons in a bunker complex three miles southwest of the SF Camp. Among the weapons was a light machine gun, one SKS and five AK47s. Several other small contacts near the Oasis and Ban Me Thuot between Ivy recon elements and NVA patrols also occurred. After sweeps of the area were made blood trails were discovered leading away from the areas. Civilians also felt the brunt of the fighting in the highlands. A Vietnamese civilian was wounded.

The 27 Oct 1968 issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth also contained the following article titled "Cavmen Inaugurate NVA Nightmare" with a subtitle "Flying Scouts Spot Enemy" by SP4 Hans J. Lange. The date assigned to this event is early October 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Ban Me Thuot – Fourth Division support troops, from the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, turned a cordon and search mission into a nightmare for two North Vietnamese (NVA) soldiers. The sun had not yet burned off the morning's haze. Residents of Buon Bung, a small village one mile northeast of here, were still rubbing sleep from their eyes when light observation helicopters, Cobras and Huey slicks, came wailing in to seal up the village. As the slicks touched down, out popped Alpha Troop's air rifle platoon. They quickly set their positions to complete the vise-like seal, as the guns and scouts circled overhead. While National Police and a psychological operations team questioned the villagers about enemy activity, one of the flying scouts making an air security sweep, spotted two armed men stalking through the tall grass west of the village. When the observation craft made a second pass for a closer look, the pair broke into a run and began firing at the ship. A call hurriedly went to the command and control (C&C) ship hovering high above. Captain Fredrich Rosenberger of New Rochelle, NY, piloting the C&C ship, answered the call and told the scout to pin down the two enemy soldiers with fire from their miniguns. "And keep an eye on them," he

added. A message was relayed to Second Lieutenant Michael D. Casey of Sallisaw, OK, the air rifle platoon leader, to hand pick four men for the mission of routing out the NVA. It was his first day on the job. He selected Sergeant First Class Patrick C. McCormack of New York to lead the element. Specialist 4 John W. Yellock of Burlington, NC, was his heavy weapons man with an M60 machine gun. Specialist Horisce Young of Benton Harbor, MI, and Private First Class Raymond A. Notarbartolo of Whitestone, NY, completed the team. Captain Rosenberger dropped his ship to pick them up and lift them to where the NVA were pinned down. Once over the area, he brought his ship in and inserted the team, with his door guns blazing. On the ground, Sergeant McCormack moved swiftly. He had Specialist Yellock set up the machine gun and put out grazing fire. He sent Specialist Young and PFC Notarbartolo straight ahead, where the NVA were hiding in a small hut. "We hadn't moved very far through the tall grass, when up popped Charlie," said PFC Notarbartolo. "They were really motivatin', each of them going a different way. I got the one moving to our right," he continued, "and John (Specialist Yellock) got the one going left. It all happened so fast, I don't think any of us had time to realize what was going on." Once the shooting stopped, the team moved forward – slowly and cautiously. They found one dead NVA. Then the other one. He was still alive, offering no resistance. He was disarmed immediately, then evacuated.

The 27 Oct 1968 issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth also contained the following article titled "Peaceful Town Hit by NVA" with a subtitle "400 Enemy Infiltrate" by SP4 Hans Lange. The date assigned to this event is early October 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Ban Me Thuot – Buon Kdoh, a small Montagnard village 15 miles north of here, is nestled in a valley abutted on the north by rolling hills. Until now, the conflict raging throughout Vietnam had been distant from these villagers, as distant as Saigon, Hue, even Pleiku. But change came overnight when reports began filtering into the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Headquarters, under the command of Colonel Herbert J. McChrystal of Arlington, VA, that an enemy force, 400 strong had been spotted near Buon Kdoh. The mission of ascertaining the reports was given to Troop A, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, commanded by Major William P. Glover of Ozark, AL. He sent two light observation craft, two Cobras and a command and control (C&C) ship to scout the area by air. The scouts received small arms fire from the ground each time they passed to see what was below the heavy canopy of jungle foliage. They were there, but well out of sight. Suddenly, one of the scouts spotted four NVA in the open and ripped into them with miniguns, killing one. The others scattered. Captain Friedrich Rosenberger of New Rochelle, NY, at the controls of the C&C ship, felt there was no sense in playing games with the enemy. While the gunships were expending, the captain called for air strikes from the Air Force. In a matter of minutes the sleek fighter-bombers were on station. Once the position was marked, they swooped in to unload their heavy bombs. Three more sorties rained destruction on the suspected enemy positions. In little more than an hour, they had completed their mission. After the bombing runs, the scouts made bomb damage assessments. Forty-three heavy bunkers had been destroyed, as had 24 light bunkers and foxholes with covers. Scattered through the underbrush were ten sleeping mats, clothing, cooking pots and the remnants of six small hutches. They also saw two NVA bodies. One of the observation crafts swung around and sighted an NVA soldier with an AK47 in hand firing at the chopper. A burst from the mini-gun silenced the rifle and its owner. Four confirmed NVA kills resulted from the day's action, two of them attributed to the Air Force. Captain Rosenberger estimated many more bodies would have been spotted had the foliage not been so thick.

The following article titled "Smoke Billows from Destroyed Bunkers" appeared in the 3 Nov 1968 issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The date assigned to this event is early October 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Ban Me Thuot –Air Force fighter bombers and Cobra gunship from Alpha Troop, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, in support of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade pounded 100 L-shaped, enemy bunkers for five hours, destroying 80 percent of them. Eight secondary explosions were spotted. According to Major William P. Glover of Ozark, AL, commanding officer of the "Ruthless Riders," no accurate count of the NVA could be made. "We had worked the area north of Ban Me Thuot all day," the Major continued, "and earlier, our gunships with the help of air strikes, knocked out a smaller complex of 14 bunkers. There were a lot of trails and some looked fresh and well-traveled. The enemy was in there, too. They opened up on our 'Loaches' with what seemed to be an arsenal," Major Glover said. First Lieutenant James L. Devito of Sacramento, CA, piloted one of the 'Loaches,' the 'Reds.' His observer, Sergeant Ronald M. Evander of Minneapolis, MN, spotted several bunkers on the first pass. "The bunkers had steps going down into them and there were water containers standing outside," said Sergeant Evander. "The whole area had deep and wide zigzag trenches. We also saw partially covered rockets. About 25 of them." Surprisingly, the scouts received no immediate fire. "We were on our fourth pass when they finally opened up on us," said Lieutenant Devito. "As we were pulling out, we saw heads popping in and out of several bunkers." The "Ruthless" Cobra gunships made runs on the bunkers, blasting them with rockets and mini-guns. Then the Air Force got its chance. Captain Jerome McChristian of Odessa, TX, 21<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron, assigned to the Ivy Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, was flying a Forward Air Control (FAC) plane high overhead. He had three sorties (two planes each) of F-100 Super Sabres and one sortie of F-4 Phantoms unload 750 pound bombs on the NVA bunkers. Eight secondary explosions were counted during the bombing runs.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup>, A Troop's operations were mentioned in yet another article that appeared in the 27 Oct 1968 issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The following article is titled "Ivymen Score 56 Enemy Kills" with a subtitle "In A Week of Battling."

Camp Enari – Sharp clashes sparked the war in Vietnam's Central Highlands as 4<sup>th</sup> Division soldiers accounted for 46 enemy dead, 31 of these the results of previous fighting. A village north of Dak To was hit twice in less than one day by enemy units, the second time as Ivymen were conducting a MEDCAP in the village. The North Vietnamese soldiers fled leaving two dead, after artillery, air strikes and gunships, pounded the area. One AK47 and two SKS's were captured. (5 Oct) Gunships from the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry dropped two enemy soldiers and found one AK47 and one SKS when they were called in to help a Camp Strike Force which had engaged an enemy unit. (5 Oct) Following airstrikes and gunship runs on an enemy complex of 100 bunkers north of Ban Me Thuot, the NVA troops again fled leaving two dead behind. (6 Oct) Elements from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry found three NVA bodies in an area southwest of Duc Lap on the same day. (6 Oct) A patrol from the Duc Lap Special Forces camp found the bodies of 5 NVA killed in a contact with Ivymen on 23 August. (8 Oct) Fighting Fourth Division gunships came to the aid of a Camp Strike Force which had sprung an ambush on a large NVA unit in the area of Plei Me. Three of the enemy perished and 17 rucksacks were recovered from the site. (9 Oct) Cobra gunships from the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry again filled the air 10 miles north of Ban Me Thuot when 15 enemy soldiers were spotted in the open. A check of the area found three enemy bodies. (10 Oct) Four NVA soldiers were killed in a sharp clash with Ivymen on patrol from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry near Duc Lap. (10 Oct) The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry in operations south of Duc Lap found the bodies of 23 North Vietnamese. Fifteen of the enemy were found in shallow graves and thought to be the result of a battle with Ivymen on 30 Sept. Another four bodies, killed by artillery, were found by the same unit. The North Vietnamese soldiers were wearing green uniforms. An additional five enemy dead, estimated to be a week old and killed by artillery, were found by the "Cacti Blue" soldiers.

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, the following 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav personnel were awarded the Army Commendation Medal for meritorious service via HQ 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade General Orders 5029, TC 320, dated 6 Oct 1969:

SGT Adams, Michael P. – D Troop – Nov 1968 to Oct 1969.  
SP5 Ashworth, Gary – HHT Troop – Dec 1968 to Nov 1969.  
SP4 Beichler, David L. – HHT Troop – Sep 1968 to Oct 1969.  
SGT Cole, Gary – D Troop – Nov 1968 to Oct 1969.  
SP4 Koch, William R. – HHT Troop – Nov 1968 to Oct 1969  
SP5 Lund, Charles A. – HHT Troop – Dec 1967 to Nov 1969.

SP5 Charley Lund recalls: As mentioned earlier, I served in the 40<sup>th</sup> TC Det until Oct 68 when I became a crew chief with the Aviation Section of HHT. I was assigned as the CE of 67-17315. At that time it was waiting for an engine. I believed it had been damaged but don't know all the details. According to the logbook, there was a drop in oil pressure and they put it down in some elephant grass. A Chinook brought it back to Camp Enari. CW2 Sustrick was the HHT Maintenance Officer. [Notes from Mike Law: The VHPA pilot roster has SUSTARICH JOSEPH P flight class 64-5W which is too early unless this was his second tour in RVN in 1969 and then he would have been a rather senior W2 or W3 plus SUSTRICK LAWRENCE J flight class 70-1 which is too late.] I crewed 315 until Feb or March 1969. I gave 315 to an old gunner who was also a 67N20. I started crewing 67-19492 in Feb or March 1969 and stayed with it until Nov 1969. They were going to take me off flight status but they needed a CE for 233, so they gave it to me. That is how I was on the milk run to BMT that day. The Aviation Section in HHT had no assigned gunners. All of us were crew chiefs. We would use new guys or volunteers as gunners. We would rotate ships a lot.

On the 8<sup>th</sup>, CPT David 'Mike' Hennessy assumed command of D Troop replacing CPT Tony Hoyer.

For the 8<sup>th</sup>, LT Dan Schuette's Diary provides details about the consolidated squadron motor pool. I reported to C Troop at Camp Enari on Aug 1968, was assigned to the Lift platoon under CPT Bob Davis, and given the additional duty of Motor Pool Officer. I was an Infantry Branch officer and had just completed flight school. 1LT Jim Cunningham was one of my roommates. I often flew with Bob Davis. When CPT Davis DEROSed and ETSed in early October 1968, 1LT Bob Springthorpe became Blue 6. When Bob didn't fly, I would fly as Blue 6. Prior to coming to Vietnam I prepared a diary with lined paper in a small 5-ring binder and even put the date on the top of each page with a typewriter. One of the notes in my diary mentions that "a Captain" showed me around the area at Camp Enari and explained things to me. Though I didn't write it down, I remember that person was Mike Law. During the 2009 VHPA Reunion Jim, Mike Law and I spent a lot of time reviewing this diary. Prior to attending the Reunion I made a list of people I wanted to met and was glad to met both Jim and Mike. Since C Troop had only recently arrived in Vietnam it had yet to have a CMMI. MAJ Frost gave me some strong advice on how to prepare the Motor Pool for this inspection. I believe the total Motor Pool staff consisted of one sergeant and one specialist. If memory serves me correctly, paperwork in wasn't their strong suit. I'm been warned that the CMMI team would really look at the individual vehicle logbooks in some detail. These should include almost a daily record of some sort. Of course all oil changes and all maintenance activities like repairing a flat must be noted. So we inspected each vehicle, noted the mileage, etc. Then we started fabricating the logbook entries. We guessed we worked on this for at least a couple of weeks. We'd lay out a plan with dates and events. We used the names of baseball players for different drivers and each one of us had to remember "who" we were and how to sign that "person's" name. I remember being "H. Aran." We'd write our entry into the logbook, sign it, and pass it to the next "driver." We kept this up hour after hour. I kept complaining to MAJ Frost, the XO, and 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant that we needed more people. Finally we got this guy that came from the backwoods of Alabama. He wasn't too good with the paperwork but he could certainly fix things and that was a big help. The Squadron operated a consolidated Motor Pool. This arrangement had advantages and disadvantages. Not having to have our own dispatcher was one of the advantages. We

had a duty roster so everyone would pull a shift for the various jobs. On \_\_\_ we had a CMMI. After we passed I remember being in the Orderly Room. MAJ Frost said something like, "The Motor Pool passed the CMMI!" I remember saying something like, "With no help from you." He turned to me and said, "You are dismissed Lieutenant." Everyone I know from C Troop has "Major Frost stories" but everyone also remembers that he was always in the middle of the action – flying low and slow and hanging it way out. Later I saw most commanders flying high above the action, landing only when it was really safe, and then writing themselves up for awards. MAJ Frost was a real leader and a real fighter!

1LT Bob Springthorpe recalls: I arrived in Vietnam in Feb 1968. I flew LOHs for about 4 months and then joined C Troop's Lift Platoon. I remember flying with CPT Bob Davis while he was the Platoon Leader. When he DEROSed I thought they made 1LT Jim Phifer to Platoon Leader but that was only for a short while then he was reassigned to another unit at Holloway. I'd guess by the end of October I was Blue 6. I stayed in that job until early 1969. The guy who took my place was a West Pointer. I remember he liked going on the ground with the Blues. I think his name was CPT John Davis.

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, A Troop performed a VR and found some people harvesting rice. Suddenly they produced AKs and started shooting at the Scouts. One LOH took five hits but three rice harvesters died.

On the 10<sup>th</sup>, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16241 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took seven hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, forward main rotor system, and tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 14<sup>th</sup>, A Troop's Scouts observed three VC in a camouflaged hooch. Only one managed to escape.

From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup>, A Troop was given the assignment to recover bodies from an Air Force C-47 that had crashed into a mountain while returning Air Force personnel from R&R (they were wearing khaki uniforms and may have been returning from Bangkok). SP4 Jim Hoffman (who was BLUE ALPHA, LT Casey's RTO with the aircraft from Apr 68 to Apr 69), SGT Rick Bossard, SGT Malcolm Smith, and SP4 Ken Kay were part of the Blues inserted to do this job. During the 2001 and 2002 Reunion, the following description was recorded: The crash happened on the 14<sup>th</sup> when the aircraft slammed into the side of a steep slope. Initially 3 or 4 Blues repelled in with some engineers to blow down some trees so the rest of the Blues could get in. They had to walk, mostly climb, about an hour to reach the site near the top of a hill. Part of the platoon was used for security and part for the actual recovery. SP4 Bob Kilpatrick, their medic, provided most of the technical directions for removing the bodies from the wreckage. Bodybags were dropped at the site and a cargo net. The dead were all smashed into a tight area toward the front of the aircraft. Jim Hoffman remembers there were bodies and luggage and bodies and pieces of aircraft metal all mixed together. Malcolm Smith remembers that they had to rotate people working inside the wreckage frequently and they all wore the small gray gas masks. They also dispersed wintergreen but the humid and hot environment worked against them. Their Scouts flew normal security for this operation but they never made contact or received enemy fire. A FLIPPER CH-47 came to retrieve the cargo net but one side came loose and some bodies fell out, so they had to reload it. The Blues did not spend the night on the site. Several people believe they recovered 27 bodies. By the third day, they had done all they could. The smell and hazard created by the leaking fuel put an end to this effort. They were told to leave the area and artillery would set it on fire. Others that may have been on this detail were: SP4 Doug Werner (the other RTO), SP4 Clyde Hinson, and SGT Littlejohn. All in all this was one of the most disturbing jobs the Blues ever had to do.

SP4 Kurtis Jackson was a medic with D Troop during this period. He remembers that D Troop established a perimeter and the CH-47 landed with the external load of bodybags in the net. He believes his troop was given the job of removing the bags from the net and placing them inside the Chinook so it could take them to a major base without upsetting everyone.

The following article titled "Army and AF Aid Rescues C-47 Crash" by SP4 Hans J. Lange appeared in the 24 Nov 1968 issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth.

Ban Me Thuot – In a show of interservice cooperation, the Army teamed with the Air Force in the recovery of a C-47 aircraft which crashed on a rugged ridgeline 19 miles south of here, killing 24 passengers and crew members. Both services reacted quickly when radios in the Ban Me Thuot Control Tower picked up the cry of "May Day, May Day." The tower men plotted the course of the plane, which was en route to Da Nang from Saigon. They sent a call for all available aircraft to aid in the search for the stricken plane. At the forward area of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, commanded by Colonel Herbert J. McChrystal of Arlington, VA, the "Ruthless Riders" from Alpha Troop, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, commanded by Major William P. Glover of Ozark, AL, responded without hesitation. "We sent out scouts (LOHs) and Cobra gunships as soon as the morning fog lifted," said First Lieutenant Carl L. King of Shreveport, LA, liaison officer for the Ruthless Riders. The downed C-47 was found shortly after the May Day call. No sign of life was seen on the ground. Attempts to lower a paramedic into the crash site were hindered by tall trees. The Dustoff ship did not carry ropes long enough to allow the medics to rappel to the ground. To alleviate the situation, a Chinook helicopter from the 179<sup>th</sup> Assault Support Helicopter Company, located at Camp Holloway, Pleiku, was diverted from a resupply mission. Pilot of the hook, Warrant Officer Errol H. Van Eaton of Yakima, WA, picked up four medics and a doctor at Ban Me Thuot Army Airfield as well as a Special Forces para-medic, who was trained for rescue of this nature. "We took them out to the crash site," said Mister Van Eaton, "then lowered them by the hoist. After they spent sometime on the ground, they reported no survivors and we pulled them back up." The Special Forces para-medic said: "The plane apparently hit hard. It was completely torn up. Only the tail section was recognizable. The passengers and crew must have been killed on impact." Recovery operations were put into motion soon after. Air strikes were called in on the opposite side of the ridge near the crest, to clear the heavy canopy of trees and undergrowth. When Air Force jets finished dropping their bombs, a team of specially trained engineers was lowered into the cleared area to prepare a landing zone. Major Richard H. Mashall of Columbia, SC, the 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry's 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron S-3 in charge of the Air Cavalry's part of the recovery operation said, "We had our ships covering the surrounding area all the time. That piece of territory is rugged and we didn't know if Charlie was around to throw a monkey wrench into the operation." Three air rifle platoons, two from the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Robert H. Reuter of Arlington, VA, and one from Delta Troop, 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron, 10<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry, commanded by Major Jack Glenn of Sommerville, Ga, were inserted to provide ground security. The operation continued slowly, but one by one the bodies were extracted from the wreckage.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07915 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine compartment, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

### **A Troop Relocates to Camp Enari from Ban Me Thuot East**

On the 25th, A Troop left Ban Me Thuot East and returned to Camp Enari.

Also on the 25th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16266 flown by 1LT J.L. Devito and Aerial Observer SP5 R.M. Evander. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was removed from the Army Inventory in November 1968. The Accident

Summary reads: At approximately 1800 hours 1LT Devito was flying lead ship in a flight of two. Their mission was to fly convoy escort on a convoy enroute to Camp Enari. The convoy was approximately 10 miles south of Camp Enari traveling north on highway 14. 1LT Devito was flying S turns from east to west across the road in front of the convoy at an altitude of about 30 feet above the ground, which was tree-top level. The aircraft was traveling at approximately 10 knots indicated air speed. The wind was generally out of the north east at 10-15 knots. 1LT Devito made a pass to the right and made a right pedal turn. As he started turning the wind caught him and the aircraft started spinning to the right. 1LT Devito cut the throttle to stop the spin and autorotated. The aircraft landed hard, damaging the aircraft. There were no injuries to the crew. A thorough pre-flight was performed and no evidence of aircraft or material failure was present.

Meanwhile, the Monsoons ended at the beginning of the month, and B Troop supported elements of the 173rd Abn, 3/506 Abn, and the 44th ARVN Regiment during the month. They made contact with the enemy 21 times and inserted the Blues nine times. The coordinated efforts between B Troop and supporting units resulted in 11 VC killed, two VC and six weapons captured.

On the 26th, B Troop was grounded for two days due to fuel contamination. Their maintenance crews worked day and night to flush all aircraft fuel cells and lines with grain alcohol. By the afternoon of the 27th, B Troop was mission ready again.

For several days during late October C Troop worked for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde, 4<sup>th</sup> Inf Div around The Oasis. The following article titled "Ivymen Overrun NVA Post" with the subtitle "Tiger-Suited Enemy Lose 39 Plus Ammo" by SP5 Jeffrey Tarter appeared in the 17 Nov 1968 issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The date assigned to this event is 26 October 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law. It is Mike's opinion that the events described in this article are separate from the events of the 27<sup>th</sup> even though many of the players (C Troop and a mechanized infantry unit) are in common.

