

1970

The primary source materials for this year are: For A Troop, a 29-page AUH prepared by WO1 Charles E. Smith, III. For B, C, and D Troops; nothing. For the Squadron: a 48 page OR-LL for the period 1 NOV through 31 JAN, a 43-page OR-LL for the period 1 FEB through 30 APR (dated 10 May 1970), a 32-page OR-LL for 1 MAY through 31 JUL (dated 10 Aug 1970), and a 32-page OR-LL for 1 AUG through 31 OCT. The last two OR-LLs contained some accident summaries which are included in this narrative. An 8-page transcript of the debriefing of LTC De France in Sep, 1970 for historical purpose.

January 1970

During this month, A and B Troops supported the 2nd Bde in Operation PUTNAM POWER northeast of An Khe. C Troop worked the An Lao Valley and Crows Foot area, weather permitting, else worked the low lands against the VC. D Troop also supported the 4th Div with road security assignments between Camp Radcliff at An Khe and Firebase Emelia as well as working the Camp Enari TAOR.

The 1st was the beginning period for the RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm Award for the Squadron. In 1971 via DA General Order #52, the Squadron was awarded the RVN Gallantry Cross for the period 1 Jan 1970 to 31 Oct 1970.

On the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17762 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack target area, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit and cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

B Troop Moves to Camp Enari from Ban Me Thuot East

Some time after Christmas and prior to mid-January, B Troop moved to Camp Enari from Ban Me Thuot East. Anyone who can provide details of this relocation is encouraged to contact Mike Law.

On the 5th, A Troop's Scouts found and engaged a large enemy element; killing five and capturing four AKs.

On the 7th, A Troop inserted their Blues into a fortified living area. They captured some clothes, medical supplies, AK ammo, and food plus 11 suspects; then the Guns destroyed the structures.

On the 8th, the A Troop unit history states that an A Troop LOH was shot down, crashed and totally burned. The pilot and observer escaped and were medevaced. The Guns worked the area, then the Troop screened for a rifle company already in the area. They found a large bunker complex and made contact with an estimated NVA company. The C&C's crew chief was wounded and evaced when the ship suddenly took a volley of enemy fire. The Blues were inserted and found numerous caves and signs of recently enemy living there. One NVA was captured.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16666 flown by an unnamed crew that suffered 2 injuries at grid BR336471. CPT Wes Worcester provides:

I joined A Troop in March 1969. I flew with the Lift platoon for 3 months and then with the Scouts for 7 months. Before I talk about the events of 8 Jan 1970, I want to describe one of my most unforgettable experiences in Vietnam. I was flying through the treetops once at about 10 knots when this Orangutan grabbed the skid and swung onto the LOH. I was on the right side and he was on the left. He started chattering at me in a loud voice. I don't know who was more scared at that point! In a second or so he either got out or fell off the LOH. On 8 January our mission was looking for a 750-lb dud near LZ Schuller on the Mang Yang Pass. I was the team lead. SGT Russ File was

my Observer. SP4 Gary Luke was in the wing LOH but I don't recall who his pilot was. We picked up a trail about mid-morning and started working it. I'd guess we were about 300 yards down at when we got shot in the minigun box. We landed at Schuller and Russ tried to clear the minigun. We thought he had it fixed, so we returned to the AO. I tried the minigun but it didn't work. We tested Russ's M-60 but it was jammed as well, so we pulled off again. He borrowed a cleaning rod at Schuller and cleared the weapons. We returned to the trail. I put him right over a crew served 30-cal position. He knocked it out but there were others. Those guns shot us up. They took out the tail rotor, radios, and we were on fire. I took a hit in the neck that paralyzed me. I was also hit in the leg. I was awake but couldn't move. We spun into the trees and crashed about 50-feet from a 30-cal position. Russ came around and got me out of the wreck. We rolled down a hill and the LOH blew up. I later learned the Cobras had declared us dead. I figured as much because they started shooting all around us. When we got to the base of the incline, I was able to crawl. This helped as we dodged all the fire. After the Cobras finished, some 8" artillery started coming in. When the NVA weren't ducking from the American fire, they were also shooting at us. We crawled into some elephant grass. WO Eddy Klaeger, the other Scout team leader, came into the clearing not far from us to clear his minigun. Russ ran out waving his T-shirt. Either Eddy saw him or the Cobras saw him and called Eddy. Russ and I started running to the LOH. McKinnely was his Observer. I actually beat Russ to the LOH. Russ sort of threw me into the back of the LOH, grabbed a carbine and started firing. Eddy took us to Enari. I was medevaced to Nha Trang. Russ was treated at Enari and was back flying soon after that. David Aldridge flew one of the Cobras that day. He told me he logged over 13 hours that day. I spent six weeks in Nha Trang, returned to A Troop, went on R&R to Hawaii, and then DEROSed. While I was in Nha Trang I met another wounded pilot who told me more of the story. He was a Major and was flying a C&C Huey for a Brigade General. They tried to come in to get us out but were shot down very near our area. I believe one of the EM on that ship was killed. Additionally I learned that it took an Infantry company supported by a Mechanized Infantry company to secure the area but they also took a beating.

SP4 Gary Luke recalls: I remember one day flying in an A Troop LOH over the Mang Yang Pass. The Troop had already flown ahead of us so we were flying alone. I don't remember the pilot's name but this was a minigun ship. I heard the sound of what I thought was a seat belt banging on the side of the LOH and asked 'What's that?' We looked around and finally figured out that an AA gun was barking at us. We called the troop and they came to work on this gun. This would develop into a HUGE BATTLE. An armored cav unit would get involved with our troop. As I understand it, this NVA unit was getting ready to attack a firebase. Eventually CPT Wesley A. Worcester, we called him CPT Sauce, got shot down. He was the lead Scout. I seemed to remember that a colonel or some senior officer was flying a Huey down the road. He took a lot of fire but went in to pick these guys up. I remember cleaning the M-60 with JP4 that day. When the tank guys went to work on the enemy, we learned there was a LRRP team in the area. They were EXCITED and wanted OUT. The troop extracted them. I remember at the end of the day watching the Air Force putting in napalm strikes. What a day!