Oasis – Units from the Ivy Division's 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade overran an NVA command post in an overnight battle that cost the enemy 39 dead. A sweep of the battle recovered huge amounts of brand-new weapons, supplies and communications equipment. The enemy camp was discovered when an observation helicopter from Troop C, commander by Major Robert Frost, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, spotted signs of NVA activity beside a small stream twelve kilometers from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade's Headquarters at the Oasis. "The enemy made a stupid and uncharacteristic mistake," declared the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade's commander, Colonel Stan L. McClellan. "They had washed some clothing and hung it out to dry in the open." As the helicopter dropped down to inspect the area, it drew small-arms fire from five tiger-suited NVA but escaped without damage. An air rifle platoon was swiftly landed and found rucksacks and partially dug bunkers. No NVA were in sight. While the platoon secured the stream bank, Cavalry gunships tried to lure the enemy into resuming the contact. The NVA broke cover about 500 yards away by shooting at another helicopter. Returning fire from the air, the air cavalrymen killed eleven fleeing enemy, then landed and shot three more. "With that many in the open, I knew then that a large force was present," said Colonel McClellan. In an attempt to cut off the escaping enemy forces, mechanized reinforcements from Company A, commanded by Captain Charles Lauderdale of Midland, TX, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Mechanized), 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry, were rushed to the scene from Firebase Puma, five kilometers away. Churning through the thick bamboo and brush, Alpha Company's armored personnel carriers (APCs) cut down another six NVA before reaching the stream bank. Enemy soldiers ran, splashing across the stream to escape, trading fire with Charlie troop on the opposite bank. Guided by Colonel McClellan in an airborne command and control helicopter, the APCs flattened a hasty landing zone. Moments later a Recon Platoon, led by First Lieutenant William J. Filippini of Fresno, CA, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry, was airlifted onto the landing zone to replace the air riflemen. As darkness fell, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Mechanized), 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry, infantrymen set up a compact night perimeter around

(continued on Back Page) their APCs. Twice that night the enemy tried to move on the opposite bank and was beaten badly. The first time, the listening posts facing the stream heard NVA trying to recover weapons on the other bank. The listening posts pulled back, blasting Claymore mines at the enemy as they left. A C-47 "Spooky" plane raked the area with deadly mini-guns and cannon. "We flew a mission spraying the entire area west of the river, where there were none of our troops," Colonel McClellan said. A tracer round from an APC touched off a cache of NVA B-40 rockets, and flash lit up the night. Later the listening posts heard movement again, Specialist 4 Michael Valunas of Philadelphia, PA, a Scout Platoon team leader, was on the perimeter when the APCs opened up on the enemy with .30-caliber machine guns. "We called in artillery – you could hear the shrapnel ripping through the trees, we were so close. Four or five shells were coming in at a time," said Specialist Valunas. A second "Spooky" mission added to the havoc caused by the tracks and the artillery. The next morning the infantrymen found abandoned gear and enemy dead littered the area around their position. Said Sergeant George Warchol of Antioch, IL, a squad leader with Alpha Company: "I just couldn't believe it. All you saw were rucksacks all over the place. It was fantastic." The equipment collected within a few yards of the perimeter filled Hueys. "We spread out and fanned the area," Sergeant Warchol recalled. "We came across becoup bunkers that were being dug just about 30 meters away from the LZ." A 7.62mm heavy machine gun with canon and spare barrel that had been fired on Charlie Troop's helicopters was found lying up against a tree. Beside the charred wreckage of the exploded B-40 cache were a launcher and more NVA bodies. "There were sandal prints running all over the area," said Sergeant Warchol. The sweep brought the total of enemy dead to 37. Among these were four NVA officers. Rifles, machine guns, mortars, rockets and ammunition, medical supplies, rice, six miles of communications wire, a field telephone and switchboard were recovered during the sweep. "Everything we found was brand-new," said Colonel McClellan, who joined the troops on the ground at daybreak. "That was very significant. We knew we had a newly-outfitted unit. It was also clear from the equipment we found that we had hit at least a battalion-sized unit," he added. "We feel reasonably certain that a lot more of their dead were hauled away during the night." The Colonel pointed out that virtually all the captured equipment was found close to the landing zone perimeter. "Much more," he said, "was probably recovered by the NVA during the night." Sixty-nine rucksacks gathered during the sweep, all were full of neatly-pressed NVA khaki uniforms. Many of the enemy carried new food rations similar to dehydrated Long Range Patrol rations, as well as blocks of C-4 plastic explosive. Ground and air surveillance of possible escape routes continued for several days after the battle

On the 27th, C Troop was screening an area east of the Ia Drang between the Oasis and Plei Me. WO John Kawa remembers the battle this way:

C Troop had been in country several months and until this day had experienced very little actual enemy contact. I was beginning to wonder when and if heavy contact would happen. I can remember being concerned that if this routine continued we would all fall into complacency and someone would get hurt. We were working out of The Oasis which was a small strip with minimal refuel and rearm facilities. At that time the 2nd Brigade had its HQ there. It was located on the northern side of the famous Ia Drang valley along QL19 that continued west to Duc Co near the Cambodian boarder. Our AO that day was on the eastern edge of the valley; the countryside was basically flat and covered with scrub. As was our custom, the lead LOH had a Gunner and an Observer while my ship had a minigun and an Observer. SSG Tom Thompson was my Observer. I believe Hub Roberts flew lead that day. He was a GREAT Scout pilot and a FUNNY, FUNNY person. We were following a dirt road looking for any signs of recent crossings. As usual, I made my search in random patterns mentally keeping track of which areas were covered and which still needed checking. I often overlapped my searches approaching likely hiding places or travel routes from several different directions in an attempt to pickup something that I might have missed on a previous pass. The VC and NVA were very clever but like all humans they needed food, water, and

a safe place to rest. As a Scout we were trained to understand these needs and to look at the terrain in those terms. On one pass I skirted the edge of a village and noticed piles of freshly harvested rice. The lay of the land was perfect for concealed movement as the village was located on the edge of a small bluff next to a shallow draw forested with single canopy trees and heavy undergrowth. In the open areas, tall grass grew everywhere. There was a small stand of trees between the village and the entrance down into the draw and we started our search there. On the first pass, I discovered some freshly dug trenches for both personnel and AWs. I slowed down and on the second pass, saw some satchels and tools laying around the base of the trees. Subsequent passes at even slower speeds did not solicit any response or movement and I passed all this up to the Guns and MAJ Frost in the C&C. MAJ Frost decided to have one LOH land near the edge of the trees to capture as many of the satchels as possible. We all felt that they could contain valuable intelligence information. I covered Hub's landing in a clear open area next to the trees. I watched the Gunner [later we learned this was SP4 Jack Wesley] jump out, pistol in hand, and dash into the trees. As I circled I could see him gathering several satchels and then all hell broke loose. Hub reported AW fire coming from the trees. I could see the Gunner sprinting back to the LOH with one of the satchels. It must have been very heavy because it seemed to take him forever to reach his ship. I know everyone in the air was willing him to run faster. I immediately rolled back around onto the trees and laid down a burst of mini into the tree line. My adrenaline jumped up a bunch. There was so much to watch for: enemy movement, the position of the other helicopters, the tree lines, the village, the status of my ship, and on and on. Many things, however, were second nature: listening for instructions from the C&C, staying out of easy lines of fire, keep moving and altering flight patterns, watching for the enemy. The situation was complicated by the fact that the village was so close to the contact area. The C&C had to get permission to engage in full contact and sometimes this could take forever. The Guns were getting impatient. They had a score to settle. Someone was shooting at the people they were supposed to protect and this could not continue. Everyone got safely back into the air without any injuries. Hub quickly reported that the satchel was a two-man carry job, weighed about 120 lbs and was filled with plastic explosives! Ed's Scout team arrived, was briefed and we departed for The Oasis.

We continue the story from the front seat of a Cobra and WO Bob Mitchell tells us: The second team had Sterling Cox and R.A. Jones in the lead Gun, Danny Norman and myself as wing, 1LT Ed Johnson piloted the lead LOH with LT Pat Murphy as an observer and SP4 Vosine as gunner, and WO Bill Nichols as wing. Apparently MAJ Frost had ordered up the Blues because one of the first things we did after relieving the first team was to insert the Blues. They quickly moved in and picked up about 60 packs. MAJ Frost split the team about that time; Ed and Sterling covered the Blues and Bill and Danny started tracking the escaping NVA force. It wasn't very long or very far, maybe 7 - 800 meters to the northeast when Bill drew fire. We immediately rolled in and fired the area up with rockets, minigun and 40mm. The jungle wasn't very high or dense here and our munitions were very effective. Our ship was functioning perfectly, something that had taken a lot of personal interest by all of the Gun pilots to make happen. We ask Bill to go back in and check the area out. At this point, Danny and I used an unusual tactic, I suppose, in that we dropped down low and flew a tactical right wing on the Scout ship. We went in fast as we expected it to be hot. I had the action switches depressed and the turret weapons aimed under the LOH. As he passed over the bottom of the draw I saw two sets of muzzle flashes coming out of a bush. I was on the mini and literally tore down the bush even as Bill was calling "receiving fire." He followed that with "there's a bunch of them running up that trail to the left." I came off the mini onto the 40mm and just ate up the trail. We later found two dead in the bush and five on the trail. We went back to altitude and made some more runs. I think Sterling came over and helped us. We took the LOH / Gun team back down again but couldn't draw any more fire. So Bill started to slow down and take a good look. It wasn't very long before he had a body count up in the 20s and was not taking any fire at all. About

this time, the Blues were ready to be extracted. Their PZ was about 400 meters to the west and MAJ Frost had the last slick reinsert a Blue Squad in a single ship LZ to search the bodies. The LZ wasn't much - high grass surrounded by scrub with a few 100 - 150 foot trees. It seemed relatively safe as we had not been able to provoke a response in about 20 minutes. In reality the NVA had hunkered down hoping we would go away. As the Blues started down the trail toward the dead NVA, their point man, **SP4 Edward J. Maslyn**, was shot and killed by a 51 that penetrated his flak jacket front and back. [The Wall database gives his tour start date as 16 July 1968 and his MOS as 11B20.] The remaining six Blues scurried back 50 meters or so to their LZ where they were taking fire from three side. They were calling for help saying they had left their point man down the trail and didn't know if he was dead or alive. The air teams were back in normal configuration again. Ed was talking to the Blues and said he would hover down the trail, to see if he could find the soldier and make a determination. I watched almost in fascination as he hovered high (about 150 foot) over the LZ. The enemy were so close in on the Blues that we were not shooting. I saw the muzzle flashes shift from firing at the Blues towards Ed's LOH. These scenes are brazened in my mind. I can see them as clearly as if I was still sitting in the front seat of that Snake. I watched as the aircraft started taking hits, then started to spin violently, struck the largest tree which ripped off the tailboom, and then tumble down the side of the tree to the ground on the side away from the Blues. It immediately started to burn. The smokes, WPs, and frags added to the burning jet fuel. My stomach sank as I was sure no one could have lived through such a crash. My first thoughts were -- why him, his wife had just had a baby about a month before. They were dead (so we thought) and we couldn't dwell on that; we had the Blues to save. The other team came back on station and we departed to rearm and refuel but we felt terrible, just terrible.

The VHPA Helicopter database has helicopter battle damage and lost record with three injuries for C Troop OH-6A #66-07909 at YA036226. 1LT Ed Johnson recalls: I was to Scout Platoon leader at the time, Red 6. I was flying in the left seat giving instructions to LT Pat Murphy, who was new in country, flying the right seat. This was not a minigun ship so SP4 Vosine was in the rear compartment. During my post-crash recovery period I remember some flashback thoughts of some events prior to getting shot down. In one I remember returning to the AO after refueling at The Oasis and flying over a village. As we passed over the village and I saw some people walking around in what was really an abandoned village. They were acting like villagers. I remember thinking at the time: "This isn't right! These guys don't belong here." Of course, after the fact, I realized they were NVA soldiers trying to act like villagers. I don't recall any other significant details until we started taking hits. I remember the 51 cal taking out the tail rotor. I was flying at the time. Naturally we started spinning. I remember hitting the tree and believe we more or less slide down it as we crashed. The LOH didn't roll but there was a fire. When I regained my senses I noticed that Pat wasn't in his seat. He must have been dazed because he wandered off by himself always from the wreck. I believe a US mechanized infantry unit found him walking in a streambed. I had cuts on my face and was bleeding from my nose. The crash injured several vertebrae in my back. I was in pain. When I exited the aircraft, I saw that SP4 Vosine was pinned under the LOH. I pushed the LOH enough to free him and drug him to a hiding place in some brush. I believe he had a broken leg and possibly a broken back. I don't remember that he was bleeding seriously. I only had my pistol for our protection. About that time I started thinking about stuff we were supposed to take from the aircraft. I remembering searching for the SOI we kept in the front pocket of our chicken plate. I couldn't find it, so I gave up on that idea. I clearly remember being very afraid for our safety. I knew the NVA were all around us. Fear was the primary sensation on my mind. I have a clear mental image of one Slick coming in to land the Blues as it passed overhead. I remember hoping the door gunners would not open up because they would have hit us for sure. I could hear the pop, pop of AKs firing at the Huey and later at the Blues. I have a vague recollection of seeing a Dust-Off ship that's about it on that subject. Again I was scared. When I heard someone

approaching us in the brush, I remember thinking, “Am I going to fire this pistol at them or am I going to shot Vosine and myself to keep from being captured?” I didn’t fire it at all. It was the Blues! I think once I realized we were with our Blues, I more or less passed out. The next thing I remember is landing on the hospital pad at Pleiku. I stayed in the hospital about three weeks. They never evaced me to another hospital. Then I went back to Enari. I was grounded until about January, I’d guess. I remember making several trips in a jeep from Enari to visit the medical folk in Pleiku. They made me the Troop Operations officer. SSG Francis E. Powers was the Operations Sergeant. He had deployed with us from Campbell. He would later con me into teaching an accounting class for several C Troopers. He got several others to sign-up for one of those USAFI classes in accounting. Then he got me to be their instructor. After my time in the Army, I was a banker. I remember PSG Powers was a good soldier. We kept in touch after Vietnam. I believe he later got a commission so maybe this class helped him out. After I got back on flight status I did fly a LOH again but mostly I flew C&C with MAJ Jerry Ledford. I didn’t like that. Let’s put it this way – he was not Major Frost. I remember seeing MAJ Frost’s C&C ship once when we were up near Dak To. The main blades had entry bullet holes in the topside – meaning the NVA had been shooting down at him!! I remember once Jerry just put his head down and he said, “I can’t take this pressure!” Because of my back injury I didn’t fly all that much. After awhile even the normal helicopter vibrations were painful. I stayed in C Troop’s Operations until I DEROSed. I did stay on active duty for about four years and then flew in the Guard for a few years. I still have back and leg pains. I had one other scary experience in Vietnam that I still think about. For some reason I was refueling the C&C Huey. I think we were at Dak To. I don’t know where the gunner was, but I had my hand on the fuel nozzle as we were refueling from one of those blivets. It was a standard hot fueling – so the Huey’s engine was still running. This Chinook landed in the POL point and almost blew me over with the fuel nozzle still in my hand! I remember thinking – if I fall over and a stream of fuel goes into the engine exhaust – it will be all over but the shouting! The remember seeing what was left of an NVA tank that had been destroyed by artillery just outside an SF camp near Dak To. I also remember how stupid I thought it was that we could only fight the NVA until we got to the border, and then we’d have to break it off. The politics of that War still don’t make any sense to me.

Now we’ll hear from SP4 Ed ‘Bomber’ Kane who was on the ground. Only the 1<sup>st</sup> Squad was inserted the second time. No sooner had we stepped off the Huey when the squad leader, a Spanish SFC who’s name I can not remember, told me to take the rear as we moved toward the place where the NVA bodies were. I don’t think we’d gone more then 20 yards when all hell broke loose. SP4 Ed Maslyn, was hit immediately and went down. I remember hearing the heavy machine firing with several AKs. The sound of that large a weapon firing so close and right at us isn’t something I ever want to hear again! That was terrible! The Spanish NCO got on the radio and started talking with the air crews but he was so nervous that he was speaking more Spanish than English. Finally a young buck sergeant grabbed the hand set and communicated with our support. We pulled back a little but were still in the tall grass. Someone tried to crawl down to check on the LOH crew but the fire was just too thick. I remember a Huey came in with 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> Squad to reinforce us. One of my good friends, ‘Sill,’ was standing on the skids ready to jump as the ship slowed to land. I can still see the pilot’s eyes and expression on his face – they were as scared as we were! We waved them off. We weren’t at all certain about our future but we didn’t want any of them hurt in what might be a quick fight. I still have several mental pictures of the next hour which seemed like FOREVER. First, we were firing blind at the enemy in the tree line. Every good infantryman knows you have to shoot to live in a fire-fight, but you know that your side isn’t doing well when you have to fire blind. Second, there were these red ants in the grass with us. They were only one small step below the NVA in terms of the pain they were causing! Third, I don’t remember the Cobras firing rockets, but the minigun fire was Heaven sent for sure! There is still a special place in my heart today for miniguns! Finally, I need to talk about the LOH getting shot down. I’d guess they crashed no more

than 40 yards from us in the trees. There was the big column of black smoke – really ugly but I don't remember any ammo going off. It took us about 20 minutes to get to them. I was one of the first to get to Bozo, our name for SP4 Vosine. He was laying on his back just a few feet from what was left of the LOH. I remember he was breathing really heavy but I saw no signs of blood, so he must have had some serious internal injuries. I kept telling him that we were with him now and we'd all be extracted soon. Actually that was more of a prayer than a statement of fact! I don't remember seeing the LOH pilots. But then salvation arrived! Next to miniguns, my heart as a special place for APCs and 50 cal. When the mechanized infantry company from the 4<sup>th</sup> Inf Div came on the scene, the NVA called it quits or died in place. I was due to ETS in November and I remember thinking - now I may have a chance of living that long! We were extracted soon. That night we talked about a lot of things that happened that day – what a day! The next day we went back and it was like a picnic – “Smoke ‘em if ya got ‘em.” No bad guys around. We helped load up this cache of weapons, pith helmets, uniforms, you name it – maybe enough for a 100 men! That's when we got the 51 cal gun that became Ed Johnson's memorial. I think I only went on four or five more operations with the Blues after that. 1SG Turner was kind to me – even told me to hide out in his hooch during my last few days. I guess he wanted to make certain I made it home alive.

We now return to John Kawa's story. The call came about one hour into our rest period and we knew something was up because that was shorter than normal. I had heard many stories about what a downed helicopter scene looked like but until you actually see one laying on the ground, on its side, a long column of smoke rising from its shell; you will never understand the emotion of that sight. The rest of the Blues were inserted and were pushing toward the downed crew but not making much progress. The C&C told me we were up against an NVA unit that had been pushed down into the draw and had taken up a position on the opposite slope. They had set up a 51 cal on this ridge and commanded a good position over the entire area. The first attempt to rescue Ed was made by a Dust-Off from Pleiku. As it hovered over the crash site, I could see the 51 firing at it and the Huey shuddered with each impact. [The VHPA Helicopter database suggests this was UH-1H #66-17068 from the 498<sup>th</sup> Med Co.] Finally, he had to break away. How it flew back to The Oasis is still a mystery to me? Later we had a chance to look at this ship and confirm the fact that it was a miracle it wasn't shot down. All of this was taking place as I circled the area looking for signs of movement and trying to keep out of the way of the enemy guns. The sun was getting low in the sky and it would be dark in about an hour. I was so intent on watching the ground that I did not see the one large tree that stood on the edge of the draw until SSG Tom Thompson screamed with terror. I had just enough time to clear the main body of the LOH over the top of the tree. The skids, unfortunately, went through the tree and were well camouflaged with foliage when I emerged on the other side. I also realized that a change of clothes was in order when we got back to base. All through this time, MAJ Frost had been working with the mech inf unit that was sneaking up on the rear of the NVA position. The objective was to trap them between our Blues in the draw and this unit. To make a long story short, the plan worked fairly well. The NVA position was overrun, although many managed to sneak off into the valley under the cover of the approaching darkness. The mech unit linked up with our Blues and were able to transport Ed to an open area where he was evacuated to Pleiku. The 51 was captured and we displayed it outside our mess hall as a memorial to SP4 Maslyn who died that day.

SSG Tom Thompson adds: I was Mr. Kawa's Observer as he mentioned. I was glad to read the details about 'the tree' we almost hit. If he hadn't mentioned that – I would have! I still have a vivid mental image of that tree in front of us. Since Jack Wesley passed away a few years ago, I want to tell everyone that he used to tell the story about retrieving those satchels OFTEN. It was, without a doubt, his favorite war story and we laughed about it many times. He said that besides being scared and the weight of the NVA pack, what really got him running faster was John Kawa's minigun run

behind his ass! I have pictures of the 51 in front of C Troop HQ, along with other pictures of the booty from the Maslyn op.

Bob Mitchell provides some more to the story. As we were rearming the first time, a Medevac ship came limping into The Oasis and made a hydraulics out landing. They had been really shot up attempting to get our guys out. I remember they were shot through the red cross on the right side and the medic in the back had been shot in the "chicken plate" right over his heart. He was a very happy camper, however, it knocked him down but other than that he wasn't hurt. The team I was with were back in and out of the fight several more times that day. It was a real mess as we had *leadership* stacked up over the battle, some talking on the freq we were used with the Blues. I remember Hub Roberts yelling at the Bde Cmdr to stay off the net as we had a fight in progress. The "Colonel" whoever he was came back with "I'm the boss and will talk on whatever net I please." I remember wishing I knew which Huey was his because I had the sudden urge to shoot his ass down!! Anyway, the mech inf folks had been working our way ever since we started getting into the fight. They were a lifesaver - literally!! They rolled through the enemy, on line, as we continued to pound them from above. The NVA pretty much gave up and ran when the APCs showed up. They found LT Murphy (Ed's left seat) in a dazed condition standing in the middle of a small stream right in the middle of the fire fight. How he got there from the crash site, through the middle of the fire fight, without getting captured or killed remains a mystery! It was starting to get dark when they finally had the place relatively secure. MAJ Frost then directed the Blues to "get dog tags or whatever you can recover" from Ed's ship. Ed had miraculously escaped the crash and with an injured back, had lifted the burning LOH off Murphy and pulled him to safety. Ed later said he thought it was the NVA approaching him and he had a very difficult time holding his fire as the Blues approach. He was armed with his 38 and Murphy's 45. He did hold his fire until the first face appeared through the brush; it was an American. C Troop killed over 40 NVA that day and we continued to pursue them down that draw to the southeast for the next two days. From the documents we recovered, we were able to learn that we had been the reception party for an NVC sapper battalion that had just arrived from Cambodia.

LT Marty Martines recalls: I arrived in Vietnam near the end of September and spent about two weeks going through the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's in-country training; so I'd only been with C Troop about two weeks at this point. I had been flying OH-6As around Camp Enari as part of my transition, but this was my first day 'outside the wire' and flying in the OA. I was flying in the front with 1LT David 'Cash' Register as the AC and SP4 Jack Wesley in the back. Cash was the scout team leader that day. WO John Kawa and SSG Tom Thompson were in our wing ship. I remember we went to The Oasis and shut down for awhile since Cash's team wasn't first up - Ed's team was in the OA. At that point the Scouts hadn't found anything yet. I believe we were working an area not very far from The Oasis. I remember this large village - we flew past it before we came to the area we wanted to work. This was rolling terrain covered with tall grass, brush and small trees; so you could see to the ground in many places. I think we saw the NVA packs on the ground before we detected any movement. I remember we talked inside the aircraft about retrieving one of those packs. There were about six packs in a row along the edge of a trail. I quickly learned that Cash was spontaneous about things like that. Anyway, Cash asked Wes to jump out after coming to about an 8-foot hover. Wes said, 'No, I'm not getting out!' After a few seconds I said that I'd get out. Normally C Troop removed the left seat cyclic stick when there was only one pilot in the LOH. Since I was learning to fly the OH-6A the left stick was installed. I remember flying out to The Oasis from Camp Enari. Anyway, as I undid my seat belt and tried to get out of the aircraft, my pant leg got tangled on the cyclic. The little top hot piece of plastic got caught on part of my uniform. As I worked to get it free, my leg got stuck between the instrument panel and the cyclic. Cash was yelling at me to stop bothering the controls. The ship is rocking back and forth. We are still at a hover in an area inhabited by the NVA. After a couple seconds, Wes yells: 'I'll get out!' I hand him

the CAR-15 I had for a weapon and a couple of clips of ammo. We couldn't land on the trail because there were 10 to 20 foot small diameter trees immediately near the trail. We finally sat down about 15 to 20 yards from the packs in some tall grass. Wes gets out and we return to a hover. Wes may have gotten disoriented because it appeared to us that he wasn't sure which way to go. We hovered away from him and then back directly over the packs. After awhile I pointed to Wes the direction we wanted him to go and he started in that direction but he didn't take a straight route. I'd guess it took anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes for him to get to the packs. In the meantime I remember hearing CPT Doug Hammond in the lead Cobra asking, 'What's going on?' You know there are lots of moments when the LOH's aren't talking to the Snakes. In retrospect, I think MAJ Frost wasn't on station at that time – maybe he was refueling the C&C ship – I just don't remember hearing his voice in any these conversations. Well, Cash answers Doug that he's got a man on the ground trying to pick up one of the packs. Just about this time Wes has reached the packs. No one is shooting. As Wes picks up a pack, he starts shooting to his left. He lifted the pack to his shoulder and continues firing as he slowly backs away. As I'm watching this Doug is yelling, 'What did you say?' Cash says he's got his Oscar on the ground and they are shooting at him. To our surprise Wes starts running down the trail away from the direction he'd come in and then we loose visual contact with him. Cash asks if I can see Wes. I answer No. We continue hovering down the trail. Hammond is yelling for us to put out a smoke and get Wes back in the aircraft. Naturally none of the aircraft can shoot because Wes is on the ground. I'd guess it was another four plus minutes until we see Wes and hover near him. He threw the pack in the back. I heard it hit the deck and felt the ship sink to that side. We were still a few feet off the ground. Wes climbs in and pushed the CAR-15 back to me. We start taking fire and put out the smoke. I think we moved off a little ways but we weren't done yet. The Cobras fire up the area near where we'd picked up Wes. When they finished their firing runs, we came back around to make a high-speed pass. Wes is firing his M-60 and I fired a full clip from the CAR-15. On our second high-speed pass I couldn't get the empty clip to release from the CAR-15 as I see this guy running along the top of this plateau. I grab the M-79 chunker in my lap. I sort of pointed it out the door and fired. As luck would have it, the grenade hit a tree in front of the running man and he goes down. The Cobras start firing again. The other teams arrived on station and we were low on fuel. We pulled off to the east and briefed Ed Johnson then headed back to The Oasis. We refueled, then shut down and went to see if we could eat a hot meal at The Oasis. I would later learn that the mess hall there served the daily hot meal at noon and then just cold food in the evening. The joke was that whatever we ate for lunch at The Oasis we'd have the same thing for our evening meal at Camp Enari. The Blues left while we were eating so we had no radios. Once an hour had passed since we'd shut down, the entire team starts up for our normal rotation. As we lift off from The Oasis we start hearing all this chatter on the radios. We heard this LOH talking to the Blues about a burning LOH! Wow – this was a shock to us! I remember we flew to another column of smoke and found a burned up LOH but no one was there! I'm thinking another Cav troop must have been working that area. We, however, made it to C Troop's battle just about the time our Cobras caught up with us. Remember it takes longer to start a Cobra and take off than it does in a LOH but they could fly faster than us; so we often headed out by ourselves knowing they'd catch up. We could see the column of smoke from Ed's LOH burning. I remember hearing someone, it may have been MAJ Frost, tell the Blues, 'When you get to the LOH, make certain you get the dog tags.' Wow – that got my attention!! We approached the area from behind a small ridge and plateau and suddenly we see this huge fire. I just knew no one could survive that crash. We were told not to shoot because of the Blues and the downed crew. We just circled for about 40 minutes and took a little fire. Soon I think it was LT Charlie Campbell comes up on the radio saying, "We've got all three of them." I thought well they must have the dog tag. Then he adds that one is hurt pretty badly, so they need a medevac. They moved back down this creek bed. Once the Blues were clearly identified, we could start shooting. I remember seeing two guys in this area. I had to shoot almost straight down to kill them. With only three LOHs we started flying a round

robin where one LOH leaves to refuel and rearm, then returns to the AO immediately. I believe it would only take us about 45 minutes to return to the battle using this technique. That's about all I can remember about the 27<sup>th</sup> except of course I was delighted to learn that no one on Ed's ship was seriously injured. I served many months with Wes and regarded him as a very fine Scout. He lost some teeth in the crash when 1LT Flurry and SP4 Manserge were killed. It is strange that I can't recall some of the details of this day – like the fact that one of the Blues was killed!

On the 28th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12992 flown by an unnamed crew who had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching target area, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

On the 29th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17783 flown by an unnamed crew that had one injury at grid YA037115. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they had more than 99 holes from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they crashed and the helicopter was destroyed and lost to inventory.

Over the years there has been a lot of discussion about NVA helicopters, especially by I Corps based aviation units. Dick Arnold, historian for the Cacti Association, 1/35 and 2/35 Infantry, 4th Division sent an email in October, 2000 to Mike Law concerning possible NVA helicopters. This is an edited version of that email exchange:

You guys frequently supported us in the Highlands. The 1/35th S-3 journals in late September through mid-November 1968 are rife with examples of radar spottings of unidentified aircraft, thought to be helicopters. These radar pickups, and some audio/visual sightings, were west of FSB Jean (YA809234), Joan (YA842251) and Vera (YA807232). [These American bases were immediately west of Duc Co (YA8526) overlooking the Ia Krel Valley which flows into Cambodia and QL19 the highway between QL14, basically the Catecka Tea Plantation, and Duc Co. This area is basically on the north side of the larger Ia Drang Valley. The area near QL19 in Cambodia was a major NVA logistic complex and would be the primary 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division objective during the May 1970 Cambodian Incursion.]

The following are extracts from the S-3 journals of 30 Oct: 0415 hours – the radar at our location spotted 3 unidentified birds north of LZ Jean on an azimuth of 4300 mils. Informed Bde. 0425 – Bde is going to get gunships to work with the 1/35<sup>th</sup> and its radar. 0445 – Radar had 3 ships low on their screen flying low to the ground at grids 8231212106, 818519285, and 814185, 4 ships in this area. Bde informs ETA 10 minutes. 0456 – The gunships for enemy copters are on push 58.70, Gambler 4 [B Company, 4<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division] is the callsign. They hit one ship possibly. Radar plots the fallen ship at a range of 6000 meters on an azimuth of 3400 mils from radar location. 0505 – Spooky (USAF AC47 gunship) came north to northwest at 4400 feet. Inform Gambler 4 of this. 0530 – More enemy choppers are located at grid 823223, at 1800 meters high also 822217, 827214, one enemy chopper at each of these locations and 2 choppers at grid 827214, one more sighting at grid 833203. The ones listed above are individual sightings. 0536 – Bde informs us that the gunships from the 7/17 Cav are enroute to this location. 0537 – The Gambler ships expended fuel. Ruthless will be on station in place of Gambler. 850212 another sighting on chopper (enemy or unidentified). [Not extracted from the log are references to a US Army Dustoff helicopter extracting 3 WIAs caused by friendly artillery fire. The radar and the S-3 tracked the Dustoff ship.] 0555 another sighting at grid 825196. 0556 More sighting: 802266 and 815196. 0603 two unidentified choppers at grid 810284. At 803278 also a UFO and at grid 782282, 3 unidentified aircraft at 811269, at this grid 5 unidentified 795269, 500-700 meters altitude of these sightings or unidentified objects. 0610 – White 22 from the 7/17 Cav is now on station. 0615 – Grid 792253 is the general area where the enemy ships are moving. 0616 – White 22 is now on the

Command B push. 0618 – White 22 is now in the enemy location. 0618 – New enemy location grid 800231. 0630 – At grid 806223 sighted 5 enemy aircraft. Also unidentified aircraft at grid 848298, spotted again at grid 850292. 0643 – Radar requests that White 22 go north northeast from our location. 0658 – at grid 820193 there is a possible downed enemy aircraft. 0700 – Headhunter 41 [USAF FAC] is now on station. 0720 – Headhunters 40 and 60 now on station. 0850 – Headhunters 40 and 60 will be leaving to our AO to work other Bde areas. 1000 – The 7/17 Cav at LZ Vera had both of their jeeps torn up. They want us to contact D Troop at Pleiku and get the S-3 to send out a mechanic to fix them. One has a universal out and the other has a clutch out. [The rest of the journal includes details about a two heavy artillery warnings (B52 strikes) starting at 1030 plus normal infantry unit relocations, resupplies, commander arriving and departing, etc.] 1325 – White 28 came on station, they will be supporting B Co while they make their move. 1326 – There will be 2 guns and 2 scouts. 1340 – B Co has begun their sweep to the northwest and they do have air cover. 1400 – Bikini 23 [170<sup>th</sup> AHC] came on station he will be LTC Buckner's C&C bird. 1450 – Redbirds spotted 1 NVA 600 meters to the west of B Co LZ. Snoopy device picks up the smell of a few others. 1508 – Gunships are being employed on the enemy locations. 1510 – The gunships are canceled artillery will be employed. 1530 – Artillery checked second gunships being employed. 1554 – Next gunships are on station another air strike will be called in. 1555 – B Co is now moving west. 1605 – The 7/17 Cav element was inserted at FSB [assumed to be LZ Joan since that is where the S-3 was located when the log was written. The rest of 2119 – the log reports details of a priority Dustoff and each infantry unit's night locations until 2119.] The sensor device on LZ Jean picked up movement southwest of the perimeter. C Co threw frags and ILL light organics, the movement stopped than it started up again, continuing to throw frags. 2130 – Movement has stopped, they are on 100% alert. 2245 – radar sighting one unidentified bird at grid 814216. 2255 – At grid 808223 they spotted one more bird. 2309 – Radar informs us that the choppers on his scope are going towards Cambodia but he does not know where they are coming from. 2310 – Radar reports 2 unidentified object flying into Cambodia. 2315 – D Co SRPs [short range patrols] 10, 11 and 13 spotted the aircraft headed towards the west. 2320 – SRPs 11, 12, and 13 hear what appears to be jets flying high. 2330 – one more chopper at grid 813232, about 600-700 meters above the ground headed west. Radar scanning grids 813226, 813221, 813219. Radar followings. 2346 – Radar spotted 2 birds at grid 820223, 1 at grid 821215, 3 flying in a "V" shaped formation at grid 823217, 825205, 826213, 828210. Altitude 600-800 meters. 2346 – D Co SRP 11 hears high flying craft possibly jets. 2350 – C Co informs us that an aircraft of unknown origin flying from 2500 meters or higher. He is flying south southeast at 90 knots or less. 2358 – A Co 1/14 Inf heard fixed wing aircraft at 5,000 feet, going southwest, not a chopper.

The following is an extract for the Summary section of the S-3 log for 30 Oct: From 0415 to 0640 hours the radar sections at LZs Jean and Joan picked up 5 unidentified flying aircraft flying low to the ground. The aircraft was working west to east and back to west. A check at Bde was made to see if there were any friendly aircraft in the area. Bde informed the S-3 that there were no friendly aircraft in the area. Acting upon this information the S-3 requested gunships be sent to this location. The unidentified aircraft were working in the vicinity of grids YA8221 and 8027 when the gunships came on station, a dog fight resulted with one of the unidentified aircraft and the gunship, the enemy aircraft was believed to be shot down at grid YA820193. The vegetation is very thick in this area and the radar and the gunships lost sight of the aircraft. No more sightings were reported until 2245 hours when radar picked up another aircraft at grid 814216 and continued to have sightings until 2358 hours. Most of the movement was towards the Cambodian border, however no action was taken.

James G. 'Gary' DeWitt, who was a 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav Cobra pilot commented that during this time period, there were nightly reports of a generator starting up in the vicinity of Duc Co and VC valley. The Air Force would report in the same general time frame unidentified slow moving aircraft coming

across the border. The word was that the generators provided a homing beacon for the aircraft. One day, some 'Saigon warriors' showed up at Pleiku AB to review radar tapes and the word was that this was reciprocal engine noise, not turbine. The speed of the mystery aircraft was said to be max for an empty UH-1C. In the meantime, the 4th ID was getting a couple of their C models ready (fully loaded) to intercept the enemy. Anyone who ever flew a charlie knows that a fully loaded charlie model at Hensel Field struggles and these guys were getting the call to launch, scrambling to the aircraft, starting up, then get out to the AO. Now, our A and C troop guys wanted to take a stripped Cobra (no rockets just miniguns) and, as I remember, had volunteers to sit in the cockpit, combat cocked to launch maybe at The Oasis. Unfortunately the famous fourth would not agree. We believed they wanted the glory for their pilots to catch the bad guys. That was a long time ago.

CW2 Mike E. Smith recalls: I DEROSed from HHT in October. I came over on the boat with B Troop. I flew in the Lift Platoon as Blue 23. I often flew with WO1 Rick Schoeny. Once I remember MAJ Hefford pulled my AC orders for taking off backwards out of POL. I thought it was a kool trick that came in handy when things got busy. He didn't see it that way! I still flew my missions in the same seat but couldn't log AC time for a couple of weeks. I was sad to leave B Troop about June 1968. They were a great bunch of guys. One guy I'll never forget was 'Filthy' Leonard Robbins, a gun pilot. The guy had a real gift with a welding torch. I watched him take two USAF bomb containers and about 300 feet of metal tubing. He carefully heated and bent the tubing into a coil for a hot water heater. Next he shows up with the a large shed or house in the back of a deuce and a half. Soon it was a sauna besides providing hot water for our showers. How I enjoyed that!! I also remember WO Charlie Rhyne. I worked for MAJ Thiring and then MAJ Soupene my last four month in Vietnam in Tech Supply. I often went over to some transportation unit at Camp Holloway with stacks of forms. While they were processing those forms, my guys were loading the trucks with parts that had just arrived.

CPT Jim Cunningham recalls: During October C Troop was given the mission of having Cobras ready to intercept the UFOs - thought to be enemy helicopters. C Troop flew several of these missions that included standing by at night at Duc Co. I can't recall the names of any of the Cobra pilots who might have flown these missions. During this same period of time, I remember once 1LT Sterling Cox and I were flying C&C and near the end of the day we received this call from an ARVN advisor asking if we'd medevac three wounded ARVNs. Apparently there was no Dustoff available for them. We said OK and afterwards wished maybe we hadn't agreed to do that mission. We finally located them at the bottom of a small hole (maybe 50 x 100 feet) in the jungle surrounded by trees at least 50 feet tall. The CE and gunner cleared us down - it was really a tight fit. When we landed these three guys walk up to the Huey. They didn't look all that wounded to me and that sort of made me mad at the time. We got back out without any tree strikes and took them wherever they wanted to go - I can't remember where. Then I remember one other time I was flying C&C - maybe with Cox as well. Anyway, 1LT Marty Martines, WO Stan Mason, and an observer were in a LOH in the AO. They knew they were about to run out of fuel so they told us they were landing in an open area before the engine quit. We circled the area as they landed in this tall elephant grass. We could still talk over the radios after they'd landed so we told them to pop smoke and we'd land the Huey to pick them up. We saw this plum of white smoke that didn't look like WP but we didn't think too much of it and shot our approach into the wind. As we got on short, short final the guys in back started yelling even before they talked on the intercom. Then we got a load in the cockpit! CS gas! Mason and the others were laughing at us because of the Huey's erratic movements as we sat down. Normally the observer had the pin loose on a smoke or WP grenade - why he grabbed a CS grenade I don't know. Additionally, I have a tape recording made at Camp Enari one night when the small outpost at a water supply point outside the perimeter was overrun.

The following article titled "Ambush" by SSG Edward Cannata with photos by SP5 John Stidham appeared on pages 4 and 5 in October 1968 issue of Hawk, the official newsletter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade.

Thirty miles southwest of Ban Me Thuot in the southern tip of the Central Highlands lies a bend in a narrow jungle road which will never be forgotten by the column of US armored and air cavalrymen or by the enemy who waited for them in ambush. The column was led by four armored personnel carriers (APCs) from B Troop, 1/10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (under operational control of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division). Twenty heavily armed vehicles from D Troop, 7/17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry Squadron followed close behind. The column was en route to a rendezvous point five miles down the road during "Operation Fearless" in II Corps. This was a search and sweep mission of three enemy infiltrated hills and surrounding villages. As the first APC sloughed through the axle deep mud at a bend in the road, two recoilless rifle rounds blasted from concealed NVA roadside positions and slightly damaged the vehicle. While automatic weapon and B-40 rocket fire tore into the road, Captain Anthony X. Hoyer from Haverstraw, N.Y., commanding officer of D Troop, ordered the APC's which were under his control for this mission, into flanking positions on both sides of the road. The vehicle-mounted recoilless rifles continued down the road to where their counterfirepower raked the first line ambusher's 20 two-man foxholes. As the APC's proceeded to cut deeply into the enemy flank, Huey-Cobras and Charlie model Huey gunships from A Troop of 17<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Group's 7/17<sup>th</sup> ACS swept over the retreating enemy and selected their targets. The helicopters, which had been awaiting the column's expected arrival at the rendezvous point, were led in by an OH-6 'Cayuse' light observation helicopter within five minutes after the ambush began. The onslaught of rockets and minigun fire broke the enemy's forward line while the advancing APCs flanked their rear defensive positions. Air Cav, ground and heliborne, worked as a team to turn the tables on the enemy, while the armored Cav cut off retreat. After 15 minutes of close combat, the Cavalrymen withdrew 200 meters as Air Force jets struck the exposed enemy. When the air strikes tapered off, the enemy survivors fled into the dense jungle abandoning their dead in the ambush site. Captured equipment included two 57mm recoilless rifles, one B-40 rocket launcher and field gear. Regrouping on the road, the men of the 7/17<sup>th</sup> and 1/10<sup>th</sup> moved out past the ambush site and on toward their rendezvous point, aware that in this as in other jungles throughout the world, the hunted sometimes become the hunters. Shortly thereafter, the column rolled into the village of Chi Lang. Suddenly the unnatural quiet which had hung over the clearing was punctuated by three rifle shots. Scouts leaped from their vehicles just as six men disappeared into the dense foliage of the jungle. A search of the village revealed a man squatting in a dark corner of a grass hut. At his side lay a briefcase and a pistol. He offered no resistance. As a veteran Viet Cong recruiter with six years field service, he realized his time had just run out. When questioned by the reconnaissance scout's interpreter, the man responded in frenzied tones declaring loyalty to Ho Chi Minh. Within 20 minutes, a gunship from the 7/17's A Troop airlifted the detainee to the squadron's forward base camp for further interrogation. The nearby villages were checked out and the past effectiveness of the recruiter's presence throughout the area, became apparent. The Montagnard village chiefs said that it was common for North Vietnamese Army troops to spend the night in the villages and leave in the morning with rice plundered from the people. The departing enemy's words were invariably that the villagers had no choice and that resistance would be suicidal. The villages were being watched at all times by "Someone." For the present, 'someone' is neither recruiting nor watching the villagers, thanks to the two Cav units. Once again the column moved on toward their destination. For the Cav, it is all in a day's work.