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop AH-1G #68-17026 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom engine compartment, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Finally on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an AVDAC record for A Troop UH-1H #68-15368 flown by an unnamed crew. The record states this was Combat Incident Damage caused by other combat by ground fire less than .50 cal in size with the mission function of Visual

Reconnaissance. There were no casualties. Search and rescue operations were not required. The helicopter was recovered.

On the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16498 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 one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 10th, MAJ Hahn assume command of C Troop replacing MAJ Joe Tobin.

On the 11th, A Troop's Blues were inserted after the Scouts and Guns made contact with an estimated NVA platoon in their base camp. The Blues killed five NVA and captured two AKs, one pistol, and one 51 cal. They swept thru the area again prior to extraction and found a large quantity of raw cotton, a weaving machine, some food and a 30 cal. SSG Tom Wells A Troop's Blue Platoon Leader wrote the following and titled it 'The Jackpot:'

On or around the 11th of January, we were working northwest of An Khe. The Scouts had found a well dug in unit in a large gorge and had been fighting with them for a couple of hours. The Guns rolled in and were taking some hits. Then things seemed to get quiet. They were no longer taking any fire from the area so the Blues were inserted about 200 yards from the position. We moved into the gorge and encountered no enemy. We moved through the area and found three bunkers, one large center bunker and two flanking bunkers. We realized then that the enemy was hiding in the bunkers waiting out the scouts and guns so they could escape that night. Not realizing we were on the ground, we deployed around the bunker area and started to try to talk them out. We weren't getting anywhere because they kept firing at us. I asked my interpreter what he thought of the situation. He just shook his head and said, 'No give up.' I then noticed smoke coming from the large bunker and thought it was a strange time to be cooking lunch so we started throwing hand grenades into the bunkers. The men were much better at timing the fuses and dropping them in so that they wouldn't be thrown back out at us. We threw in about three hand grenades in each bunker and one concussion. There was dead silence and we didn't receive any more fire. We then started pulling the bodies out, 15 in all. Some were still alive, but comatose. The strange thing about them was that a lot of them were carrying pistols, 5 in all. Two of the NVA were wearing silver stars on their shoulder boards. One had three stars and the other two. We looked inside the bunkers and found numerous documents and log books, two chicom radios and a large wall map of the area between An Khe and Pleiku with numerous markings on the map. They had bamboo floors and lots of equipment and food as if they were planning on staying there for a while. One of the radios had been destroyed, but the other one was okay. SGT Smith's squad moved up the gorge about 20 yards and found a 51-caliber machine gun that had been hit by a rocket by our Cobras. No one was in the pit where the gun was found. SGT Tate, who was in charge of the second squad, came up to me and handed me a Russian pistol. It was in great shape with a holster belt and big buckle. On the handle it had the CCCP on it and the red star and sickle. My interpreter found paperwork on one of the Colonels and said to me that he was a political officer for a division and was school trained in Russia. He seemed very interested in the paperwork on them. My Kit Carson scout, Dick, looked at him and said, "Big Shot." A story about this incident was written up in one of the divisional papers. SGT Tate's name was mentioned as he talked about the shoulder boards with the silver stars on them. We found another 7.62-caliber machine gun in the bunker. We took the machine gun up to where the 51-caliber was and infused them together at the breaches. We then started packing everything up to leave. They said someone from G2 was coming in on a chopper to pick up the documents and equipment that we had. A couple of days later we found out some of the story. There were a total of 10 officers killed that day – two Colonels and one senior Colonel. The rest of them were Captains and Lieutenants from different regiments. One Colonel worked for the Chief of Staff of a division. Their plan was to cut Highway 19 between An Khe and Pleiku. There was some

kind of a fuel line that ran along Highway 19 with pump houses. They were planning on destroying them. They also wanted to close and capture the Mang Yan Pass for some political reason. That would have been a hell of a battle. At the time South Korean soldiers were occupying the Pass. The enemy division was deployed in Cambodia and the Ia Drang Valley. We understand that they sent in some Arc Lights to disrupt the NVA Division as they were able to pinpoint it from the documents and maps. That was the day of the jackpot.

On the 12th, A Troop's Blues were inserted in another base camp, complete with hidden buildings and detained 28 people plus an M-1 and some food.

Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17762 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 1500 feet and 50 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 12th, CPT Pete Kacerguis and WO1 John W. Wilcox of C Troop were awarded the DFC for rescuing the crew of a downed LOH with their Huey.

On the 14th, **SP4 Henry Luscious Taylor** was killed while serving with C Troop's Blues. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 18 Aug 1969 and his MOS as 11B20.

CPT Pete Kacerguis recalls: I was the C Troop Blue Platoon Leader from Aug 69 through June 70. SP4 Taylor was with the Blues. He triggered a booby trap after the Blues were inserted along the coast somewhere between LZ Uplift and LZ English. The Scout Platoon Leader, CPT John Sartor, landed and picked him up. Usually the C&C did that, but the LZ was really tight, and we did not want the Huey's rotor wash to possibly set off any trip wires that may have been in the area. John nosed over his LOH and headed toward LZ English. He went so fast he collapsed the Plexiglas on his bird. Taylor was pronounced dead at the LZ English Aid Station. I was one of the guys that went in to give a positive ID on his body for the Graves Registration types. Not a good day.

SP4 Gary Phillips, the OH-6A crew chief, recalls: A lot happened on January 14, 1970. Duff (SP5 Michael DuFresne, the Observer on my LOH) and I got Bronze Stars with Vs. I am sure CPT Sartor was the pilot. They didn't put the pilot's name on our award citations. I believe there were four metals with Vs that day. Henry Taylor, I remembered him as Taylor, Duff remembered him as Henry. We put him in our LOH with the Medic. I remember kneeling down in the LZ with the Blues and the Cobras shooting just outside our perimeter. I was very impressed and very scared.

SP4 Phillips and SP5 DuFresne were awarded the Bronze Star with "V" for heroism via HQ 1st Aviation Brigade General Orders 2647 dated 24 April 1970. The citation reads in part – these men distinguished themselves by exceptionally valorous actions while serving as aerial observers on a medical evacuation mission which was responding to a request for aid from a platoon of allied soldiers who were engaged in heavy contact with a large enemy force. Arriving at the battle area, they courageously exposed themselves to enemy fire while assisting the wounded men into the aircraft. When the injured men were safely inside the ship, they voluntarily remained with the beleaguered troops. Securing their machine guns, they laid down a devastating hail of fire and forced the enemy to break contact. Their inspiring courage and devotion to their fellow soldiers in the face of intense hostile fire contributed greatly to the success of the mission.

Also on the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16634 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 10 feet and 15 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

Also on the 14th, A Troop's Blues were inserted. SSG Tom Wells wrote the following and titled it 'The Arrow:' Just after Christmas 1969, I got word that I was getting a platoon leader. After running the Blues for six months, I was happy to get one. His name was CPT Casey. He was a likeable guy. He told me to continue to run the platoon as usual and that we would talk over any changes he felt were needed. We talked a lot about the men and the problems the platoon had. He set up training missions, such as repelling, to keep us out of the First Sergeant's details when we were in the rear. CPT Casey took over my position on the first lift ship in and the last ship out. I was on the third ship feeling that I would be next to last out. On 14 Jan, we inserted on an enemy complex northeast of Firebase Duffy. After we landed, I got up to start moving the troops when I felt a thud in my back and went down on one knee. Somebody yelled for the medic. The medic said I had something in my back. I said, 'It doesn't belong there so take it out.' He pulled it out and I felt my right lung start to collapse. CPT Casey came up to me and said that I had to get out of there. The SOP was for the lift ships to hang around in case we needed a fast extraction. One ship came in for me. CPT Casey handed me the arrow and told me to have it checked for poison. I got on the ship and as I sat there with the arrow in my hand, I kept thinking of that stupid song, 'Please Mr. Custer, I don't want to go.' Part of the song dealt with a man standing there with an arrow in his back. We flew into the 17th Field Hospital in Pleiku. I woke up the next morning attached to a respirator. A doctor came in and informed me that there was no poison on the arrow. That was certainly good news. Two days later CPT Casey showed up and told me that they were cutting orders to send me home. We sat and talked about home, the men, and their problems. Two days later they moved me to the 67th Evac Hospital. On the 24th, LTC DeFrance, the Squadron CO, came to see me and told me about CPT Casey being killed the day before. He asked me if I would stay in country and go back to the platoon. I told him that I would if he could get me out of the orders sending me to the States. Later that night a full Colonel, who was in charge of the hospital, came in to see me. He asked me if I wanted to stay in country. I told him that I did. He said he was sending me to China Beach for 30 days recuperation. After being there for one week, I was able to talk myself out of the place so that I could get back to the platoon. I could only imagine the trouble the boys had gotten themselves into – and they never disappointed me.

On the 20th, A Troop found a large sleeping area occupied by an NVA platoon. The Gun killed four and the Scouts killed three.

On the 21st, **CPT Michael Dale Casey** was killed while leading A Troop's Blue on a prisoner mission. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 6 Sep 1968 and his MOS as 1542. This indicates that he was on a tour extension at this time.

David Sims, Rook 35, wrote: Here's how I recall that day. Yes, Blue had grown bored with the O-club, and began flying as an observer with the C&C ship. I remember the day MAJ Maxson captured an NVA with a grappling hook from the air and I think Blue was with him then also. On the day in question, I recall MAJ Maxson landing the C&C ship, then Blue and someone else (maybe the crew chief) went to retrieve one suspect. Blue was even wearing a "chicken plate." Ironically, the suspect had a bolt action rifle with armor piercing ammo, and shot Blue through the body armor and the heart. Maxson called out the ARP. I was flying in the lead ship. I know I was on the controls and made the insertion because I took one round of hostile fire on short final and announced it. I had felt the round go through the ship. The reason this part is so vivid is that this was the only hit I took in my entire tour. We almost never found the hole because it was in a main rotor blade. That's why I felt the hit, through the cyclic. Maybe I was Rich Turnley's co-pilot and he let me do the flying, I don't recall for certain. I do recall that our ship picked up Blue's body, obviously I was sensitized to that fact having roomed with him in Pleiku, and later with Rich in An Khe. Blue was sort of a legend in II Corps. His branch was Infantry and he was not a rated aviator. How he ever get assigned to our Air Cav unit, which is strictly an Armor branch outfit, I don't know. I always felt this was some sort of experiment or maybe it was some concession among the

MFICs. Blue, consequently, could not be carried as the ARP Platoon Leader, but had charge of the grunts, aside from the lift helicopters, which had a separate leader. Blue had quite a reputation in our AO. He was bolder due to the inherent, organic support he had with Scouts and Cobras present constantly. The Grunts loved him, I think, because he was Infantry, not necessarily air cavalry. He had great NCOs in Littlejohn and others. He once told me that he sent Littlejohn and another NCO to the 4th Div LRRP school, and that they finished # 1 & 2 respectively. That's why they were the only ARPs allowed to wear Tiger-stripped fatigues. Lastly was Blue's Oklahoma, good-old-boy, homespun demeanor. I think Blue knew he had it good (home every night, good, hot meals, O-club, floorshows, and booze), hence he also tried awfully hard to stay put. I think the succession of ARP leadership was Tom Ollhoff, then CPT Burgess. Like me, Burgess was a Louisiana boy, and who happened to play football on LSU's national championship "Chinese Bandit" team. After the day I saw the ARP come in with quarter inch open wounds all over their bodies from tree-dwelling leaches, I had zero interest in grunt duty, and became invisible when the subject arose.