## **November 1968**

On the 1st, B Troop reconed the Le Hong Fong forest which is north of Phan Thiet and is basically several square miles of uninhabited area bounded by QL1 to the south, west, and north and the sea on

the east. The VC considered this "home" and B Troop would work this AO many, many times during its stay at Phan Thiet. On this day, the Scouts located a VC training area. The Blues were inserted and found a small hospital as well.

Concerning one of C Troop's days, MAJ Robert 'Jack' Frost recalls: I can't date what I'm about the describe with 100% certainty but since I recall CPT Jim Ray flying as my replacement and CPT Hammond flying as a scout, it had to be late October or early November. Anyway, C Troop was working for the 173rd Abn Bde in Happy Valley near An Khe. The mission was to conduct a VR starting about 5 a.m. in an AO that contained two friendly infantry units. The night before these two units, one was an American Infantry Company and the other was a US lead CIDG company, had moved on both sides of a small river and established their NDPs. I think they were one or two clicks apart. During the briefing I was given the exact locations of both units along with instructions to screen the area around them. We started working an area some distance from the CIDG location and very early in the VR the Scouts, I think it was Doug Hammond, reported movement in the jungle below them. I ordered the gunships to fire up the area because I wanted to see what would develop. Well it just so happened that we had recently been issued the relatively new flechette warheads for the 2.75" rockets, so the gunships made a few passes with HE and these nails. We are just getting ready to have the Scouts come back in for a look when we hear an American voice calling for the gunships in our area to cease firing. To our horror we would learn that this CIDG Company was about one to one and a half clicks from the NDP we had been given and that the gunships had killed two of the Americans plus a few of the CIDG. As we were working to help with the medevacs, I get this call from the 173rd ABN commander, I believe that was BG Allen, to immediately report to his CP. I remember turning the C&C for the mission over to CPT Ray, the Troop's XO and flew to the 173rd's CP. When I landed and reported in, I was told to sit in a waiting area until I was called. I just knew that General was going to have me relieved! I sat there with my back to the wall in that CP all day long. Believe me, it was a very long day. Anyway, while my fate hung in the balance, the 173rd had moved the American Infantry Company across the river to the CIDG unit to add support and to help with the leadership reorganization. As they moved into the CIDG's area, however, they found some dead NVA – I guess three of them – not too far from the CIDG location. These NVA had been killed by flechettes. Well, two things became obvious. First, the CIDG's location was at least one click from the 'exact location' I had been given when the 173rd had briefed us prior to the mission and, second, an NVA force had been 'shadowing' the CIDG. Anyone that has been involved in a 'friendly fire' situation knows how gut wrenching and terrible they are. This one was no exception. It was late in the afternoon when someone came out to me and explained all that I've just described and said I was free to leave. I walked out to my helicopter and left, but it has been a day that I've never forgotten.

On the 2nd, while enroute to an AO west of the Oasis, A Troop's Scouts spotted approximately eight men traveling along a trail. As the helicopters passed, the men took cover. After determining that there were no friendlies in the area, A Troop's Scouts and Guns engaged the NVA. During one exchange **SP4 Noe Tameyoza**, an observer on LOH #66-07801, was killed. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 12 Apr 1968 and his MOS as 11D40. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was repaired by A Troop and continued to serve with them. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while hovering over target, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit and forward main rotor system, they continued flying but aborted the mission. An airstrike was called in before an infantry unit moved to sweep the battlefield. They found eight dead NVA and captured one AK-50, 20 grenades, four 82-mm mortar rounds, 25 packs and several bags and rolls of rice. CW2 Jose Martinez recalls:

I remember the day Noe Tameyoza died - the surreal aspect of it all. I locked the door to my hooch and had a good cry. We had talked at times when he wasn't too busy helping maintain the LOH he

flew observer in. He was a good man, kind, loyal, generous, and always had a smile on his face. Above all that he was a great scout and a warrior in the true tradition of our culture.

Also for the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16305 flown by an unnamed crew that had two injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while hovering at an altitude of 5 feet, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

SP4 Kurtis Jackson provided details about C Troop's activities on the 2<sup>nd</sup>: While I had served with C Troop for the first month after coming to the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav, my normal duty assignment was with D Troop. On this day I must have replaced C Troop's medic because I was with the Blues on this day. We were inserted onto a hillside that had been heavily bombed. I have some pictures of the LARGE BOMB CRATERS. The Hueys couldn't land, so we had to jump off the ships. It was a hot LZ. The first ship got in and out OK but the rest took fire. I'd guess we had 12 to 14 Blues lead by LT Campbell. SP4 Andy Masi, a rifleman, was one of the Blues. He was a nice guy from New York. I don't know what the mission was but when we tried to move out of the crater, we couldn't. We called for CS gas and I think it was put in at least three times. One poor guy didn't have his gas mask and he really paid for this. It was hot and we were sweating, so the gas burned us as well. I don't think we made it more than 100 yards before we stopped. I remember guys yelling about snipers in the trees, so they fired rifles and M79s into the trees. We moved back into the craters and called in airstrikes. Two jets came it. We were so close to the impact points that we got lots of debris from those bombs. I got hit in the left leg but didn't think anything about it. I don't recall how we got extracted but back at Enari I rolled up my pant leg, took some tweezers and removed some shrapnel. Then I went to the dispensary to get a Tetanus shot and was surprised a few weeks later when I received a PH. SP5 Lowe had submitted me for that.

During the rest of the month, A Troop only made contact once and killed but two VC.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the following article titled "Hairy Extraction Ensues – LRP's Uncover NVA Bunkers" appeared on page 3 in the November 3rd issue the Ivy Leaf written by SP4 Hans J. Lange.

Ban Me Thuot – "I'm sending the slick in and you have two seconds to get aboard," CPT Friedrich Rosenberger of New Rochell, NY, radioed to the desperate 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade Long Range Patrol (LRP) team. "There are air strikes coming in to the west of you and Cobra gunships to the east. The slick is coming down the pipe. Be on it," said CPT Rosenberger of A/7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav. "We won't miss it!" exclaimed SGT John Gibson of Hurricane, WV, the LRP team leader. The Ivymen's adventure had started only three hours earlier. They had dropped into a LZ west of the Central Highland city, unknowingly about 700 meters from a North Vietnamese bunker complex. From the LZ they stalked through the undergrowth and stumbled onto a compacted, high-speed trail. As they crossed it, two NVA spotted them, but the pair quickly melted back into the thick foliage. "We tried to call for artillery when they saw us, but we had no commo," said SGT Gibson. "We decided to make our way back to the LZ," said SP4 Stephen Wallace of Port Lavaca, TX, "and try to fix the radio to call for extraction. As we moved out we saw seven or eight of the enemy blocking our path," he continued. "They saw us and began to fire. We returned the fire and ran for a different LZ. We managed to get the new batteries in, called for an extraction ship and then decided to give Charlie a taste of what he was trying to feed us. Three came out of the bushes and charged our position," the sergeant recounted. "We killed all three and then took off again." The call for help flashed to A/7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav, commanded by MAJ William P. Glover, Ozark, AL, and the Ruthless Riders scrambled aboard two Cobra gunships and two Huey slicks. They tested their guns on the enemy, keeping him pinned down. An Air Force FAC plane was also near the harried team. CPT Bradley Van Sant of Davis, CA, 21<sup>st</sup> TASS, piloted the craft and soon had a set of fighters on station. "When I got to their LZ," CPT Rosenberger said, "Cobras and fighter planes were already making runs on

the enemy, keeping them down. I got a fix on the LRP team and told them to get ready for the extraction ship.” Bomb strikes were on one side while Cobras were expending on the other. “I just sent the slick right between them,” said CPT Robenberger.

On page 8 of the following article titled "Smoke Billows From Destroyed Bunkers" appeared in the November 3rd issue the Ivy Leaf, author unknown.

Ban Me Thuot – Air Force fighter bombers and Cobra gunships from A/7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav in support of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade pounded 100 L-shaped enemy bunkers for five hours, destroying 80 percent of them. Eight secondary explosions were spotted. According to MAJ William P. Glover, Ozark, AL, commanding officer of the Ruthless Riders, no accurate count of NVA dead could be made. “We had been working north of Ban Me Thuot all day,” the major continued, “and earlier, our gunships with the help of air strikes, knocked out a smaller complex of 14 bunkers. There were a lot of trails and some looked fresh and well-traveled. The enemy was in there, too. They opened up on our Loaches with what seemed like an arsenal,” MAJ Glover said. 1LT James L Devito of Sacramento, CA, piloted one of the Loaches The Reds. His observer, SGT Robert M. Evander of Minneapolis, MN, spotted several bunkers on the first pass. “The bunkers had steps going down into them and there were water containers standing outside,” said SGT Evander. “The whole area had deep and wide zigzag trenches. We also saw partially covered rockets. About 25 of them.” Surprisingly, the scouts received no immediate fire, “We were on our fourth pass when they finally opened up on us,” said LT Devito. “As we were pulling out, we saw heads popping in and out of several bunkers.” The Ruthless Cobra gunships made runs on the bunkers, blasting them with rockets and miniguns. Then the Air Force got its chance. CPT Jerome McChristian of Odessa, TX, 21<sup>st</sup> TASS assigned to the Ivy Division's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, was flying a FAC plane high overhead. He had three sorties (two planes each) of F-100 Super Sabres and one sortie of F-4 Phantoms unload 750-pound bombs on the NVA bunkers. Eight secondary explosions were counted during the bombing runs.

From the 4th through the 10th, B Troop staged out of Bao Loc and supported the 3/503rd Abn and the 2nd ARVN Rangers on an area sweep. The operation was disappointing in that it netted only a dozen detainees and some captured rice, ammo, and clothes.

On the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17787" flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the pitch change link and a skid, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was recovered to recovered to Camp Enari and repaired.

On the 10th, C Troop started an eight day period where they made heavy enemy contact most every day while working the Cambodian Border near Duc Co. CPT Jim Cunningham vividly recalls:

Nothing ever seemed to phase MAJ Frost and when we flew together I could count on almost anything happening. The 14th was no exception. We had a sniffer kit installed in the back of our regular C&C ship. The Troop had deployed to The Oasis for the day. We would be flying a sniffer mission near the Cambodian border as the low ship with a Red and White team as back-up. Anyway, we had just flown over an area with numerous trails and the sniffer unit registered a response. We made a 360 to come back for another look and as we completed the turn, we were inbound on our original ground track - a bad idea! The cockpit seemed to explode when a 12.7mm round came through the lower right corner of the windshield and exited through the 1st Aid kit above the MAJ's head. The second round took out the number 3 hanger bearing and severed the tail rotor drive shaft. We also took several hits from SA fire. As we cleared the area, we found that it was difficult to maintain both airspeed and altitude. I was the only one able to transmit to outside world, so Frost was busy providing me with information to pass on to our Red and White teams and to The Oasis TOC. We sort of flew, really more of a side slip, toward LZ Vera which, Thank God,

had just been opened a few days prior to this. But there was no area available for a running landing, so from about 75 feet up Frost chopped the throttle and we spun in. The Huey stayed upright after we hit although we managed to bend the skids and tail boom. Amazingly enough, no one was hurt from either the enemy fire or the crash. I did learn the lesson that if you didn't have your survival gear strapped to you - it stayed in the aircraft. Frost moved to my position and kept directing the operation until we were picked up by one of our slicks and flown back to The Oasis. I was sent back to Enari to fill out the paper work on our crash landing while Frost took off in another Huey to continue with the mission. By the end of the day the second C&C had received several hits from two 51 Cals! Like I said, flying with MAJ Frost was always an experience!!

On the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15618 flown by AC WO1 J.K. Rogers and pilot J.C. Tamm had minor injuries. The Accident Summary reads: At 1730 WO Rogers departed the Golf Course at An Khe, accompanying 1LT Royal Latshaw, the team leader, to replace another team of AH-1Gs on station. LT Latshaw's team was released at 1745, before replacing the other team, to return to home station at Camp Enari. While flying west at an altitude of between 25 to 100 feet AGL on highway 19, 5 miles SW of An Khe, WO Rogers' aircraft struck a 5-ton, blue covered truck. WO Rogers was following LT Latshaw's aircraft and traveling at an indicated airspeed of 90 knots when the accident occurred. After WO Rogers checked the aircraft and found it to be handling normally, he radioed LT Latshaw and asked him to check his aircraft for damage. LT Latshaw turned around and flew along the right side of WO Rogers' aircraft and informed him that his aircraft's turret was damaged, the right skid was gone, and the left skid was hanging loose. Later WO Rogers contacted his base operations and informed them that he requires some sort of cradle to set the aircraft down. WO Rogers made one approach to a hover so the ground personnel could get an idea of the type of cradle needed. A sandbagged frame was built and after one more aborted attempt, WO Rogers was able to safely put the aircraft down on the sandbags, without further damage.

WO1 Jeremy Rogers recalls: Over the years I have bumped into several guys who were in that crowd of folk watching us land this Cobra on the sandbag cradle. I know lots of people have pictures of this Cobra. After reading the Accident Summary, I tell you that neither one of us was injured and we obviously weren't at an altitude of 100 feet when I hit that truck! This was my assigned aircraft. It was a heavy hog with twin minis in the turret. I remember it had a beautiful Iron Butterfly painted on the nose. The miniguns just missed the metal railing of the luggage rack that went round the top of the truck otherwise this story would have ended differently. As a result only the fairings were stripped off. After Latshaw described the damage, we radioed the basecamp and they quickly built a sandbag cradle. When we first hovered near the cradle, I remember some brave soul had to climb on it with an ax to hack the left skid off. We tried to land on the cradle but everyone realized that it needed to be reshaped a little, so we hovered off to the side for a few minutes. Luckily we didn't have a fuel problem and were successful on our second try. If you see a picture of a Cobra in a nose-low attitude resting on a sandbag cradle - that's mine. Well, the rest of the story is that I got an Article 15 which cost me a month's pay and was grounded for six to eight weeks. I was appointed the Mess Officer - so I drank a lot of coffee and remember some LONG DAYS. Finally, one day the Operations Officer came in, said they were really short Cobra pilots and I started flying again as if nothing had happened. The Cobra was repaired and I remember it flying again in a couple of weeks. It was seriously damaged about a month later when LT Wagner went down after experiencing an engine failure. I completed my tour with A Troop and have had a long flying career.

SP5 Joie Walker recalls: The 288<sup>th</sup> Signal Detachment was a part of A troop. We worked on all the avionics communications equipment on the choppers. I handled the SAS system on the Cobras. and our shops were at the end of the maintenance area. CW2 Willie Crabtree was our commanding officer. He is registered in the log book as I am, and lives in Kentucky. We went to the field with A

troop and were at Ban Me Thuot when the base camp was hit and the pilot's tent was satchel charged. We had two 2.5-ton trucks, a jeep and four generators to run our electronic shops. We also provided the air conditioners for the pilots officer club. I have pictures of the Cobra Iron Butterfly when it landed after hitting the truck and ripping its skids off. We built the revetment that she landed in on the flight line. I served with the 288<sup>th</sup> Signal Detachment for one year.

On the 12th, B Troop worked out of Long Song North, a FSB occupied by two 175s. The Blues were inserted at 1300 in a small clearing at the mouth of a canyon. In the narrow canyon, they found some caves and a cache of 100 entrenching tools, 28 knives, some claymore mines and grenades, and 75 100 lb. demolition charges. The 101st reinforced with another platoon and both spent the night securing the area. At 0545 the next morning B Troop's aircraft were overhead and the Infantry moved out. By 0730 they had found another cache. While one squad worked with the cache, the rest came under heavy AWs fire. The enemy guns were quickly flanked and five VC killed. The second cache yielded more demo charges, mines and grenades, some weapons and a blacksmith's forge. All the Infantry was extracted that evening. For the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #67-17248 flown by WO1 W.P. Christen at Phan Thiet. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was repaired by B Troop and continued to serve with them. The Accident Summary reads: the main rotor struck a tree in the LZ on set down from a hover while troops were deplaning. Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #67-17723 flown by CW2 D.B. Skiles at Phan Thiet. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was repaired by B Troop and continued to serve with them. The Accident Summary reads: a main rotor blade struck a tree during the extraction of infantry from the LZ.

The following article titled "First Cobra Ride" appeared in unknown issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth (the official Vietnam era newspaper of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division). The date assigned to this event is mid-November 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

'First Cobra Ride' by 1LT G.W. Hale Camp Enari (long article with great details about his flight with WO Danny Norman of Troop C, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry who was still based at Camp Enari.

For his actions on the 13<sup>th</sup>, WO Gary Brydges, a B Troop Cobra, pilot was awarded a DFC. Gary recalls that the Troop was obviously short on aircraft because I was flying a lone gunship over a lone scout in the AO. I think we only had two Cobras flying that day. So we were doing a replace on station where one would refuel and immediately return to relieve the other. That was between Phan Thiet and Phan Rang in a ravine. I don't remember all the details. The LOH took fire from some VC in an open area and I started making gun runs to protect the LOH. Afterwards we confirmed five enemy KIA that most likely were the result of our gun runs. Now I believe I would not have received an award for these actions except for the fact that a few days later I was flying when 1LT Welding and SGT Green were shot down and killed. The CO wanted all involved on that day to be put in for a medal. I think that precipitated my getting the DFC even though it was for a different day.

The following article titled "Ivy Forces Foil NVA In Ia Drang" with a subtitle "Air Strikes Rout The Enemy" by SP5 Jeffrey Tarter appeared in the 1 Dec 1968 issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The date assigned to this event is the middle of November 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Oasis – The day began with gunships and air strikes. It ended with the death of a long NVA soldier on a twisting, grassy trail near the Ia Drang Valley. Alpha Troop of the 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry, commanded by Major William T. Glover of Hopkinsville, KY, spotted the NVA soldiers first. The cavalrymen saw an estimated squad of the enemy, wearing dirty green khaki uniforms. Sweeping over the trees, the gunships scattered the NVA with a rain of fire and air strikes raked through the jungle when the Air Cavalry finished its work. The air strikes were still pounding the

enemy positions when the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of Delta Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry, began landing on an abandoned firebase less than a mile away. With helicopters skimming overhead to protect and guide them, the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, commanded by First Lieutenant Wiley J. Inscho of San Antonio, TX, moved out along a stream to a small clearing where the NVA had been caught. There they found two enemy. They were forced to shoot one when he started to fling a grenade at them. The other was killed almost at once. "All around the air strikes, we found blood trails heading east," Lieutenant Inscho said. In all, nine enemy dead were counted in the clearing. Guided by a Kit Carson scout, the platoon fought its way through small-arms fire to reach a platoon-sized bunker complex. Then Lieutenant Inscho's platoon came back to the clearing, cut a landing zone and set up a perimeter. Moments later the rest of Delta Company, commanded by Captain Jerry P. Laird, was airlifted in to reinforce the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon. Lieutenant Inscho and a five-man patrol set off for a hill 200 yards away. "We ran across a trail made by the enemy, which was pretty well used," he said. "We followed it for a short distance. Then, suspecting an ambush, we moved off the trail unto the top of the hill. After we reconned the area, the rest of the company came on in with us. At the bottom of the hill the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon found 25 enemy rucksacks and encountered one enemy." Private First Class Dean L. Horton of Ontario, CA, a medic with Delta Company, was nearby when the single NVA was found. "As we were going down the trail we saw all these packs laying by the trail," he recalled. Three men walked past them. The fourth man spotted movement and fired a warning shot in the air. "We hollered 'Chieu Hoi' and shouted for him to come out," said PFC Horton. "He just lay there, scared. He had an AK47 with a banana clip in one hand and a Chicom grenade in the other. About a dozen people had him covered," said PFC Horton. "Suddenly he threw the Chicom out and fired one shot. The CO and another man silenced the enemy." It was all over then. Delta Company went back up the narrow trail, set up camp for the night and gathered up the enemy's abandoned gear. The final tally of captured equipment included 55 rucksacks, automatic and crew served weapons, and large quantities of ammunition and explosives.

#### **40<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Maintenance) Departs Vietnam**

Effective the 14<sup>th</sup>, according the squadron ORLL dated 10 Feb 1969, the 40<sup>th</sup> Transportation Detachment (Aircraft Maintenance) UIC WG2YAA, was transferred to CONARC control on this date. The authority for this unit transfer was USARPAC General Order 716 dated 7 Nov 1968. There is every reason to believe that this was simply a 'flag transfer' and that no personnel or equipment physically left the squadron. The 40<sup>th</sup> TC Det had for some time been attached to HHT.

Also on or near the 14<sup>th</sup>, the following article titled "Fighting Fourth Battle Briefs" appeared in the December 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth. The Battle Briefs column provided a brief summary of combat action within the 4<sup>th</sup> Division's AO. This article covered the period November 9 through 15 and reads in part as follows: "The following day (actions on the 13<sup>th</sup> were mentioned earlier) an air ship from Troop C, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry came under heavy ground fire while flying a recon mission near Duc Co. The aircraft made it safely to LZ Vera, seven kilometers south of Duc Co. There were no Ivy casualties. Farther south, a crew from another 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry ship spotted an NVA unit and called in artillery. A large secondary explosion occurred as a result of the airstrikes, billowing smoke some 300 feet into the air."