After reading Dave's narrative, Rich Turnley, Blue 34, wrote: Dave has really nailed down "Blue's" story. He really jogged my memory on this. I was the AC on the insertion that day with Dave as Peter Pilot. I had forgotten about the round through the rotor blade that day...also had four holes in the tail boom that didn't hit anything important. I guess this all proves the old saying "two heads are better than one". This is how I remember those days. CPT Casey was the Blue Platoon Leader when I arrived in March, 1969. His tour was up in late 1969 but he extended to run the Officers Club and that is the sad part.- he didn't have to be out in the field! I recall that he was bored and just went out that day on a lark. I was flying lead slick that day and inserted the Blues to try to take a prisoner. There was only one VC in the area, but he got a lucky shot off and killed CPT Casey. Major Maxson was flying C&C that day and went in to recover the body. I remember that we were all pretty pissed off at the Major for allowing CPT Casey to go in as he was super short and didn't have to do it. CRS the name of the Platoon leader who took Casey's place. I have a mental picture of him but can't come up with a name.

SSG Jim Littlejohn wrote: I was not with CPT Casey when he got killed. I heard he was back at base camp and volunteered to go out on a medevac mission to get some wounded LRRPs out. The chopper landed and he ran over and started carrying the wounded LRRPs back to the chopper. He got two to the chopper and as he went back for the third he was shot through the side and was killed. I still have the clipping from the Stars & Stripes. We served together for two tours. He was a great officer. I also have a book that his sister sent me with his background when he was a boy and until he was killed.

On the 26th, A Troop found another NVA platoon's camp and killed four.

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16106 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 one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right bottom engine compartment, they made a forced landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

On the 29th, A Troop made an assessment of large artillery strike and found four more NVA to kill. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16634 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 25 feet and 25 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was recovered to recovered to An Khe and repaired in theater.

Also on the 29th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage records for two C Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions. (1) #67-16083 while at an altitude of 100 feet and 40

knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left engine compartment, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated. (2) #67-16619 was destroyed and lost to inventory at grid BS755039. The crew sustained two injuries. While at an altitude of 40 feet and 45 knots of airspeed, they took 18 hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, and they crashed. Several C Troopers describe these times:

WO Jeff Heritage recalls: I served with C Troop from Feb. 1969 until Feb. 1970. For the first six months I flew front seat in the snakes and for the last six I flew slicks. When I made AC I was Blue 38 and while in this position I remember another embarrassing incident that turned out Okay. It was only attributable to my screwing up – which I know I did so on a fairly predictable basis. I have no one to blame for this one, but the outcome, was both humorous (hindsight is a wonderful thing) and gratifying. Directly opposite of Flurry Hill, on the east side of the An Lao, was a long flat ridge line running in a slow down hill gradient, from north to south. I believe we had been support the Company N, 75th Rangers out of LZ English. A particularly tight pants (using a very appropriate description) Captain was running the unit, but the grunts, and their platoon leaders were really a great bunch of kids. Well, they had inserted about 7-10 guys a few days earlier into what had been reported to be a company size area, and they were supposed to observe and report what they saw. The long and short of it is that they had apparently been living in trees, surrounded by what turned out to be a NVA battalion sized area. Something had spooked the gooks and these Rangers had had to un-ass the trees and head south, fast! They had been calling our LOHs, who were trying to direct them to an LZ at the southern end of this flat ridge line. I believe that Dave Kramer was the lead LOH. He was scouting out and trying to find a reasonable LZ for their extraction. I had by this time shifted over to the Slick platoon, and my ship and another had been called up by Six to get into position for the extraction. We had been orbiting, approximately over Flurry Hill, and were following the action on the radio. In the back seat, I had a young 1LT on board, who very earnestly wanted to do whatever it took to get his guys out. Unfortunately, back at the TOC, his Captain was constantly jamming up the FM with reports. So, the radio traffic to his own men on the ground was getting slammed by this REMF trying to get Sit-reps. Like I said, I was monitoring Kramer, and heard him being asked by a very obviously winded Ranger "Where is the LZ?" and Dave responding with "You're in it!" All of the communication from the ground side were punctuated in the background with very heavy weapons firing and the sounds of the LOHs minigun bursts and the Snakes rolling in trying to cover the back and flanks of the Rangers. As it later transpired, (you will understand soon), there was more than one enemy battalion in that area. The Rangers had been deposited in a battalion area on the north end of the ridge line. Where the ridge petered out on the south side, there was a bit of low area, after a cliff, and then the terrain began to rise up again. After hearing Dave tell the Rangers that they were in the LZ, I started a loose trail formation approach to make the extraction. On long final, I still was a bit confused as to the exact location of the LZ, and had had enough with the Captain diverting everyone's attention with his incessant calls for reports. I tuned up the FM and told him to get the hell off the radio, that we would call him when we were done. Then, scanning forward, I told the Rangers, again on FM, to "Pop yellow smoke!" How dumb can you get! Immediately, about 10 to 15 yellow smokes went off, over a huge area. Feeling pretty dumb, but finally getting my head out, I said, (very witty now) "Pop grape!" Immediately one purple smoke and a whole range of red, yellow, green and other assorted colors went off. Continuing in toward the lone purple smoke, we made the extraction, and the guns had a field day expending big time on the other assorted colors! So, talk about landing on your feet after extracting your head from you know where! If memory serves, Steve Huckreide was flying with me that day. I will relate what happened after we landed at English and I was confronted by their Captain for my critique of his radio etiquette, at some later time. Suffice to say, that what their Captain later recommended should happen to me was ably deflected by Joe Tobin, in his inimitable, ever supportive style!

Tom Pember remembers: Some Vietnam events stand out in our minds more than others. The account I am about to relate is VIVIDLY ETCHED in my memory. I was a Gun team leader for C Troop at the time and used the name "The Pacemaker" (because I was an older guy) on the radios. We habitually stage out of LZ Two Bits and would refuel and rearm at LZ Uplift. This was late 69 or early 70 when C Troop's main AOs were in and around the An Loa Valley. My wing that day was CWO Charles Alexander - "Sober Charlie" we called him. I liked having him on my wing because you could always depend on him to be at the right place at the right time and you didn't have to spend a lot of time explaining how to handle a situation. We were returning from covering a LRRP that had been in contact well up in the valley. While covering these LRRPs, we had expended everything except for the outboard 'seven shot' pods which contained nails. It was quiet - eerily quiet when a faint sound suddenly came on the radio. It was so faint in fact, that I asked Charlie if he could make it out? Negative. Then, in a little louder whisper, a voice filled with tears and fear pleaded for help. GOD! What a sound. Once you've heard that whisper you know someone has bad guys very close by; but the tears and fear tell you they are in very serious trouble! It was from another LRRP team surrounded on three sides by a VC company and a sheer cliff to the west. The LRRPs couldn't move in any direction and the bad guys were closing in slowly but surely. I explained to them in a whisper that all we had were nails. I'll never know why it is when you receive a whisper, you transmit with a whisper!! The LRRP said they were holed up in some rocks at the top of the cliff and couldn't move. I explained that we weren't supposed to use nails close to friendlies. They said: "The bad guys are within 50 meters and closing - so we're dead if you don't and may be dead if you do. We'd rather take our chances with you." I asked Charlie what he thought and he said he'd do whatever I decided. So I told the LRRPs to get behind and under the rocks and report when they were ready. They said: "My men are already under the rocks but taking fire from all sides - smoke is out!" I said we'd make our runs at tree top level from the southwest to northeast, break left and try to pop the nails just over the rocks and into the tree line. I reminded them that the red airborne smoke would indicate the nails had popped. I thought my first pass was too long and asked them about it. They said: "Couldn't tell. Heard some nails tinkle across the rocks. The VC quit shooting at us and started shooting at you though." I said we'd continue as long as we could, firing only one pair each run, so they should stay low, and that this time we'd try the east and south half. We adjusted for the next run and asked how we'd done. "You're doing great but there's a bunch working along the cliffs from the north towards us." So we adjust again and asked how'd that look? "It looks - OH #@\$& (he yelled in pain) good. (silence) (deep deafening silence!)" I asked if they were hit and almost dreaded the answer. "No - the damned smoke got ticked by a nail - rolled down the rock against my leg and burned the hell out of me!" Boy, I was relieved to hear that. Then I asked if they were ready to move because we had just enough ammo left to cover their break and we couldn't raise anymore Guns. We suggested they try to move SSW along the top of the cliff. They called when they were ready to move. Charlie made a hot pass and I made a dummy. Then we made some more hot and dummy passes but saved one last pair each 'just in case.' Finally we asked how they were doing. "We're doing fine. We'll continue down the hill to the south." We continued to play dummy and asked for them to report when they were clear. A few minutes later they said: "We're clear now. THANKS. We would have been dead if you hadn't stopped to help us." We were both 10 minutes into the 20 minute light, so we fired the last pair and when home. You know, we never heard from that LRRP team again. Perhaps they made it home. I hope so. I do know they made it through one more day due to a C Troop Cobra team and I was proud to have been there.

PFC Rodney Lindell provides: I remember there were almost thirty of us in a line at the Cam Ranh Bay Replacement Battalion. Someone pointed to our line and said we were all going to Nha Trang to receive our in-country orientation prior to joining units in II Corps. We went through some Infantry AIT review type training, saw some local booby-traps, etc. They didn't teach us anything we didn't already know. I think twelve of us we sent to Pleiku to join the 7/17th Cav. Some of us

went to A, B, and D Troops but most of us went to C Troop at Lane. I'd guess it was about three weeks before several Blues were departed for home.

SGT Eddie Barrett provides: I arrived in country in Jan 1970 and was assigned to B Troop at Camp Enari.

The following incident occurred prior to C Troop's move to An Khe but the exact date is not known. CPT Barry Speare provides: A relatively new WO was playing a scrabble game with CW2 Jim Browning. They got into an argument about a word actually being a word. The new WO got upset, drew his pistol and shot Jim in the chest. Since Jim was a former SF medic, he just opened a LRRP packet and put the bandage over the sucking chest wound. The medics took him to the 67th Evac and he was sent home. I really have to think about the shooter's name but will have it by reunion time. I know Freddy Sullivan was there too. I was in the next hooch and heard the shot.

February 1970

During this month A Troop supported with 4th Div in the general vicinity north of An Khe along the Suoi Kon river and northwest in the Song Ba valley. For the first ten days, B Troop worked to the north of An Khe in the Dak Som and Song Con river areas. Extremely thick vegetation and rough terrain hampered observation efforts but the troop was able to find several enemy complexes and infiltration routes. Several contacts were made with squad sized elements. During this entire month, C Troop supported the 173rd Abn in the general An Loa valley area. Their primary mission was to interdict enemy movement from the mountain base areas to the populated coastal plans. D Troop continued conducting search and clear operations around the Camp Enari and Pleiku TAORs as well as providing periodic convoy escorts.