On the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop AH-1G #67-15651 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission, while at an altitude of 800 feet, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right skid, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Also on the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop AH-1G #67-15652 flown by an unnamed crew, one was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission, while at an altitude of 800 feet, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the

nose, ammo compartment, and rocket pad, they made a precautionary landing and completed the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

On the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16305 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16096 flown by Instructor Pilot CW2 P.J. Kahl and 1LT D.K. James. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was turned into the 79<sup>th</sup> TC CO, repaired by Hughes Aircraft in CONUS and returned to serve in Vietnam with another unit in late 1969. The Accident Summary reads: CW2 Kahl and 1LT James were engaged in transition training utilizing the OH-6A at the unpaved airstrip at Plei Do Lim. Several successful autorotations had been made, when, at approximately 1635 hours 1LT James initiated the autorotation which resulted in the accident. The autorotation was initiated at 500 feet AGL and 80 knots IAS. 1LT James had control of the aircraft and CW2 Kahl was following through on the controls throughout the maneuver. The autorotation was normal until the initial pitch pull. Initial pitch and cushion were not sufficient to hold the aircraft off the ground, and it struck the ground in a level attitude with sufficient force to cause buckling of the seat structure. Low rotor RPM and hard ground contact caused the main rotor to flex and the blue blade contacted the tail boom, severing it at station 219. The aircraft then rose approximately 2 feet, turned 90 degrees to the left and settled to the ground. The aircraft remained upright. There was no fire. The winds were 060/20. All autorotations were made into the wing.

On the 21st, during a recon about 35 miles northwest of Phan Thiet, enemy ground fire downed a LOH killing **1LT Clifford Welding** and badly wounding the observer, **SGT Stanley Green**. The Wall database gives the following tour start and MOS data: Green, 16 Jul 1968, 11D40; Welding, 26 Aug 1968, 61204. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16355 at grid AN962487. All flyable aircraft were scrambled. The Lift ships received heavy AW fire on final to the LZ but completed the insertion about 15 minutes after the LOH went down. Within six minutes after the insertion, the Blues reached the still burning LOH and found SGT Green badly wounded and burned. Sadly he died on a Dust Off enroute to the aid station. After securing 1LT Welding's body, the Blues pursued the VC but were unable to establish contact and were extracted.

Also on the 21st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16241 flown by 1LT Joe Shepherd. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Joe Shepherd, Scalphunter 15, recalls:

Cliff Welding and SGT Green were flying my wing that day. We were covered by two Cobras and were following a fresh trail from an over-night contact into the foothills. We caught a group of 8-10 VC on the trail. Cliff and I both engaged with miniguns and fire from our observers. We dropped smoke and the Cobras rolled in as we moved off to the west. After making several passes, the Cobra lead called us back for a BDA. Cliff's minigun had stopped working so he led back into the area and I followed to cover him. As we neared the smoke from the Cobra's rockets we received small arms fire. Then Cliff's aircraft was hit by an RPG. It went down immediately! I tried to land but could not because of small arms fire. I could see that Cliff was still in the burning aircraft and that SGT Green was out, but that he was burned very badly. I stayed on station until the Blues arrived and confirmed that Cliff was KIA and SGT Green was medevaced.

CW2 Mike Piccone recalls: Cliff Welding and Joe Shepherd were some of my closest friends in B Troop. About the middle of the month I received word that my grandfather had passed away and the

Army had granted me a 10-day leave to go home for the funeral. Initially I told Cliff and Joe that I wasn't going even though I was very close to my grandfather. Cliff was especially emphatic saying, "You have to go home for that funeral. I'll cover your missions." Prior to this I flew with SGT Green almost all the time. I wasn't gone more than three days when I learned that Cliff and Stan had died most likely on a mission that I would have flown. I've dedicated my website [www.cavpilot.com](http://www.cavpilot.com) to them. About a month prior to this Cliff and I were flying as a Scout team together. In those days the Scout Observers were using the M79 grenade launcher quite often. As we worked this area, I believe both Observers fired their weapons at about the same time. Not long after the bang I took some shrapnel in my left forearm. The piece went all the way to the bone. A few seconds late Cliff reports the same sort of injury. Neither wound was life threatening so we landed our LOHs and were taken to the medical facility I believe at Nha Trang. The medical folk looked at the X-rays and determined that they would just leave the metal where it was because to dig it out would cause even more damage. It was really ironic the Cliff had almost exactly the same wound and in the same place as mine! They bandaged us up, put our arms in slings, and released us. Guys took pictures of us returning to Phan Thiet each with one arm in a sling. I'd guess we were flying again in about 3 days. I stayed with B Troop until just before Christmas when I was transferred to the 57<sup>th</sup> AHC at Camp Holloway. They were hurting for UH-1C gunship pilots. Since I had some UH-1C time with C Troop and lots of combat time with B Troop, I made AC on my first day with them. I was Cougar 11 for the rest of my tour after being Scalphunter ?? in B Troop.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16108 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup>, via HQ 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav Special Orders 307 the following SP4 E-4s were promoted to Sergeant E-5. The roster that follows included their name, Troop, and MOS:

Campbell, John A D Trp 11H40	Forsman, Charles R D Trp 11C40	Green, Gregory HHT 11B40
Griffitts, Johnnie D B Trp 76Y40	Griswold, Bartley R B Trp 11D40	Hahn, Thomas A D Trp 11B40
Haynes, Don E B Trp 11D40	King, Harold D Trp 11D40	Lee, Eddie P B Trp 31G40
Palacios, Jose M C Trp 11B4P	Slater, Arthur R D Trp 11B4P	Warner, James M B Trp 11D40
Wilkins, Rodney B HHT 11D40	Wilson, Donald S B Trp 11D40	Wood, Michael C Trp 11B40

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, MAJ Jerry Ledford assume command of C Troop replacing MAJ Robert 'Jack' Frost.

Also on the 24<sup>th</sup>, A Troop found and partially destroyed a large bunker complex near Polei Kleng.

On the 26th, C Troop held the famous "Last Meeting of the Original Chaparrals" as a farewell to MAJ Jack Frost. Years later at a VHPA Reunion Jack would look back on his time with C Troop and say:

Besides 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt Turner and myself, only Terry Glover and a squad leader, who was also named Turner, for a total of four Vietnam Vets for the entire Troop of over 225 soldiers. We came together well to prepare ourselves and our equipment for deployment. We also lucked out! I was glad to be a part of the original Chaparrals.

### **D Troop Relocates to LZ Mary Lou from Ban Me Thuot East**

During November, D Troop moved from the Ban Me Thuot area to LZ Mary Lou which was 3 kms south of Kontum and was the headquarters for the 2nd Bde, 4<sup>th</sup> ID. Their duties were daily convoy escorts to Polei Kleng and firebase security.

SP5 Ed LaGar recalls: I went down to see where I'd stand with the Army per their advertisements. I later found out that because I had done that they were going to submit my name to the Selective Service because I had "expressed an interest" in the military. I didn't really want to go to college. So I opted to enlist in the Army. This was in Los Angeles. I'd been to the Navy, Air Force, and even wanted to be a corpsman with the Marines. They just laughed because the draft was on. They even suggested I try the Army. The Army sergeant said, "What makes you think you're good enough?" That made me mad so I sat down and took their test. Then he said, "Well you can qualify for anything you want!" I told him I want to be a medic with the infantry. He looked it up on the coffee stained list on his desk and said, "Oh, that's a 91A10 MOS." I said, OK and signed up for it. They guaranteed it. I didn't want to take whatever I could get. This is what I wanted and I got it. I went to Basic at Ft Ord and then AIT at Ft Sam Houston. There were at least 200 guys in my AIT class. That lasted 8 weeks. My orders came down assigning me to Oakland Army Base – the transfer point for everything going to and coming back from Vietnam at the time. The morgue was there as well. I was assigned to the HQ Detachment there as a medic in the dispensary. I worked mostly nights and was there 7 or 8 months. Then I came down on a levy for Vietnam. They called me in and said you have 3 days to clear post – we managed to get you a 30-day leave, but you've got to go now. So I dropped everything and cleared post, took my leave which was most of October, and then shipped out the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nov 1968. I wound up at Cam Ranh. They were getting shelled when we landed. I had no idea what it was. I looked out and thought, "Oh, that's interesting!" When they opened the doors of the plane, the heat hit me. I said, "Oh, my god!" I looked over to the right and there was a soldier there with a German Sheppard crouched in the shadows. You could hear firing off in the distance and I thought, "My god – what have I got myself in to?" They put us in a bus with chicken wire on the windows. It was at night and it seemed like they drove us forever. We were in a Repo Depot. They assigned us a bunk. As an aside, when my brother came through two years later he was standing near the entrance to the mess hall and saw where I'd carved my last name in the post. He was also standing behind Shorty Boling who was a CE on 020. My brother got to talking to him and learned he was in the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav and that he had known me. Anyway, they ended up sending to Nha Trang I think for further assignment. When I got there, I walked in to the processing center and met one of the platoon sergeants I knew from AIT. So while I was at Oakland, he'd been sent to Vietnam. He recognized me and said, "Don't worry about a thing. I'll get you assigned here. Twice a day you will drive around in an ambulance to pick up guys who want to come to Sick Call. You'll just transport them to the hospital. We have white sandy beaches here. It's a nice area to be in." I told him that I really didn't want to do that. Then I went to an interview with a Major and said I really didn't want to drive an ambulance because I'd already done that stuff at Oakland Army. I said, "I want to be an Infantry Medic." He said, "Well we only have one unit that has infantry in the Group and that is (point to a map) clear up there at Dragon Mountain near Pleiku. I looked at the map and said, OK. Then I said, "Well, I'll think about this." I went out and saw the first M-16 rifle I'd ever seen leaning against a cabinet. I asked the guy if I could look at it because we'd trained on M-14's. I picked up the rifle and was looking at it when the sergeant walked out. He said, "You dumb SOB – you got your wish – you're going to the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav." I said, "All right!" I went back to the holding barracks and told some guys, "I'm going to the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav!" There was another guy there who said, "Oh, god, I've spent three weeks trying to get my orders changed to keep from going to that unit. It's dangerous up there!" That had a bit of a negative impact on me. Anyway, I wound up going.

SP5 Ed LaGar continues: One of the first people I met was Doc Kurt Jackson. He had the lower bunk and I had the upper bunk in the hooch. He took me under his wing and started showing me how to do things and get integrated into the unit. We had a SP5 Sandy (don't recall his last name) and a SFC – a medical staff sergeant in the section – and, of course, medical doctor CPT Wallack. I was kicking around the base camp for about three weeks – doing Sick Calls. D Troop was preparing

to move up to LZ Mary Lou. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon needed a medic. Doc Jackson and I went to CPT Wallack. I told him that I'd like to be that medic because I did not want to work in the dispensary or base camp aid station. He sort of hymned around, said I hadn't been in country long enough, etc. Finally because they didn't have a medic and because no one had volunteered to do it – some medics weren't too fond of field duty. He finally said, "Yes, you can go." At that point, Kurt took me in the back and on the wall were hanging some aid bags. He said for me to grab one, so I grabbed a canvas one that later rotted out on me – it was old – may be it had been through Korea. He said I'll help you load it up. The aid bag is a little over one foot wide, maybe 8" deep and maybe 9" or 10" tall. It had just a strap so you could carry it from your shoulder. It had flap that came over the front. It fashioned to the front with a metal grip. There were two packets up above that would fold down to reveal a big center pocket that you would unzip. You could also unzip those small pockets as well. Kurt had me put in a bunch of field dressings – five or six. I had some Ace Bandages – smaller ones, then some morphine syrettes – about 15 of them. You kind of had to watch them. Various spurious people would get into your morphine if they had a chance. Doc Wallack was good. He basically let us take whatever we felt we needed and he said that to us. I had stimulants to keep people awake. Remember we worked long hours. It wasn't just a 12 hour day – it was all like 18 hours and seven days a week. The only time we got any time off is when we stood-down in base camp after driving in. I actually had cleaned out an old cough syrup bottle and I filled it with all sorts of pills. I felt sorry for these guys especially on guard duty – they'd relax for a second and fall asleep, then get in trouble. They were just exhausted. Hey, I was exhausted too! The only narcotic I had was the morphine. I had one can of Serum Albumin that I taped to the strap on the Aid Bag. It is a blood volume expanded. The can contained a glass bottle with two needles and a rubber tube. You'd stick the big needle into the bottle and the other needle into the guy's arm. When people were bleeding, it would swell the volume of blood to fill him up. I did use this one time. Kurt modeled my bag on what he carried in his. So in about 30 minutes I had my bag ready to go. Later on when I was in B Troop I acquired a field surgical bag (a medical doctor's kit bag) and looked like a little back pack. I actually carried that in addition to my aid bag. So back to my beginning with 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, I met SFC Calendar the Platoon Sergeant. Shorty after that he managed to twist his ankle. I remember going down to his hooch twice a day to put ice and then heat on it. I'd wrap his ankle trying to help him get ready to leave for the field. During that time I was issued a weapon. If you carried a 45 pistol, you had to carry an M79 grenade launcher. You couldn't just check out a pistol on your own. I kept going back and forth with the Armor on this. Well as a medic I wasn't going to carry a grenade launcher. So what I did was have him issue me a pistol with the holster and belt. Then he handed me the M79. I turned back around and handed it back to him and said, "I'm checking this back in. Just hold it for me." Then I turned and walked away. Later on with D Troop, I kept loosing the pistol. It kept falling out of the holster because it metal snap didn't work – it was worn out. I even tied some string to the pistol. I wrapped it in plastic because I got sick of cleaning it. I remember being on a patrol and walking out of a stream. I'm standing on the bank and the string is going down into the water to the pistol. I was always taking off the pistol belt and laying it on something. What finally caused me to get rid of it was I put it on the front fender of a ¾ ton truck. A few minutes later we took a couple of shots. So everyone scrambled. Eventually they decided to burn off this field. So they set fire to it and prior to doing that, they moved the truck back. I wasn't there so it just fell off into this field. The fire met up with my pistol and set off all seven rounds. Again they think we're taking fire but it was just my pistol. SFC Calendar walked up to me and he's holding this smoldering canvas pistol belt with a burned leather holster with the end shot out. He says, "Is this yours Doc?" So I took it and cleaned it up as best I could – the grips were melted a little – and I turned it in. I said I'm not carrying a weapon anymore. Other than a knife, I didn't carry a weapon. So even when I was in B Troop, I didn't carry a weapon. When I first showed up there, some LT tried to order me to carry one. I have a picture of the medic I replaced in

B Troop. He is just covered with ammo. The Blues actually came to my support saying that I was a non-combatant and didn't have to carry a weapon.

SP5 Ed LaGar continues: Back to my first trip in a vehicle up to LZ Marylou – the roads were terrible. It was bumpy to say the least. I was wearing a flack vest. I painted an Ace of Spades on the back of it. We were sweating and hot. My helmet was bumping my head. I went up with the Infantry in a ¾ ton truck. I remember they had a mortar truck and a 106 truck. I got to be a loader on the 106 once. We only fired it in training conditions. The back blast was just incredible! The guy who ran the show for the mortar loved his coffee. I used to give him my C-ration coffee. I don't think he had any rank to speak of. He was always setting it up to be ready to fire. Besides C4, he'd peel the bottoms off hand grenades to burn the powder. You'd unscrew the top and throw it away (pop). Then you'd peel off cap and the stuff inside, you'd scratch it up to make it into a powder. When you'd light it with a match, it would start to burn and bubble; then a small flame would shoot out of it. You'd prop it against something to direct the flame. It would cook for quite a while – five minutes or better - and would boil a large cup of water. We were at LZ Mary Lou two, maybe three, weeks I'd guess. Our primary job was perimeter security but we also patrolled outside the wire. We also escorted convoys up to Dak To from there. I seem to recall we went to Dak To three or four times. This was the first time I start artillery fire landing relatively near us. We had a 50-cal mounted on our ¾ ton truck. The perimeter wire and foo gas and bunkers were already in place. We just occupied them. The very first night we got there, this buck sergeant comes up to me and said, "Doc would you mind pulling a little guard duty?" Like an idiot I said, "That's fine." Well until the day I left D Troop, I pulled guard duty most every night. I was "in the rotation" with all the Infantry guys. These two Infantry sergeants were short at that time but they took me under their wing and they taught me everything they knew. They even told me that. The first thing they did was teach me how to smoke a cigarette in the dark – how to light it and cup it with your hand so the fire didn't show. Now when I stopped carrying a weapon, they would always show he where a weapon was – most of the time it was leaning on the back of a vehicle. They also sort of "assigned me a body guard" – SP4 Williams as my shadow. SFC Calendar was a tanker. He and other sergeant would go to the SF compound to drink in their club. They'd bring me along. I'd wait outside with bottles of Maalox – they both had ulcers. I remember getting a case of the stuff for them. Once I remember we met up with a tank in the bush that had thrown a tread. We spend most of the afternoon helping that crew fix that tread. He was in hog heaven at that point. They weren't too happy driving around in jeeps with the Infantry. I remember we were up there during Thanksgiving. They did a nice job with the food. They brought us turkey and cans of nuts and hard candy. The Army tried real hard on Christmas and Thanksgiving make it a special day even in the middle of a war zone. It was a good meal. We ate on paper plates sitting on a bunker but that's OK. It's the thought that counts. I'd never seen these large grasshopper helicopters before. They were bringing in large timbers and large pieces of half culverts. This was a fairly new fire base so there was a lot of construction going on. I watched the construction during the day when we weren't out puttering around. One of the bunkers collapsed during this time. They had to dig this poor guy out. I got there and told them to back off, don't do this. I had them get a big plank and very gently put him on it then strap him down. I made certain his head was stable. We lifted him out. I'll be darned if he didn't have a back injury. For some reason or other I impressed the guys in D Troop with the directions and instructions I gave concerning this man. I don't remember his name but he was a D Trooper. He was evaced and I never saw him after that incident. This proved to be one of the events that improved or established my credibility within D Troop. That and the diagnosis of hemorrhoids helped my creditability. I diagnosed this one poor guy with hemorrhoids and sent him back to Camp Enari. They were hooting and hollering about that but sure enough he had them. So people began to say, "Well, Doc LeGar knows what he is doing." While we were there we also went out west to Plei Djereng from Kontum. Nothing ever happened to us in terms of an ambush or fire fight, we just got dirty from the

dust. We sleep in the bunkers at LZ Mary Lou. We had rats. We'd buy these Vietnamese candles. The wax would melt and the rats would come to eat the wax. I remember I was asleep one night and they started a Mad Minute. I was sleeping against the front wall of the bunker. I sort of rolled over and there was this rat looking at me. You are always tired but I sort of woke up somewhat. I didn't pay much attention to the shooting or the rat, just went back to sleep. I was in the bunker with SFC Calendar. This rat would come across this perimeter road every day. He would get up on the third row of sandbag steps and watch SFC Calendar shave! This was a big rat! That impressed me. SFC Calendar was also a good field soldier. He dug a hole in the ground, put an ammo can in it, lined it with plastic and put ice in it to make a cooler. It only worked a little bit but it was better than nothing. They tried to get at least one hot meal a day when we were at Mary Lou so it wasn't Cs all the time. SFC Calendar would ask who wanted a bath. I went whenever I could but lots of guys didn't. We'd drive out to a creek and one would stand guard while the others washed. You'd kind of bath with your clothes on. That way you'd get your clothes sort of clean as well. I always washed my feet and socks. I remember going through massive amount of razorblades because we only had cold water. I remember we found places with vines to swing on and waterfalls out in the middle of now where. It was really pretty! We had our Vietnamese interpreters and advisors. We had two of them of Chinese descent. They were both from Saigon, had been drafted and were now staff sergeants. They had a better education than most Vietnamese. They were Mr. Bing and Mr. He. We got into a little fire fight once, they were hit with shrapnel. I have pictures of them wearing a sling and bandages. I remember Mr. Bing getting a Purple Heart but I don't know how that happened. Then I remember one guy's M60 cooked off a round. He had power burns on his hand. Everything instantly got infected so I was treating him. SGT Sass was an interesting guy. He'd get a cut or scratch and wouldn't take it of it. I'd tell him we needed to watch against infections. He'd say that he'd only not get treated to "play with" Doc LeGar's mind! We medics got real "mother-hennish" with our guys. It was funny when they came into the Aid Station even at Enari. They would want us medics to work on them versus CPT Wallack – a real doctor. When we finished our time at Mary Lou, we returned to Enari but we weren't there long – two or three days of stand-down. We started going out on three or four week missions on a regular basis. We got to ready know the area around Camp Enari. The unit that had been out would return in the evening to Camp Enari – drive through the main gate. CPT Wallack had a policy that the next day, the medics who'd been in the field had the day completely off. The Infantry always had work to do – cleaning weapons, whatever. I remember going into Pleiku on these days. The next day after our day off, we were expected to work in the dispensary until it was time to go out again. On this "next day" we made certain our aid bag and rucksack was ready – clean clothes, etc. The idea was to be able to snatch it and go quickly when the word came we were leaving again. That is when we had problems with people sleeping on guard duty or other things. At first they didn't lock up the weapons. Later on they figured out that was a good idea. Naturally there was smoking and drinking and gambling going on and it was just better not to have weapons as part of that mix. It was actually a treat to eat in the mess hall! The food service guys, in my opinion, did the best they could with what they had to work with. A field stove isn't the best piece of equipment but they made it work.

SP5 Ed LaGar continues:

SP5 Terry Swanger recalls: I got to D Troop, 2nd Platoon, Scout Section by way of the infusion program in late 1968. I was one of those that trained at Ft. Knox when they formed up the new Air Cav units, but I was in the 7/1st Air Cav and came to Vietnam with them when they first deployed at Dian. The bulk of my tour was with them. When I got to 7/17th I was sent out to FB Blackhawk

and was put on a recon jeep with Joseph Barto and "Doc" Mace. Our scout jeep, D-21, ultimately wound up with a 50-cal mounted on it. Maybe some of you saw it? Barto told the story about how he won it in a poker game. I don't know if any of you heard that, but here is what really happened. On the perimeter of the firebase was a 4th Div M-113 APC with a 50 on it. We happened to be just down from them and were leaving the next morning. I had a 50 on my jeep at 7/1<sup>st</sup> Cav and I told Barto and Mace about it. The 113 crew had a poker game going that night in the track so all the hatches had to be closed. Barto went into the track to play cards and distract them while Mace and I lifted that gun, mount and all. Barto did win a couple of packs of Camels. When we got back to Camp Enari the guys in the motor pool braced the mount stand, because you couldn't fire a 50 off a M-60 mount stand without ripping it out. Anyhow, the pictures some of you saw on the website of the jeep and the three of us were taken at Polei Kleng a few days later on the next mission. Each one of us had two pictures of the jeep and the three of us taken by somebody with a Polaroid. I left country in late January 1969 and was stationed at Ft. Hood just waiting to get out of the Army when I heard that the Jeep was hit, maybe by a mine, and Barto and Mace were on it. I could never confirm it and I wrote it off as a myth, because a lot of stories like that seemed to floating around then. I have been told recently that Mace was KIA later that year and Barto died a few years ago from cancer, attributed to Agent Orange. I didn't get a chance to really know anyone else in the unit that well because I was almost a short timer when I got there. Barto was a great guy, full of life, volunteered us for every mission and patrol that came up, and when they didn't that us he'd go find one. Mace was quiet, with a great sense of humor and dry wit. I thought he was the Platoon medic that just loved to be in the field. I'd go along with these two jokers just because I hated to be around base camps. Anyhow, to Barto and Mace, may they find peace and God bless them. As for me I'm living up in the Great Northwest and doing just fine.

SP5 Phil Keilman provided the following as he reflected on his year in Vietnam: I joined HHT in December 1967 and departed in December 1968. I arrived as a PVT E-2 and left as an SP5 E-5. I worked for Lt David P Horstick in the Personnel Office. The NCO's in that section were SSG Bookie Bolen and a SFC Joblin. Didn't care for either of them. Our hooch was right near the large ditch that separated the billeting area from the flight line. I bunked with SGT Terry Shields (he worked in Operations), Otis Brown, Tom Dam, and Carl Sowell from Atlanta, GA. We became real close. Heard from Otis once a long time ago but that was it. We used to trade sodas for steaks with the Air Force guys that lived near the airfield. I also flew quite a bit as I got to know the aviators. I flew as door gunner a few times and also volunteered to go out on patrols with the 4th ID and other troops in our squadron. At the time, I thought I was missing something but looking back I'm VERY GLAD I did it. Remember one of our avionics crewmen setting off a couple of rockets that blowing up another chopper. I ran out with a couple of other guys to see if we could help. There was a jeep parked near a burning Huey. One of the guys tried to get in and start it to move it, but it wouldn't start so we tried to push it. I kept getting hit in the stomach by something while we pushed. Then I looked down and saw the end of the rocket motor sticking out the side of the jeep. I yelled at everyone and backed out of there! I remember a very sad event once when I was on perimeter guard duty. This D Troop buck sergeant got juiced up and wandered out in the wire. He ended up dead when we all opened fire per the orders of the tower. We used to body surf down the drainage ditch next to the hooch during monsoons. What a rip! Let me tell you how that got started. The ditch was only a foot or two deep. One day I tried to stand in the rushing water and it whisked me away down the ditch toward the perimeter. I stopped and pulled myself out before I went through the culvert that went under Perimeter Road and out into the wire. After that we took our clothes off and started doing in on purpose. We used our air mattresses too. Really a rough ride and you got all scraped and banged up but it was a blast at the time. I lost my class ring doing it! One guy did get pulled into the culvert and popped out the other side and into the wire on the perimeter. Banged and bruised but OK. We stopped shortly after that incident. I stayed in the Army and retired as a MSG in 1988.

The following article titled "'Ruthless Rides' Hit Fast, Keep Enemy On The Move" appeared in Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth (the official Vietnam era newspaper of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division) provided by SP4 John D. Anderson. This was a one page article which appeared with two photos credited to SP4 John Stidham. The top photo is the famous mini-gun equipped LOH over the hill with five Blues walking up the hill with the caption: "COVER – As one of their choppers furnishes air cover, soldiers for the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Air Cav move along a ridgeline in the rugged Highlands." CPT Charlie Rayl who served as A Troop's Scout Platoon Leader told the author that this famous photo is of an A Troop LOH, so we will assume this is the case unless someone else can prove otherwise. The left photo shows a LOH in the background with an infantryman's left arm on a male Montagnard walking up a high with the caption: "DETAINED – A Viet Cong detainee is led from the jungle by a trooper from the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav. The air cavalry unit has completed its first year in support of 4<sup>th</sup> Division soldiers in the Central Highlands." The date assigned to this event is the end of November 1968. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

'Ruthless Riders' Hit Fast, Keep Enemy On The Move – Camp Enari – The 'Ruthless Riders' are giving Charlie little rest in the Central Highlands. Commanded by LTC Robert M. Reuter, the elite 7/17<sup>th</sup> Air Cav has operated in support of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division since becoming operations one year ago. Harassment is the key word for the mission of the 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Working in aerial scouts teams of two gunships and two LOHs, the spotter ships reconnoiter large areas of tree top level. When the teams spot something unusual, the LOH hovers directly over the objective. If this close observation reveals enemy activities of any type, the gunships move in with rockets, grenades and miniguns. When increased heavy resistance is encountered, tactical air strikes and Ivy artillery are called in. Able To Surprise. The Cav's intensified aerial is often followed by ground scouts or an aero-rifle platoon. With close air cover the foot troops can search an area, surprise the enemy and quickly be withdrawn. Last February the Cav's ships detected enemy movement in the hills near Kontum. Launching a devastating surprise combat assault on a large concentration of NVA forces preparing to attack the city of Kontum, the Ruthless Riders forced the enemy into prematurely committing his troops. The results were disastrous to the enemy's Tet offensive in the highlands. April climaxed three months of scattered probes in "VC Valley" with more than 700 well-fortified bunkers-occupied by an NVA regiment – destroyed. Working with the Ivy's 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade at Ban Me Thuot and Duc Lap, the Ruthless Riders added a powerful punch in the defeat of a stubborn enemy force threatening that area. Responsible for every 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron ship in the air are the mechanics and signal repairman who keep the Cav going. These soldiers work around the clock seven days a week. Their kind of heroism which goes unseen, is vital.

CW2 Larry Vieley provides the following details about the AH-1G and serving with B Troop at Phan Thiet: B Troop's maintenance and flight crews had a lot to learn about the new AH-1G. In addition to the tail rotor pitch setting previously mentioned by Paul Uster, I remember we had a lot of trouble with the nose turret – both the turning mechanism, feeder de-linker, belt drive motors and the weapons systems in general. They would get so bad that periodically we'd have some civilian technicians from Emerson stay with us and get them back up. After several weeks, they'd get everything fixed and leave. Pretty soon they weren't working as well and rapidly declined until we got the Emerson people back again. I also recall that when we replaced an engine, the overhauled engines ran hotter and weren't as powerfully as the originals. I seem to recall that several rebuilds only lasted a few hours before they went out. Dealing with the sand at Phan Thiet required some unusual steps. For example, we put some of that Army 100-MPH clear speed tape on the leading edges of the tail rotor blades. Once I flew one of these to Vung Tau for a check ride and their maintenance team went crazy over that tape. They felt that the tape on the tail rotors red "X" the aircraft. I told them, "Hey, we have to fly or our people die and this patch seems to work for us." I remember WO "Common" Coy Campbell was the AH-1G test pilot and WO Sam Booker was the only black Cobra pilot we had. CW2 Don Skiles who flew in the Lift Platoon was a prior enlisted

NCO in the infantry. He wore a combat infantry badge on his uniform. He was an interim platoon leader for a while until LT John Haberlien came in. I can remember Don going in with the blues several times. The stories of life at Phan Thiet could go on forever I am sure. For example I remember standing at mail call once not long after I arrived in B Troop. WO Paul Uster who would later become one of my best friends joined the formation but he was only wearing a T-shirt versus a uniform with a nametag. He asked me, "Have they called my name already?" I answered, "Nope." They called a few more names when Paul got this frowning skeptical look on his face and then asked me, "Do you know who I am?" And I answered, "Nope." Then not long after CPT Bill Ipock moved to maintenance from being the Gun Platoon leader I overheard a conversation where a couple of gun pilots mentioned that his name was still stenciled on one of the Cobras and since he didn't fly with the Weapons Platoon, he should probably take it off. Bill was incensed and he said something to the effect, "Hey, I'm the Maintenance Officer here and I can have my name on any damn thing I want." A day or two later Bill and "Story Lady" [his real name is WO Dave Russell] returned late one evening from parts run. As we all did, they took their flashlights to the crapper. As Bill starts to do his thing he notices that there on the toilet seat was stenciled "IPOCK" in black hand painted lettering. Being somewhat puzzled and a little uncertain, Bill yells over and asks Russell if he can see anything written on his toilet seat. "Yeah, "IPOCK."" They check all of the remaining toilet seats and sure enough, "IPOCK" owned every single one them. So in the end it was true – Bill could have his name on just about anything!

WO1 Rick 'Skeet' Schuler recalls: I came to Vietnam after I finished Cobra school. Initially I was with B Troop. I stayed with them a couple of weeks. I remember CPTs Bill Ipock, Mike Hodge, and Mike Quigley - real characters for sure! On 10 June 1968 I joined C Troop. I remember flying one of their last couple Charlie Models until we could get completely converted to Cobras. CPT Doug Hammond was my platoon leader. I became WHITE 21 in the Gun Platoon. I remember one pretty scary time. I don't know the date but the C&C ship got shot down. I think this was when MAJ Frost was still the CO. Anyway we put the Blues in after shooting up all the trees and everything worked out fine. When we returned to Enari that night we discovered that my ship had taken several hits in the rotor blades. The crew chief was SP4 Alvis Richards. After I shut it down, he started looking at the battle damage and made this cute remark: "You know I work hard on this ship keeping it clean and in good working order, then you take it out and get it shot full of holes!" In late November I'd guess we started hearing rumors that the 2/17<sup>th</sup> Cav was coming over from the States and the Army wanted to infuse some us so they'd have some experienced in-country guys and wouldn't have the DEROS problem. Initially they asked for volunteers and a couple of us said we'd go. The rumors got a little heavier in December. Then in early January 1969 I was assigned to C/2/17<sup>th</sup> Cav and left for I Corps. I flew Cobras for them until I DEROSed at the end of my year.

WO Doss Pruitt recalls: I was the only black officer in many aviation units including C Troop. That was one of the few things that was somewhat regrettable but at the same time was enjoyable in a way. Let's go back to flight school. Some people say that even trying to become a pilot took some bravery on our parts in those days. If you remember at Ft Wolters, most of the classes were about 360 strong. My class had six blacks. So it was a culling process even before we got there; Sickle Cell Anemia being the primary culprit. But some of us prevailed. The Army could test for Sickle Cell Anemia and that was a criteria to prevent someone from attending flight school because it was an anemia that restricted the oxygen flow. That was what they were using. It was a little bit of a bias and a little bit of valid concern because Sickle Cell Anemia in this country was not all that prevalent and it was restricted primarily to blacks. I was able to pass through that grid. I didn't make it through flight school in the class I started with. I started with 67-15 and graduated with 67-17. I had a pilot/student conflict. After earning my wings I was part of the group of Warrants that joined the 101<sup>st</sup> Abn Div at Ft Campbell and specifically C/2/17<sup>th</sup> Cav. We was the only 101<sup>st</sup> Abn unit not to have enough equipment to go to Vietnam. So we stayed there as part of the 101<sup>st</sup> in waiting for

aircraft, training, and getting ready to deploy. Literally we got re-designated to C/7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav shortly before we climbed on board the aircraft to go to Vietnam. This was before a long, happy week of flying our aircraft to California. I was in the Lift platoon. I think I went to Vietnam on the second C-141 about a week after the first one. I stayed in C Troop six months. Then I went to the 119<sup>th</sup> AHC. I believe I joined the 119<sup>th</sup> at Holloway before Christmas 1968. My call sign with the 119<sup>th</sup> was "The Judge" – they were the Crocks and the Gaters and they flew out of "The Swamp." I was Blue something in C Troop. I made AC just a short while before I was transferred. I don't recall any difficult times flying or otherwise in C Troop. While serving with the 119<sup>th</sup> I was shot down in a Huey while attempting to rescue a downed Mohawk pilot. No one was seriously hurt even though the aircraft rolled into a ditch. I stayed in the Army as a pilot until 1972 when I was released. I came back to Texas, went back to college, and joined a Transportation Battalion that had boats in a Reserve unit in Houston. I was the detachment CO that did the ADP data work for boats loading or unloading wherever. I stayed with them for 8 years. I also worked for IBM for 20 years. I am a full fledged Texan – born there and still live there!

## December 1968

On the 1<sup>st</sup>, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07915 flown by CW2 M.F. Piccone who had minor injuries at Phan Thiet. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was repaired by B Troop and continued to serve with them. The Accident Summary reads: Observer threw a white phosphorus grenade when the aircraft's tail was into the wind. The pilot used full forward cyclic and max torque to leave the area. Due to the terrain and existing wing sufficient altitude to clear an obstacle was not obtained.

There are certain ironies in writing history. A classic is the section of B Troop's Unit History that covers this period. It says: "The month ... was a busy one for all members. The Blues were inserted a total of 15 times. Twice they received sniper fire and only three occasions actually engaged the enemy in extremely heavy fire fights." It continues with an account of the enemy equipment captured or destroyed along with 15 VC killed and 6 captured. The unit history ends by saying that the ACT suffered one KIA, four WIAs, and had one LOH destroyed. Time now gives us some advantages the unit historian never had. The soldier that died was **SGT Ray McKibben**. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 5 Feb 1968 and his MOS as 11B20. He was the first man from the 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

On the 6<sup>th</sup>, B Troop inserted the Blues. The following is an edited version of the DA form 638 (Recommendation for Award) dated 18 Dec 1968 signed by MAJ James A McCracken:

Block 1: McKibben, Ray. Block 2: RA14831777. Block 3: SP4 E4. Block 4: MOS: 11B20. Block 9: Next of Kin: wife Mrs. Marie McKibben, R.R. #3, Cedartown, Georgia 30140. Block 19: I, James A. McCracken, was mission commander on that particular day and, while I observed the actions as a whole, I could not see any details. Persons in immediate proximity or who assisted in act or shared in same hazard: PSG E7 Miguel Vidro Santiago awarded the Silver Star, SSG E6 Juan L. Gonzales awarded the Bronze Star with 'V', SP4 E4 Ronald A. Elkins awarded the Bronze Star with 'V', SP4 E4 Dale R. Fatchet awarded the Bronze Star with 'V'. Block 22a: Location: 10 kilometers northwest of Song Mao. Block 22b: Date: 6 Dec 68. Block 22c: Time: 1400. Block 22d: Terrain: The terrain was relatively flat but with dense jungle vegetation along the river. The ground was rocky with heavy bamboo thicket. The weather was clear with a light wind from the northwest. Block 23: Description of enemy conditions: The enemy stood his ground and had a good field of observation and fire. All enemy positions were in close proximity to access routes. The enemy initiated the action when the patrol reached his perimeter. All enemy weapons that were captured were of an automatic nature. Eight (8) enemy soldiers were killed; number of wounded is unknown. Block 24: Unit morale, casualties and mission: The morale of the members of the patrol was excellent. The mission was to kill, capture or destroy all enemy personnel and equipment. The

patrol was performing a visual reconnaissance when they received fire. SP4 Ray McKibben was killed and SP4 Fatchet was injured. Block 25: What were comrades who were in immediate proximity doing: SP4 Fatchet was the point man leading the patrol and delivered intense fire against the enemy until wounded. SP4 Elkins was the second man in the patrol and delivered intense fire against the enemy. Block 30: Narrative description: On 6 December 1968, at approximately 1400 hours, elements of Troop B, 7<sup>th</sup> Armored Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry were conducting a ground reconnaissance near Song Mao, Thin Binh Thuan Province, Republic of Vietnam. A sixteen man patrol was inserted into an area of known enemy personnel and equipment. The mission of the patrol was to develop the enemy situation if at all possible. In the event that they should meet a large size enemy force and establish contact, they would be required to contain the enemy for a period of at least thirty-five minutes, the minimum time required to airlift reinforcements into the area. Consequently it was necessary for the patrol to operate effectively and efficiently as a team for survival. SP4 McKibben was team leader of the point element and was the third man in the formation maneuvering along a well-travel trail. The stillness was harshly shattered as enemy automatic weapons fire was suddenly directed against the patrol. The initial barrage immobilized the first two men as they sought protective cover in the dense vegetation from the deadly fire. Immediately analyzing the situation, SP4 McKibben rapidly covered the distance to the enemy position, [continued on another sheet] killing its occupant. A quick survey of the position and cursory search of the dead enemy soldier failed to yield any valuable information, so SP4 McKibben retrieved the communist weapon, slung it over his shoulder and calmly returned to the rest of the patrol. Everything was quiet now as the patrol continued onward to complete their mission. Further along the trail, SP4 McKibben detected movement to the right front and relayed this information via hand signals to the patrol leader. Close supporting fire was requested from the Cobra gunships on station and directed upon the suspected area. The two Cobra gunships conducted four passes each against the designated target expending their entire ammunition load. This continued for approximately ten minutes. Naturally with the element of surprise lost, the patrol moved more cautiously forward through the slightly smoky area. The enemy soldiers waited within their heavily fortified and expertly camouflaged bunkers as the patrol advanced to the river and began to sweep around the bend along the trail. SP4 McKibben and his men were barely inching forward when sounds of automatic weapons fire again saturated the air. As before, the first elements were caught at a definite disadvantage under a withering hail of bullets. SP4 McKibben calmly directed the point man to remain still while the second man moved to the left as he went to the right. As a result he achieved a counter balance of fire with his men against the enemy positions, thereby granting invaluable time and room for the remainder of the patrol to maneuver against the enemy flank. At this time SP4 McKibben observed the man at his near left fall before the enemy fire. Disregarding his own personal safety, SP4 McKibben sped to his companion's side as bullets whizzed by, kicking up shrapnel and dirt. Unhesitatingly exposing himself, he retrieved his friend from the enemy's field of fire, and administered necessary medical attention before he continued his pursuit of the enemy. The enemy was by this time under fire from the rest of the patrol which had maneuvered to a more advantageous position, although their return fire was not effectively suppressing the enemy due to the protection provided by the heavily constructed bunkers. Realizing that his patrol, pinned down and unable to advance, was in an extremely vulnerable position, SP4 McKibben arose and dashed defiantly toward the first enemy bunker. In a blur of motion he attacked and killed the entrenched enemy defender and confiscated his automatic weapon. This enable the point man to move forward out of his exposed position. With his newly acquired weapon in his left hand and with his M-16 rifle braced against his right side, SP4 McKibben then directed his attention to the next bunker that was concentrating its fire against the members of his patrol. Again he confronted the enemy stronghold single-handedly as he expended his weapons into the bunker. Even though he was unfamiliar with the operation of the foreign weapons, SP4 McKibben nevertheless forget ahead and expended it also. Reacting swiftly when the bunker continued to fire,

he threw two fragmentary grenades into the open part effectively silencing it. He then reloaded his M-16 rifle and covered the advance of his patrol with an effective volume of fire and simultaneously began to advance toward yet a third bunker. A determined enemy soldier finally felled SP4 McKibben, thereby halting his devastating assault [continued on another sheet] but not before another foe fell victim to his blazing weapon. It was at this crucial moment that the impetus of SP4 McKibben's onslaught finally allowed his patrol to regain the advantage over the remaining enemy. A subsequent inspection of the second silenced bunker revealed two dead enemy soldiers which brought to five the total of enemy killed by SP4 McKibben. The final body count from the encounter showed eight enemy soldiers had been killed by the patrol. SP4 McKibben made the greatest sacrifice possible for his country, through his indomitable courage, complete disregard for his own safety, and profound concern for his fellow soldiers. By sacrificing his own life, he averted further loss of life and injury to the members of his patrol. SP4 McKibben's conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism, and intrepidity at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect great credit upon himself, and the Armed Forces of his Country. [This concludes Block 30. This page is signed by James A McCracken Major, Armor, Commanding

Block 31: Describe effects or results: Mission was completed with eight (8) killed, five (5) by SP4 McKibben. Block 32. Related Position of Person Initiating Recommendation: Troop Commander. Block 33: If approved, forward award to: blank. Block 34: Inclosures: 1 Proposed Citation, 4 Eye Witness Statements, 1 Sketch. Block 35: Typed Name, Grade, Branch and Title of Person Initiating Recommendation: James A. McCracken, Major, Armor, Commanding. Block 36: Signature //signed//

Summary of Recommendation for Award of the Medal of Honor (Posthumous) Name: Ray McKibben, Status: Team Leader (Point Element) Specialist Four, US Army Organization: Troop B, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry APO 96262 Next of Kin: Mrs Marie McKibben (Wife) R.R. #3, Cedartown, Georgia 30140. Persons who assisted: Platoon Sergeant Miguel Vidro Santiago – SS, Staff Sergeant Juan L. Gonzales – BS 'V', Specialist Four Ronald A. Elkins – BS 'V', and Specialist Four Dale R. Fatchet – BS 'V', pending approval.