On the 1st, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 under a summary of A Troop's operations for the quarter states that after the Blues were inserted a prisoner escaped from a nearby NVA POW camp and gave himself up to the Blues. This later led to the location of two enemy POW camps, an NCO training school, and a medical training school.

SSG Tom Wells wrote the following and titled it "We Should've, Would've, Could've:" One afternoon in February, I had just arrived back from the hospital. The Orderly Room was abuzz. The Blues had picked up an ARVN POW who had escaped from a camp northwest of Song Ba Valley. The intelligence that this prisoner provided led to a location of the POW camp plus an NVA NCO training school and medical training school. He also told us that there were 23 ARVN prisoners, two American pilots and a European blonde woman in the camp. I was told to get my platoon prepared for a rescue mission that night or the next morning. The Major was up at the 4th Inf Div giving the info on the location of the POW camp and personnel since we were working for them at the time. I took my gear down to my hooch and dropped it off and started formulating a plan. Not to go into too much detail, I decided that six of us would repel in that night. We would need a diversion of artillery or our guns. The six of us would repel in about a half mile from the camp. The personnel that I was going to use were an RTO, an M-60 gunner, my two Kit Carson scouts, and a little Mexican guy by the name of Rudy Ortega. Rudy was short, 5'4", but tough as nails. He took nothing from anybody, no matter who they were. He could handle a knife well. I showed him a few things such as how to take someone out without making any noise. He took to it like a duck takes to water. He came from a rough Mexican neighborhood in LA and I am sure that he had used a knife before. He was one of my magnificent seven. We had plenty of NVA uniforms. We would all wear pit helmets so we wouldn't stand out. As we moved to within 50 yards of the camp, I would then drop off my RTO and gunner and infiltrate with the rest. We would try to locate and free the POW's if we could. If not, we would have to get into a position between the enemy and the POW's so that we could free them in the morning. The plan was for the rest of the Blues and Delta troop to hit the camp in the morning. I would then direct traffic by calling in artillery and gunships plus throwing

smoke where needed to protect the POW's. I then went down to the platoon to start getting them ready. After finding the ARVN POW, their morale was very high and they were psychologically ready to go on any mission. SSG Toms, who got stuck with the platoon when I went into the hospital, was well liked by the men even though he didn't have a combat MOS. He would be leading the rest of the Blues with Delta troop in the morning. He came from another unit and was a short timer. He stayed with me for about another month and then got a job in the rear for another two months before he DEROS back to the states. As we were getting the men prepared, we got a message from the orderly room that everything was put on hold and to stand down. I figured we weren't going any place that night. In the morning we were told that the 4th Inf Div was taking over the situation and they were going to handle it. I guess that they wanted to make a big splash in the newspapers by using their K Company rangers to hit the POW camp. It took them 30 days to get organized and when they finally hit the camp there was nobody left but one old Motagnard who was guarding the cattle. They had moved out of the camp 20 days earlier lock and barrel, but left the stock. I found that units we were attached to could not comprehend how fast an Air Cav Troop would react to any situation. I always believed that in Vietnam he who hesitates loses. The 4th Inf Div certainly bungled this one. It could have all ended there, but as fate would have it, it didn't end. Years later, in the mid-1980's, I was the Senior Operations Sergeant of WESTCOM PAC stationed at Fort Shafter, Honolulu, Hawaii. We would have a lecturer about every two months. We had a large old movie house that held about 700 personnel. We marched them down there to listen to the lecturer. I was sitting in the front row with the General and the staff. As the lecturer began to talk, the story started to unfold. I then realized that the lecturer was one of the American pilots in that POW camp that day. The lecture was on "Never Giving Up and Surviving." After the lecture was over, we went backstage and talked to him. I didn't have the guts to tell him of the incident in which our paths almost crossed. I figured I should leave sleeping dogs lie. I shook his hand and said "Welcome Home." We could have possibly saved him three more years as a POW if we had only gone in that night. That was finally the end of "We Should've, Would've, Could've."

Also on the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1H #66-00935 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support target marking mission, during the target marking target area, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left and bottom forward fuselage, they continued flying and completed the mission.

On the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop AH-1G #68-15047 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission, during the attack on target, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. CW2 Sam Patriacca provides:

On 2 Feb 1970, I was wounded while flying a Cobra. I think this matches the details in the history for B Troop AH-1G #68-15047. As I recall the events of the day, a senior delegation from Washington or maybe a Congressmen were escorted by this Army Major. They wanted to see 'what was going on in the AO.' We'd been working the area around FB 5 for several days, so that's where the leaders decided to take this delegation. I flew in the back of a LOH up to Kontum. A senior Cobra pilot who was within a few days of DEROSing flew this VIP in the front seat of a Cobra. We land at Kontum where the leaders put on a dog and pony show, and then the delegation goes back to Pleiku via ground transportation. I climbed in the back seat of the Cobra with the 'unknown' pilot in the front seat. We found a good-sized enemy force east of FB 5 in something of an open area, so we start making gun runs. Suddenly I hear POW, POW, POW and my elbow feels like it's on fire! There is blood and fiber all over the cockpit. The other pilot calls that we've been hit and are pulling off. I remember hearing the C&C ask us what the gauges were reading. The other pilot told them that the gauges were all OK. We'd taken one hit in the side and two in the rotor blades. One

round entered the cockpit and grazed my elbow. This wasn't a serious wound because I was treated but stayed in the unit.

Also on the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16126 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 25 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bubble, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 3rd, via 17th CAG Special Orders # 34 the following were assigned to the 7/17th Cav:

PFC James B. Irvine //need to insert the other names//

On the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16554 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 one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for A Troop AH-1G #66-15295 flown by Aircraft Commander CPT G.E. Snyder and WO1 G.E. Mills. Both pilots sustained injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

CPT Snyder and WO1 Mills departed Camp Enari at approximately 1100 hours with a full fuel and ammunition load. At approximately 1120 hours CPT Snyder started a 10 degree dive to lose altitude. He was at 2000 feet AGL and 110 knots airspeed. The aircraft suddenly lurched downward. CPT Snyder checked his instruments the N1 was at normal operating RPM but the N2 was at 7000 RPM and the torque was at 12 PSI. CPT Snyder initially believed he had an engine failure but eliminated that. He then attempted emergency procedures for governor failure and discovered that his collective pitch when pulled did not slow his rate of descent nor bleed off RPM. At this point CPT Snyder realized that he could not recover the aircraft and had no collective pitch control. He directed his copilot to jettison the full wing stores and made a distress call. CPT Snyder picked the best available forced landing area. It was an area covered with small trees and brush. The copilot was unable to jettison the wing stores. At approximately 100 feet AGL CPT Snyder turned the fuel off and lined up into the wing. At tree top level he executed a maximum deceleration to zero his forward airspeed and minimize his rate of descent. At this point the aircraft fell approximately 15 feet through the trees and brush and struck the ground slightly left skid first and slid forward approximately two feet. The main body of the aircraft did not strike a tree; however the main rotor blades struck many small branches along the entire blade. The aircraft was held upright by the wing stores. There was no post accident fire. CPT Snyder and WO1 Mills got out of the aircraft and contacted their teammates on a survival radio. They were rescued about 10 minutes later by the C&C aircraft. The aircraft was recovered and taken to Camp Holloway about two hours later.

The ORLL dated 10 May mentions this accident and states: The collect sleeve and scissors assembly failed while in flight. The pilot had no forced landing area available and was unable to jettison his wing stores. He did an excellent job in ditching in trees with no collective pitch control. The pilot and copilot experienced compression fractures of the back.

On the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16126 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 one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 9th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that CPT Sherwood L. Emory Jr. assumed the duties of Sqdn S-4 replacing CPT Jimmie A. Yerger.

On the 10th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1H #68-15368 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 350 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right bottom mid fuselage, main rotor blade system, left canopy, right skid, and bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission.

Tim Flood provided the following Pacific Stars & Stripes article:

Paris, Feb 11 (AP) - Communist delegates at the Paris peace talks repeated accused the United States today of invading Laos - naming military units alleged to have done so. The United States called the accusations 'all nonsense.' At the same time, North Vietnam did not deny that it has troops in both Laos and Cambodia, and in fact gave a strong indication that they are in the two countries. These developments came at the 102nd session of the talks, which appeared more deadlocked than ever on basic peace-making issues. Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh, head of the Viet Cong delegation, started off the day with a claim that there are 10 battalions of American infantry, artillery and armor fighting in Laos. She said she was stressing that U.S. infantry is in Laos, contrary to U.S. statements that there are only South Vietnamese ground forces there and no American troops. Later, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong spokesmen names U.S. units they said are fighting in Laos. They were listed as the 7th Battalion of the 17th Air Cavalry Regiment, and 'several battalions' from the 5th Mechanized Division, the 101st Airborne Division and the Americal Division. The U.S. spokesman termed the Communist claims 'all nonsense.' Ambassador David K.E. Bruce said American air and artillery units are supporting the South Vietnamese incursion - the artillery firing from across the South Vietnamese border - and added: 'No American ground combat forces or advisers will cross into Laos.'

From the 12th through the 15th, the ORLL dated 10 May states that B Troop supported the 24th STZ southwest of Kontum and made contact with an NVA company killing 33 in the 4 day period. Several mortars, rifles, radios and quantities of munitions were captured.

On the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16141 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 four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left cockpit, left engine compartment, and main rotor blade system, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

Also on the 12th, MAJ Billy Bowling was awarded the Purple Heart via 17th CAG GO 13, TC 439 dated 7 March 1970 for wounds received on this date. The same order also awarded the Purple Heart to WO1 Ron Stokes but the service date is recorded as the 17th. According to MAJ Bowling, he and Ron were flying a C&C Huey when they took fire in the cockpit and both received puncture wounds in the face and neck from the shattered plexiglass. Neither were hospitalized just cleaned up. There was a door gunner and a photographer on board but they were not injured. They flew directly to the hospital at Ahn Ke about a 20 minute flight. MAJ Bowling remembers his armor plated shoulder guard took 6 rounds. It needed to be replaced.

On the 15th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May states that CPT Henry G. Wall assumed the duties of Sqdn S-2 replacing CPT Paul T. Pennington.

From the 16th for the remainder of the month and into early March, the ORLL dated 10 May states that B Troop supported the 4th Inf Div by operating in the mountains near the Suoi Kon River to the north of An Khe.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17762 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 in the right rear strut, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

On the 27th, MAJ Robert L. 'Bob' Rackley assumed command of A Troop replacing MAJ Ron Maxson. The Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May states the date as the 24th. Basically, these men changed jobs because MAJ Rackley had been the Squadron XO and MAJ Maxson assumed those duties.