Conditions under which act performed Location: Song Mao, RVN Date: 1400, 6 December 1968 Terrain: Flat but with dense jungle vegetation along the river. The ground was rocky with heavy bamboo thicket. Weather: The weather was clear with a light wind from the northwest. Enemy Condition: The enemy stood his ground and had a good field of observation and fire. All enemy positions were in close proximity to access routes. The enemy initiated the action when the patrol reached his perimeter. All enemy weapons that were captured were of an automatic nature. Defenders Condition: The morale of the members of the patrol was excellent. The mission was to kill, capture or destroy all enemy personnel and equipment. The patrol was performing a visual reconnaissance when they received fire.

Narrative Description of Gallant Conduct: At 1400 hours, 6 December 1968, a sixteen man patrol from Troop B, 7<sup>th</sup> Armored Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry was inserted into an area near Song Mao, Thinh Binh Thuanh Province, to search for enemy personnel and equipment. As the patrol maneuvered along a trail, enemy automatic weapons fire was directed against it, forcing the first two men of the point element to take cover. McKibben, team leader of the point element and third man in formation, charged up a slight incline through bamboo and heavy brush to the fortified enemy position, killed its occupant, retrieved the automatic weapons, and returned to the patrol. The patrol moved further along the trail, until McKibben detected movement in the brush and relayed his discovery to the patrol leader by hand signals. Fire support was requested and gunships bombarded the area. The patrol then moved forward and came under enemy automatic weapons fire from camouflaged bunkers. After deploying his men, McKibben observed the man to his left fall

wounded, and ran through enemy fire to him. McKibben then transported the man to a place out of the enemy field of fire and administered first aid. McKibben then rose up, dashed toward the first enemy bunker, killed the defender inside, and captured his automatic weapon. McKibben then advanced against the second enemy bunker, first expending the ammunition from his M-16 rifle into it, and then firing the unfamiliar foreign weapon. When the bunker continued to resist, McKibben threw two fragmentation grenades into it, killing the two defenders inside. McKibben then reloaded his M-16 rifle and began to cover the patrol's advance toward a third bunker. McKibben was then mortally wounded by fire from an enemy soldier, yet he killed the insurgent with a final burst of M-16 fire as he fell. The total McKibben had killed five (5) enemy soldiers.

Inclosure 1: I, PSG Miguel Vidro Santiago, RA50113688, United States Army, attest to the following events which occurred on 6 Dec 1968. A reconnaissance patrol from Troop B was inserted into an area where an unknown size enemy force was operating. SP4 Ray McKibben was team leader of the point element. He was the third man in the column of sixteen men maneuvering down a trail. I saw SP4 McKibben, with great speed and accuracy, deliver effective fire against a concealed enemy position that had opened up with automatic weapons upon his team, pinning them to the ground. With a brilliant display of courage and disregard for his own personal safety, I saw SP4 McKibben assault the position, killing one enemy soldier and capturing his automatic weapon. Further along the route, SP4 McKibben spotted enemy movement and immediately notified me, the patrol leader. I called the Cobra gunships on station and requested some close aerial support on the suspected area. The gunship conducted several passes on the target. As soon as the gunships were finished, we moved forward into the area. We were approaching the river bank when SP4 McKibben and his men received intense automatic weapons fire from several heavily fortified bunkers that were almost invisible in the undergrowth. SP4 McKibben reacted swiftly and employed his two men as a defensive base of fire against the enemy. This gave my men and I the opportunity and time to maneuver around the enemy's flank. While we were accomplishing this, one of SP4 McKibben's men was injured and was exposed to the enemy fire. I observed SP4 McKibben, without any hesitation on his part, race to SP4 Fatchet's side. Bullets were hitting all around the area but SP4 McKibben didn't falter as he pulled SP4 Fatchet to safety behind an embankment. By this time, my men and I were in a better position in which to engage the enemy but our fire wasn't very effective against the bunkers. SP4 McKibben immediately realized our predicament and attacked the first position, killing another enemy soldier and capturing his weapon. My men were receiving intense automatic weapons fire from the bunker next to where SP4 McKibben was positioned. Again, I saw SP4 McKibben charge the enemy position, firing his weapons as he ran. When it was empty, he grabbed the captured weapon and continued to fire. He reached the bunker but his weapon was empty so he grabbed a couple of fragmentation grenades and tossed them inside. We received no more fire from that particular bunker. This gave my men and I the change to advance. SP4 McKibben was covering our progress. As we drew closer, SP4 McKibben was preparing to attack another bunker when an enemy soldier shot him several times. SP4 McKibben fell to the ground but somehow managed to fire a burst at the enemy soldier. Both soldiers were dead when we arrived at the site, which took only a few seconds. My men were now able to overrun the enemy's positions. We accounted for eight (8) enemy soldiers killed that day, five (5) of whom were by SP4 McKibben. When we entered the bunker that SP4 McKibben silenced with his grenades, we found two (2) enemy personnel, one of which was dead and the other died shortly thereafter. I can honestly say that the outcome of the battle would have been different if it had not been for SP4 McKibben's actions on that afternoon. I am certain that, under [continued on another sheet] the circumstances, I would have had more men killed and/or injured. As it was, my only fatality and injury were to the people already mentioned. SP4 McKibben displayed great ability, professionalism, and courage in clearing and destroying the enemy bunkers and equipment.

I am proud ever to have associated with him. END OF STATEMENT Signed Miguel Vidro Santiago, RA50113688, PSG E7.

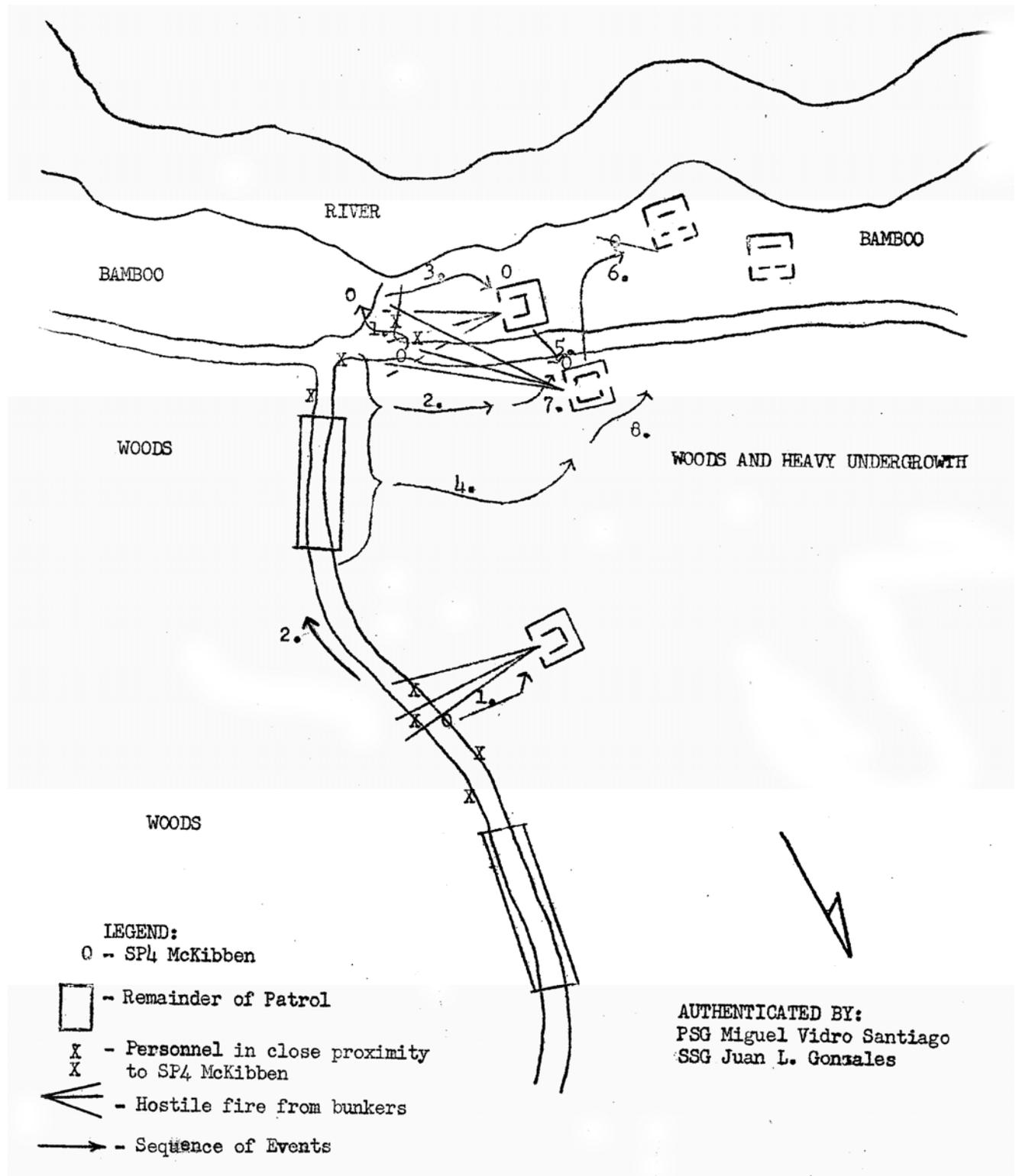
Inclosure 2: I, SSG Juan L. Gonzales, RA25851646, United States Army, attest to the following events which occurred on 6 Dec 1968. A sixteen man reconnaissance patrol from Troop B was inserted into an area where the enemy was known to be operating. I was the squad leader of the point element in which SP4 Ray McKibben was my team leader. SP4 Dale Fatchet was point man, SP4 Ronald Elkins and SP4 McKibben were second and third respectively, and I was the fourth man in the column. All of a sudden, we were receiving fire from the right front. SP4 McKibben saw the enemy position and immediately charged it. I reached a vantage point from where I could lend supporting fire to SP4 McKibben but he was already on top of the position, shooting the enemy with his M-16 rifle. He retrieved the enemy's weapon and conducted a quick search of the position. We regrouped and continued along the trail but we did not travel very far before SP4 McKibben detected some movement. The patrol leader, PSG Miguel Vidro Santiago, was informed of the situation and requested aerial support from the gunships. As soon as the gunship were finished, we moved ahead in order to assess the damage. SP4 Fatchet approached a river and began to maneuver around a bend in the trail. Nothing happened until I reached the bend and then the enemy began to fire intensively with automatic weapons. I saw SP4 McKibben motion to SP4 Fatchet to remain where he was located and for SP4 Elkins to reposition himself to the left while he moved to the right. All three of them were blazing away at the enemy with their weapons while the rest of us were moving for a flank attack. I was in a good position to observe my three men and the rest of the patrol. Suddenly, I saw SP4 Fatchet fall to the ground. Immediately SP4 McKibben was at his side and pulling him to safety. I was firing at a fortified bunker when I saw SP4 McKibben break away from his location and run towards the nearest enemy position. We were receiving intense fire from the fortified bunker and I was unable to assist SP4 McKibben immediately. He stormed the position and killed the enemy soldier who occupied it. Next, he sprinted toward the enemy bunker that was giving us so much trouble. SP4 McKibben expended his weapon, including one of the captured weapons, during the assault so he tossed a couple of grenades into the bunker, silencing it. Now we were able to move forward and SP4 McKibben was covering our advance. An enemy soldier observed SP4 McKibben and shot him with a short burst from his automatic weapon. SP4 McKibben returned the fire as he fell to the ground. The enemy soldier was hit, collapsed, and remained motionless. SP4 McKibben and the enemy soldier were dead when we reached the scene. At this time, we had the initiative and continued to press the attack. We completed our mission in a very short time and were extracted. SP4 McKibben displayed great ability, professionalism, and courage in clearing and destroying numerous bunkers and equipment and was, indeed, a very outstanding individual of Troop B. END OF STATEMENT Signed by Juan L. Gonzales, RA25851646, SSG.

Inclosure 3: I, SP4 Dale Fatchet, RA11886273, United States Army, attest to the following events which occurred on 6 Dec 1968. I was the point element for a sixteen man reconnaissance patrol which was inserted into an area to check on enemy activity. Halfway through the day, we came into close combat with the enemy when we were fired upon with automatic weapons from a concealed position. I had no alternative but to dive to the ground for protection. SP4 Ronald Elkins, who was right behind me, was in the same situation and followed my actions. SP4 Ray McKibben, my team leader, was the third man in the file. As soon as the firing began, SP4 McKibben crashed through the brush toward the enemy position. The fire was diverted toward SP4 McKibben, but he was upon the position in a split second and killed the enemy soldier. He looked around the position and grabbed the automatic weapon and motioned for me to continue along the trail. The whole event was over before the rest of the patrol, which was slightly behind us, had a chance to react in force. A few minutes later, SP4 McKibben signaled for me to stop because he detected movement off to one side. He relayed this information to PSG Miguel Vidro Santiago, the patrol leader. Cobra

gunships ired into the area. We regrouped and I continued along the trail as soon as the gunships were finished. I cam to a river and started to follow the trail around a bend. My visibility was obstructed due to the vegetation. The enemy didn't fire until the three of us had rounded the bend and came into view. Somehow, no one was injured and SP4 McKibben immediately began to return fire. SP4 McKibben told me to remain where I was and for SP4 Elkins to move to the left while he moved to the right. We began to fire back at the enemy. I was wounded in the leg and fell into a more exposed position. The first thing I realized was that SP4 McKibben was at my side as if he had always been there. Bullets were hitting all around us and what felt to me to be a very long time was only seconds as SP4 McKibben moved me to a safe position behind some rocks. Quickly, he insured that I was safe and returned to my old position. The rest of the patrol now was firing at the enmy from the side. SP4 McKibben ran toward the first enemy position. He was being fired at during the entire time but he still reached the enemy position. SP4 McKibben killed the enemy soldier and captured his weapon. From there, I saw SP4 McKibben charge the bunker that was giving the rest of our patrol the most trouble. He ran to the side of the bunker and then threw two fragmentary grenades inside. Everybody was moving toward the bunker now that the fire from it had ceased. SP4 McKibben was covering our advance. All of a sudden, an enemy soldier appeared off to the side of SP4 McKibben. It all happened so fast as they fired at each other. SP4 McKibben was dead and so was the enemy soldier. We spent the next ten to fifteen minutes checking the bunker complex before we were extracted. There is no doubt in my mind that SP4 McKibben saved my life when he pulled me to safety when I was wounded in the leg. END OF STATEMENT Signed by SP4 Dale R. Fatchet, RA11886273, SP4 ER

Inclosure 4: I, SP4 Ronald A. Elkins, US53757484, United States Army, attest to the following events which occurred on 6 Dec 1968. I was a member of a sixteen man reconnaissance patrol inserted into enemy occupied territory. SP4 Dale R. Fatchet was point man. SP4 Ray McKibben was team leader and followed me as the third man in the column. We were moving along a well traveled trail that indicated recent usage. Everything was fine until an enemy soldier fired at us with his automatic weapon. SP4 Fatchet and I immediately dove for the ground. SP4 McKibben observed the enemy position and charged it. The enemy soldier fired at SP4 McKibben, missed, and did not get a second chance. SP4 McKibben shot the enemy soldier and returned with his automatic weapon. We started down the trail again but only went a short distance before SP4 McKibben spotted some movement. We stopped and told PSG Miguel Vidro Santiago about the movement and he called the gunships to suppress the area. We moved ahead after the gunships were finished and progressed as far as the bend in the trail when the enemy fired upon us with automatic weapons. The enemy was well hidden in fortified bunkers. SP4 McKibben told me to position myself to the left of SP4 Fatchet as he went to the right. The three of us delivered a heavy volume of fire against the enemy while the rest of the patrol moved to a better position. SP4 Fatchet was wounded in the leg and SP4 McKibben came to his rescue. Bullets were hitting very close of them. SP4 McKibben pulled SP4 Fatchet to safety and moved toward the first enemy position. We were receiving fire the entire time. SP4 McKibben reached the enemy position, killed the soldier, and grabbed his automatic weapon. From there, I saw SP4 McKibben go to another bunker and throw a couple of grenades inside. All of us were moving forward when SP4 McKibben was shot by an enemy soldier. SP4 McKibben returned the fire, but both were dead by the time we arrived there. We checked the rest of the bunker complex and were extracted. We killed eight (8) enemy soldier that day and most of the credit belongs to SP4 McKibben. We would have had more men injured or killed if it were not for the actions of SP4 McKibben on that afternoon. END OF STATEMENT Signed by SP4 Ronald A. Elkins, US53757484, SP4.

Inclosure 5: Battle Field Sketch:



SP4 Ray McKibben's award citation reads as follows: The Felton, GA native was serving as a team leader of a 16 man recon patrol near Song Mao in southern II Corps on 6 Dec 1968, in an area of known enemy personnel and equipment. He was a team leader of the point element and the third man in the formation maneuvering along a well traveled trail, when the men came under heavy AW fire from a fortified bunker. SGT McKibben, assessing the situation, charged through the bamboo and heavy brush to the armed position, killed the enemy gunner, secured his weapon and directed

the patrol forward. Later, his patrol again came under heavy fire from bunkers and as the men took cover one fell wounded. SGT McKibben sprang to his comrade's side and under fire, pulled him to safety behind the cover of some rocks and administered first aid. Seeing that his patrol was pinned down, he charged through the brush against a hail of AW fire, killed the enemy with a rifle shot and captured the weapon. He then continued his assault against the next bunker, firing his weapons as he charged. But as he approached this position, his own rifle ran out of ammunition so he switched to the captured weapon. When that was emptied, SGT McKibben silenced the enemy position with two hand grenades. As his men moved forward another position opened fire. He reloaded his M-16, and as he single handedly attacked the position, he was hit by enemy fire. Though mortally wounded, he was able to fire a final burst from his weapon which killed another enemy soldier and enabled the patrol to continue the operation. In the end the patrol totaled eight enemy dead, five killed by SGT McKibben. On 7 Apr 1970, SGT Ray McKibben of B Troop's Blues was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

SP4 Dana Charette recalls: I was the liaison sergeant on the day SGT Ray McKibben was killed. What I remember about that day is the MAJ McCracken did not fly C&C that day. I don't recall who was flying C&C that day but it wasn't McCracken. MAJ McCracken was new to the unit and he was a person who wanted to know first-hand what his people did. So he went with the Blues that day. He was inserted with the Blues that day. They got in a fire fight. They decided to call for an emergency extraction. Now I don't know exactly what happened, but I believe on the way back to the LZ MAJ McCracken got hurt – when I saw him his face was all scraped up. I certainly remember hearing several people say that if it wasn't for McKibben, lots of people would have been hurt. He was responsible for the safety of a lot of people. MAJ McCracken was on the ground. He was a witness to all that stuff. It is indeed possible that MAJ McCracken's life was saved because of SGT McKibben's actions and that is way MAJ McCracken was so focused on getting that award for Ray McKibben. Everything said, in my mind SGT McKibben's efforts were a 'show of sacrifice' for sure. Now please remember I used to keep flight records for everyone as part of my Flight Operations duties. For the pilots, they completed a daily form – the flight log for each aircraft. Now on that log they had to put down the names of the people who were on that aircraft. This included the Blues. Because it was called a combat flight and would count for combat air time, I went through those flight logs and I kept a loose leaf notebook of all the enlisted man. The pilot's records were kept differently and separately. The EM's data was all in a notebook – one person per page. So anyone who flew on any mission whatsoever has a page. We added a page from them the first day they flew. For that mission maybe they'd only log half an hour. I would record their missions and I believe it included the date for each entry. When you added them all up and they'd accumulated 25 hours – they'd get an air medal and they did. So if you ever find this record in the Archive some time. You'd have the details. I would really like a copy of that if you ever get it from the Archives. I think some people will be surprised at how many or how few hours they actually flew. I think they would be surprised at how many hours 130 hours are. I know one person who thinks he flew 500 but he didn't. He flew maybe 180 or 190; but it felt like 500. I have an AM and one OLC; but I should have several more OLCs. Should you find the record, then you would know the Blues at were on that mission that day.

1LT Woody McFarlin provides: I arrived in Vietnam, I believe, on 8 Nov 1968 but it might be a little later in the month. I stayed at the replacement battalion at Bien Hoa for a few days, and then went to Nha Trang and on to Pleiku. Eventually I joined B Troop at Phan Thiet and was assigned to the Lift Platoon. I flew a good bit and received really the best instructions I ever received on flying a helicopter from CW2 Don Skiles. He had been an old Charlie Model pilot and didn't elect to go to the Cobras, as I understand. He had extremely good touch control. I learned a lot from him. I flew primarily with the Lift about three or four months. I was flying with WP Conrad Hamp in the Lift the day when SGT McKibben was killed. He was later awarded the CMH. He and I talked during

the Washington D.C. VHPA Reunion. It seemed like whenever there was some heavy action, he and I ended up in the same aircraft. We were staging out of Song Mao. Other than Hamp and MAJ McCracken I can't name another pilot involved that day. I recall we inserted the Blues into a football field sized clearing with jungle all around it. I remember the Cobras prepped the LZ. The Blues were in quite a while before the actual firefight when SGT McKibben was shot up. MAJ McCracken just chopped his way through the trees to get to the Blues when SGT McKibben was hit. My understanding was that he lived part of the way to Phan Rang before he actually died. We were the last slick for the extraction. We went down into the hover hole to get the platoon leader and his people. I was still rather new in country. I recall that Hamp couldn't see the place where we had to put the skids down from his side so here I am a new pilot hovering down into this hole and put the skid on a rock. There was a lot of shooting. Our guys are firing the M60s. The guys getting on the Huey are shooting. I am certain there were bullets coming at us. There was so much noise and I was so new that I wasn't certain what was what. I did, however, know that it wasn't a good situation! I just didn't know how bad it was. Then coming out as we started pulling pitch, we would actually start sucking the jungle into the rotor system - so there is all this green matter flying around the cockpit!

Also on the 6th, A Troop worked southeast of Kontum to check out an area of freshly cultivated fields when they discovered approximately 75 well camouflaged huts in a valley. The Scouts drew intense fire with one ship taking four hits. Air strikes were called in with unknown results as the enemy continued to stay hidden. For the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17787 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while hovering in the AO, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the pitch change link, fuel cell, and transmission, they made a forced landing and completed the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

On the 7th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16110 flown by CW2 S.C. Mason and Aerial Observers SP5 A. Medellin and Gunner SSG E.W. Cramer. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was turned in to the 79<sup>th</sup> TC CO, repaired by Hughes Aircraft in CONUS, and returned to Vietnam in early 1970 to serve with another unit. The Accident Summary reads: At approximately 1030 hours, CW2 Mason was flying lead ship in a flight of two LOHs. Their mission was to perform a VF of suspected enemy helicopter landing zones. After a suspected location was reconned at low level and prepped by Cobra gunships, CW2 Mason landed in the upper third of a 50x70 meter oval clearing. His gunner dismounted and made a ground recon. At approximately 1050 hours the gunner returned to his seat and CW2 Mason immediately began a takeoff, before the gunner had fastened his seat belt. 75 PSI of torque were required at a 5 to 7 foot hover during takeoff. At 15 feet the engine apparently lost power and the pilot nosed the aircraft into the ground to avoid striking the trees. With the engine still running, the aircraft rolled to its right side on the gunner who had fallen out. The crew left the aircraft with the observer and gunner receiving minor injuries.

On the 10th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15618 flown by AC 1LT F.E. Wagner and WO1 B.H. Causey. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was turned in to the 79<sup>th</sup> TC CO for ARADMAC repairs in CONUS, and continued to serve in the Army in CONUS. The Accident Summary reads: The mission for the day was the moving of A Troop's Aero Rifle Platoon from one village to another, with the gun ship teams flying cover. LT Wagner and Mr Causey were flying an orbit around the troop carrying helicopters. At the time of the engine failure they were heading generally south, coming around to the east. Their altitude at the time was approximately 1500 feet AGL. While in their orbit, Mr Causey, told LT Wagner that he had a master caution light and a forward fuel boost segment light. Simultaneously they experienced an aft fuel boost light and engine failure. Mr Causey then entered an autorotation. The area was of low

appearing scrub brush. The brush turned out to be approximately 15-20 feet high. The engine failure can be contributed to dirty fuel filters, both the main fuel filter and the filter in the fuel control servo.

On the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17787 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom fuselage, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12994 flown by an unnamed crew that sustained one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Also on the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17817 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, cargo section, and cockpit, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired. Also on the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16072 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07915 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, tail section, and forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

During the period 18 to 26 Dec, A Troop was given down time for aircraft maintenance and do conduct annual training requirements.

On the 21st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-14402 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while approaching the target area, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward main rotor system and engine compartment, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 27th, A Troop worked out of FB Blackhawk and when the Scouts received fire from an area with a large number of bunkers, one VC was killed. The Blues were inserted and by the end of the day 28 detainees were taken out of the bunkers.

During the last two days of the year, A Troop's Blues worked with a 4th Div LRRP to secure and extract over 12,000 pounds of rice from an area not far from Camp Enari.

The following article titled "Ruthless Riders Discover Rice Bowl" was provided by James G. 'Gary' DeWitt. All traces of the source publication and the date it was published were removed, but it most likely was the Ivy Leaf. It most likely relates to the 12,000 pounds of rice mentioned in the A Troop unit history on the last two days of the year.

The early morning stillness was suddenly broken by the "WHUMP" "WHUMP" of UH-1 rotor blades as the flight of three Ruthless Riders Huey's descended one at a time into the single ship LZ. The Ruthless aircraft were from A Troop, 7/17<sup>th</sup> Air Cavalry, and were inserting the Aero Rifle Platoon of A Troop to sweep an area for rice cache reported by a 4th Division LRP team. The A troop Aero Rifle Platoon, led by 1LT Michael D. Casey, Sallisaw, Okla., began sweeping the area and they were not long in finding several well camouflaged rice storage huts. 1LT Casey started to

establish a perimeter and as the men moved out to set up the perimeter they discovered more rice stowage huts hidden from view in ravines and bamboo and scrub thickets. Realizing that the find was bigger than anticipated 1LT Casey reported this to CPT Friedrich K. Rosenberger, from New Rochelle, N.Y., flying in the Command and Control aircraft. The Squadron S-3, Major Richard H. Marshall, from Columbia, S.C., was informed of this and ordered elements of D Troop and the Aero Rifle Platoon, C Troop, 7/17th Air Cavalry, led by Charles L. Campbell, Honea Path, S.C., to be inserted to exploit the find. The Ruthless Riders aircraft of A Troop were joined by aircraft of C Troop to insert the other ground elements. The combined elements joined forces and began to exploit the rice discovery. Locating the rice huts was made difficult by terrain that had been done to camouflage the huts from view. By the end of the first day 6000 pounds of rice had been lifted out by the Ruthless Riders aircraft. Additionally an estimated 6000 pounds of rice was also destroyed. There was estimated to be still another 12,000 pounds of rice in the area. The following day the sweep continued but the search of each hut was made more difficult as the VC unit had slipped back into the area under the cover of darkness and booby trapped many of the remaining rice storage huts. Because of the booby traps only 200 pounds of rice was recovered but an estimated 8000 pounds of rice was destroyed. The third day produced only 200 pounds of rice but a very important find was made when the Aero Rifle Platoon of A Troop discovered 150 pounds of salt. Along with the salt discovery the morale of the VC unit operating in the area was considerably lowered, not only by the loss of the rice, but 1 VC flag was found and enough material and sewing equipment to make 7 more flags was captured.

On the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17817 flown by WO1 Bob Caples as pilot and WO1 Terry Barnes as Observer. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they had more than 99 holes [the code for smashed to pieces] from an unknown source, they crashed and the helicopter was destroyed and lost to inventory.

WO1 Bob Caples recalls: I was flying the B Troop bird that was destroyed on this day. The guy with me was WO1 Terry Barnes. He was a former navy guy that joined the Army to fly. The action was on the north side of the 'Toilet Bowl' as we called that area about half way between Bao Loc and Phan Thiet. The other crews I don't remember, we were flying a round robin with two on station and one refueling. WO Dave "Story Lady" Russell was flying gun cover for me that day. A village had been hit and we tracked the bad guys to the southern side of the Toilet Bowl, there were a ton of bunkers and people on the ground. We had called in an airstrike or maybe two. I was doing a BDA when the mast got hit by an RPG round. We kind of just slow turned down mountain until we crashed. It knocked both of us out. When I came to, we were still strapped in our seats; but setting on ground. The bird was in a hundred pieces. Dave and the other gunship hovered over us until we were pulled out by medevac. I had also been shot in leg. As I pulled Terry from wreckage, I cut his chin very badly. It took a bunch of stitches to fix him. After that Terry's nickname was 'Bad Luck' Barnes.

1LT Ken Philley recalls: I joined B Troop on 1 April 1968 and was immediately made the Lift Platoon leader. CPT Denny Vaughan was getting ready to leave that position. I flew most everyday and stayed in that position for six months. For my last six months I had several jobs: I flew C&C a lot, I was an Assistant Operations Officer, and for the last two months I was the Huey IP for the troop. It is my opinion that MAJ McCracken and CPT Howard M. Newhouse, the Operations Officer, didn't fly the C&C ship all that often. McCracken seemed to have a lot of confidence in me because during those last six month I remember him giving me lots of difficult missions and directing that I fly as C&C often. Even though I was just a 1LT, I lived in the same Quonset Hut with MAJ McCracken, CPT Newhouse, and CPT Bill Ipock. I'll never forget one day I was flying C&C with MAJ McCracken. He was in the left seat. The Troop was working on AO west of Dalat.

Of course this was a high density altitude area and because we refueled at Dalat, we couldn't carry as much fuel as we would down near sea level. I can only guess that MAJ McCracken got bored flying circles around the LOHs because he flew off and we started doing something like a solo VR. I'd guess we were at least a mile maybe more away from the other ships and suddenly I see that we are making this nice slow approach as if we were going to land in this open area in the forest of tall trees. Man, the hair on the back of my neck was going up and I was getting really uncomfortable. I remember saying something like - 'Major, do you think this is a good idea? I've been planning the complete this tour in one piece.' I was silent for another second or so and then said, 'Can I have the aircraft?' There was an unspoken PLEASE in my voice. He simply said, 'OK, you got it.' I banked and dove the helicopter to the treetops and accelerated to 90 knots as quickly as I could. Then I climbed to altitude and joined the other aircraft. As we returned to our normal position in the orbit around the LOHs I was thinking - Hey, you've got to remember you're only a 1LT here! A couple of days later I was flying C&C and this brand new WO was flying with me. It was a long day. I think we logged 14 hours that day. The poor guy was so tired that he had a hard time walking back to our tents at the end of the day.

CPT Jim Cunningham recalls a famous event: Speaking of CS gas – I was a witness to the famous incident at the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's O Club in December 1968. I'm not certain I know the date – after Thanksgiving I believe and prior to Christmas. 1LT Dave Register and I had been drinking way too much already when we joined a group of C Troopers at that club one evening. We did some thing (maybe several things) that ticked off the 4<sup>th</sup> ID boys and finally they announced that we weren't welcome there anymore. We stumbled out of the place and huddled up outside. Someone suggest that the 4<sup>th</sup> ID boys needed some CS gas to 'thank them' for throwing us out. Dave and I sort of followed the group as they acquired some CS grenades and returned to the club. Even as drunk as I was, I was smart enough to know that this wasn't such a good idea; so Dave and I hung back as the others moved in for the 'assault.' I remember seeing both 1LT Sterling Cox and WO Bob Mitchell with grenades in their hands. The resulting attack was pretty effective. Several 4<sup>th</sup> ID officers got sick from the gas and may have hurt themselves as they 'unassed' the building. Dave and I were long gone by then. The next morning there was a special formation for C Troop's officers conducted by the 4<sup>th</sup> ID's CID and our squadron CO. We were told that the guilty parties must come forward. Later Bob Mitchell told me that the CID guys actually roughed them up (hit them) until they learned all the details. I know that Mitch and Cox both got Article 15s and maybe WO Mike Smith. I left C Troop just after Christmas 1968 for the 155<sup>th</sup> AHC in Ban Me Thuot and finished my tour with them. Editor's Note: In Section 1 of Squadron Special Orders # 5 dated 7 Jan 1969 we read: 'suspension from flying status of FNO is TERMINATED and indiv is restored to flying status on eff date.' The effective date is 6 Jan 1969 and the individuals named are: 1LT Sterling Cox, WO1 Michael L. Smith, WO1 Robert Mitchell, and WO1 William Schaefer.

### **D Troop Assigned the Camp Enari TAOR**

During December, after being released from duties around LZ Mary Lou, D Troop was given a true cavalry assignment; namely an egg shaped TAOR of approximately 20 kms centered on Camp Enari. D Troop conducted from three to seven day operations throughout their TAOR.

SGT Dick Jones of D Troop recalls: I was a PFC with the MOS 11H, Recoilless Rifleman, when I arrived in Vietnam in Nov 1968 as a replacement and was assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of D Troop. I stayed around Camp Enari for three or four weeks filling sand bags. I was finally assigned to be a gunner or loader on a Recoilless Rifle (RR) crew. Our RRs were still jeep mounted at the time. We only fired them if we had a mission. About December, two RR jeeps were sent to Duc Co. There were 8 of us from D Troop. At night they posted us near the main gate. During the day we'd park someplace else. I don't remember firing the RRs when we were at Duc Co. I do remember driving the jeep down to the river for a swim. One jeep had a bad clutch, so we had it hooked out. I

remember getting knocked off the jeep because of the static electricity. The guy in the hole of the Chinook was waving at me but I didn't know what he meant. We came under rocket attack three times. I earned my CIB there. It was a little cold there and we even wore coats some times. We drove the last jeep back to Enari solo – just the four of us. I was driving. One was a black Sergeant who had just returned from R&R. He pulled the pin on grenade and held it in his hand the whole way back. We had a new guy with us who kept asking why there were so many holes in the road.

It is a little known fact that HHT had one fixed-wing aircraft. It was a U-6A Beaver. It was kept at Hensel Field at Camp Enari. CW3 Bill C Walton, who came over on the boat with the Squadron aircraft, said he did not remember a U-6A on the boat; so one can assume the Squadron picked it up after arriving in Vietnam. Several of the majors and senior captains were dual rated aviators. The following collection of comments about this aircraft are more or less in chronological order.

MAJ Bruce Wilder recalls: I was picked up in the U-6A (L-20 for us old guys) by Majors Al Iller and Charlie Brown during TET'68 at Nha Trang and brought to Camp Enari. I flew many missions in the Beaver down to 17th Group HQs, Vung Tau, Long Binh, and the trips to Dalat to Teddy Roosevelt's Hunting Lodge! My 759 (flight record) does not list the aircraft's tail number but it does show that I flew the U-6 first on 12 Mar 1968 and last on 8 Dec 1968. I flew a total of 8.1 hours on 28-30 Jun cross country listed as PK-NT-PK, PK-LB-PK, and PT-NT-DGM. I note that the 759 changed format on 1 March 68 deleting the "cross country from-to." We must have received new forms in May-Jun because no more station identifiers are shown for XC after Jun 68 in my 759. I remember flying the Beaver down to Dalat to pick up MAJ Jerry Ledford and saying that some day I would come back to see the water falls when the fighting was over. The one trip I remember vividly was the final one to LBJ (Long Binh Jail) to pick up the Squadron welder who had just completed 6 months confinement. When he came back he didn't want to weld anymore, but wanted to crew a Huey. He rode gunner on LTC Bob Reuter's aircraft with the outstanding crew chief whose name has slipped me. I had been CO of HHT for several months when charges were preferred against the welder. I was the S 1 when I picked him up, which was late fall '68. I flew the Beaver down to LBJ each month for the required visit by the prisoner's commander. I know that I flew the photographer down to Cam Ranh Bay to rotate back to the states. Gary DeWitt flew several missions with me in the Beaver. I could pull out my old 759 file and see when the last flight was logged in the Beaver. There were not too many fixed-wingers left when I came home in Jan 1969.

Paul McGoran has a picture of the aircraft. There is a colored patch on the door with the number 17 between the wings of the eagle. This may have referred to the 17<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Group which was the Squadron's next higher command and was located at Nha Trang.

WO Jose L. Martinez recalls: John Leiter and I were picked up by a Beaver and taken to Camp Enari when we arrive at the unit. That would have been during first week of June 68.

CPT Jim Basta recalls: I flew the U-6 the last 30 days that I was in country in 1968. I DEROSed in Oct. Don't know where it came from but I put a lot of hours on it. I loved to fly the Beaver. The only other fixed wing pilot that we had that I remember is CPT Halcomb. He and I flew the beaver while I was there.

MAJ Al Iller recalls: Checked my 759 file and it indicates I last flew a UH1C early Aug and 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav closed my records. I was assigned to the 1st Avn Bde HQ in Long Binh. In late Aug the 759 indicates I had several U6 flights 28, 29 and 30 Aug all XC. I do remember coming back to Camp Enari and loading up some 4 ft florescent light fixtures (which our friend Walter Riddle had acquired for a full C130 load from Cam Ranh Bay) which were used in the Red Bull Inn O Club at Long Binh. I am still confident that when I did depart 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav on or about 15 Aug it was via the U6, and most probably with Bruce Wilder.

CPT Mike Law recalls: While serving as Asst S-3 in late 1968, I remember a discussion that since the Squadron didn't use the aircraft all that much there was some pressure from higher headquarters to turn it in. The Squadron, however, wanted to keep the aircraft for some of the longer trips that were required as a way to 'save helicopter blade time.'

MAJ Scott Lyman remembers the old Ruthless Riders Beaver: Yes, I did fly it on several occasions. If I am not mistaken, I was given my currency check ride in it by MAJ Bruce Wilder, when I came into the Squadron as XO, and he was S-1. If I remember correctly, I flew it at least once to Soc Trang, in the Delta, and I'm not sure exactly for what purpose now, but since that was my home field during my first tour in Viet Nam I was interested in seeing the place again, and bummed the flight. I think I went to Vung Tau once, and a couple of times to Nha Trang. I don't have access to my 759 file handy and I could be all wet on these destinations. I have discovered that my memory is not always as accurate as it should be. However, I do remember how much I enjoyed getting into a stiff wing on occasion while I was at Camp Enari. I had been a unit instructor in the Beaver while I was at Fort Lewis, and felt right at home in it. I'm sorry I don't have any blood and guts war stories involving the Beaver. It was sort of a bus-boy's holiday for me to fly it, and of course all the missions were milk runs.

SP5 Ralph Glass, who served in HHT from June 1968 until July 1969, provided: I was the last 7/17<sup>th</sup> Cav crew chief for this aircraft. The tail number for the U6A Beaver was #58-1984. We turned it over to the 604th Direct Support Company. My last flight was on Dec 30 1968. The crew chief before me was SP5 Dangel. He came over with the squadron but I don't think the Beaver did. It was a lot of fun to fly in it and work on it. I did the 6000 hour PE in Nha Trang three weeks of work and fun. I have pictures of the aircraft. I had a choice of going with the Beaver or staying in the Cav; I stayed. I had already filled in as a gunner on slicks so I was hooked. I flew with Stan Jost, the CE for LTC Bean and floated from ship to ship. Mostly on #213 with Russel Verdine. Some times as CE on #314 with Charley Lund. Hope this helps.

The following article titled "Specialist Picked As Aide" appeared in unknown issue the Ivy Leaf Famous Fourth (the official Vietnam era newspaper of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division). The date assigned to this event is 30 Dec 1968 since MG Pepke assumed command of the 4<sup>th</sup> ID in Dec 1968 and since MAJ Conklin commanded HHT until Feb 1969. Anyone with more information about this event, especially better dates, should contact Mike Law.

Camp Enari - Specialist 4 Paul Ecker of Altoona, Pa., was honored by being named the enlisted aide to Major General Donn R. Pepke, 4<sup>th</sup> Division commander. The 20-year-old ammunition specialist from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 7<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 17<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, commanded by Major Willard Conklin, was selected because of outstanding dedication to duty. All other enlisted aides have competed against other Ivyman from their battalions, Specialist Ecker showed such motivation and hard work in his job he was directly nominated for the position by Major Conklin. "It has been a great experience," smiled Specialist Ecker. "I have had a chance to visit different firebases and ride in choppers - an experience which I would have never had a chance to do." Prior to entering the Army, the Pennsylvanian worked as a stock controller for a textile corporation.

SP5 Quincy Magwood recalls: I served with HHT at Fort Knox, came over on the boat, and extended so I would ETS when I DEROSed on 25 May 1969. Most of the time I was the crew chief on UH-1C #66-15036 that was often used as LTC Johnson's C&C gunship. I still have the placard "6" that we inserted in the holder near the pilot doors when he was flying the aircraft. I remember once LTC Johnson was flying in our ship up near Dak To. The night before we had let someone else clean and reassemble our M-60s. We found some NVA and LTC Johnson told us to open fire. Both machineguns wouldn't fire. Then he lined up for a rocket run and - you guessed it - the rockets wouldn't fire! He was seriously upset - seriously! I was also the crew chief on the missile ship during the few months we had them. Later after LTC Johnson left LTC Cameron didn't enjoy the

UH-1Cs as much as LTC Johnson did. I think our TO&E changed about the time we got Cobras because we turned in the UH-1Cs for UH-1Hs. My ship was #67-17752.

WO1 Gene Russell recalls: I deployed to Vietnam with C Troop from Fort Campbell. I flew UH-1Cs as a member of the Gun Platoon. After we got Cobras I flew front seat until some time in December when I was transferred to the 92<sup>nd</sup> AHC at Dong Ba Thin. I remember flying front seat with WO Danny Norman often. I thought C Troop had a great bunch of guys and really enjoyed my time with them. I served a six-month extension with the 92<sup>nd</sup> so I'd fly UH-1C guns for them just about one full year.

WO1 Ralph Page recalls: Like so many of my classmates from 67-15, I was assigned to C Troop at Fort Campbell and then deployed to Vietnam with them. I flew in the Lift Platoon most of the time with John H. McKee now deceased. In January 1969 I was assigned to A/7/1<sup>st</sup> Cav and flew with them until I DEROSed at the end of my year in Vietnam. John was a lot of fun. After he had a few beers he'd start eating bugs. He called them 'airborne snacks!' I don't recall any really scary times when I was in C Troop. We always followed the Platoon Leader. Inserted and extracted the Blues when it was our turn.

**Year End Summary** - On the tactical side, the Squadron, especially the Infantry, fought extremely well during Tet and earned the respect and gratitude of many commands. On the equipment side, the venerable UH-1Cs were replaced with AH-1Gs. On the organization side, C Troop's designation was permanently changed to F/8<sup>th</sup> Cav but a new C Troop replacement arrived from the States. Also an aircraft maintenance TC Detachments was attached to each ACT.