On the 28th, the Sqdn ORLL quarterly summary section states that on this date A Troop found a battalion size training area southwest of An Khe. The unit history states that A Troop's first LOH team had the lead shot down and the wing forced down by a fire in the ship. The crews were pulled to safety with a jungle penetrator. While working this area later in the day they found a battalion sized training area southwest of An Khe. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage records for two A Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions. (1) #65-12942 while hovering, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom engine compartment, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated. There is a second record for #65-12942 that records two crew injuries. It states they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they made a forced landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to theater and recovered. These two records could be reporting the same event or could be describing two different events for this aircraft. (2) #66-07932 records two crew injuries and the loss of the helicopter. While hovering, they took 15 hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom engine compartment, they crashed and the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

Also on the 28th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16141 flown by an unnamed crew that sustained one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

CPT Jim Donohoe recalls: I have a clear recollection of the Squadron CO calling one day saying - get a ship ready to go pick up some of our guys up north. I am not certain of the date. I served in the Aviation Section of HHT from March to September of 1970. I'd guess it was about May. I was the second pilot in the Huey and remember the CO saying that he just couldn't talk about what was going to happen. We flew north of Dak To a long way - that much I remember. //details of the rest of the mission please!!!

CPT Barry Speare provides a little color of life in C Troop about this time: I arrived for my third tour in late Dec 69. My other tours were with Airborne Infantry. This was my first as an Aviator. I told the Squadron that I wanted to fly Scouts for Charlie Troop and the next morning I was on the courier to Lane. After I completed my 15 hours under the watchful eyes of Marty Martines (by this time I believe he was the Squadron Safety Officer and SIP), I was assigned the callsign of RED 12. Because of aircraft availability and the need for pilots, my transition took about two weeks. During that time I also flew about 40 plus hours in the front of the lead Snakes to learn the AO and to observe how the experienced Scouts worked. Now, the standard FNG initiation drink was the GMF (Green Mother _) which was administered whenever the Lane O Club had a visiting stage show band. Those of us not flying on the day of the stage show went to the club early in the afternoon to assure that our Troop got the tables directly in front and to one side of the stage. The other side of the stage was reserved for the 498th Dustoff. We started drinking the minute we arrived at the club and this went on into the evening. The stage show started about 7:30 and the GMFs were brought out during the 9 PM break. Like the rest of the FNGs I got on stage and chugged my GMF while everyone cheered. I thought I was going to die and later hung over the hooch maids' clothesline ralphing my guts out for what seemed like forever. Bill Hesse was found passed out cold, lying next to his hooch the following morning. Besides drinking, the major pastime at Lane after returning

from the AO was jungle rules volleyball. C Troop had a good team and was a serious challenge to the other aviation units. I was never very good at the game so I was only allowed to guard our war/beer chest and provide verbal support when a challenger turned up. During the eight months I was in C Troop we never lost a single challenge match. The stakes were our war chest against their's and we always went home with ours after drinking their's.

After viewing D Troop's website in late 2000, Frank M. Cipriano wrote: I was a member of D Troop for a short time - August 69 to February 70. I was the morning clerk working in the headquarters section for 1SG Herbert Richie, Top as we knew him. I don't remember our CO's name, but the only thing I do remember about him was that he was from Reading, Pennsylvania. I do remember the XO, LT Smith. Anyway, wanted to thank those who built the website and all those who served in D Troop for the many memories.

SP5 Jerry Trembath recalls: I was a 67N20 and joined A Troop on 8 July 1969. I was a Huey crewchief the entire year. I DEROSed on 7 July 1970. When I finally got my own ship it was #66-16017. It had come over on the boat with the Squadron and wasn't the strongest Huey in our troop. They mounted a 50-cal machine gun on 017 shortly after I joined A Troop. It stayed on the ship until March 1970. When we fired it, the rivets on the floor would shake! WO Richard Turnley was the pilot who flew 017 most often. He was Blue 34 in the Lift Platoon. The gunner was SP4 Ron Aaberg who DEROSed in June 1970. Once Mr. Turnley was flying and we were asked to medevac an injured LRRP on a stretcher. We couldn't land near him and eventually tied ropes from the stretcher through the D rings in the Huey. The stretcher was hanging just below our skids. We lifted him out and flew about ten minutes to a sand bar where we landed and could bring him inside. I was scared we would drop him! Luckily for him, everything worked out fine. I remember MAJ Maxson flew 017 about twice a week. One incident that happened in Feb 1970 stands out in my mind. We must have been flying C&C that day some place south of An Khe. This one LOH was working and the Cobras were watching it. The LOH kept moving left to right at tree top level. Suddenly I saw a pack in the fork of a tree and notified the pilots. They radioed the LOH and he stopped, backed up but for some reason or other just couldn't see the pack. We tried several things but the LOH crew just couldn't find it. I couldn't believe it – the pack was basically light blue with dark blue pockets and fairly large. Finally my pilot said, 'If I put the Huey on the ground, can you find the pack?' 'Sure can!' I said. The LOH found a place and we landed. I kept my eye on the pack as much as possible as we circled to land and tried to pick out distinctive features that would help me get to it. Ron and I got out and walked right to the pack. I remember looking up and seeing the minigun on the LOH pointing right at me. Boy that scared me! We picked up the pack and returned to the Huey. It contained a rice knife, some fish, and a few bags of rice. Basically we had stolen some guy's lunch! I remember that MAJ Maxson landed rather often in the AO to pick someone up. We also had a rope ladder in the Huey. If we couldn't land and wanted to get someone on the ground in a hurry, we'd throw out the ladder and one or two of our passengers would climb down. Once I remember an officer fell from the ladder. I think he was a pilot. He broke his collarbone in the fall. Luckily a LOH was able to go in and get him out. Anytime I needed anything, I'd go to SSG Ramerey. He always took care of me. I remember going to the 1st Sergeant once and asked if there was a way for me to finish High School. He said No but gave me the papers so I could go take the GED test. I did this in Vietnam and got my GED. [Editor's Note: Jerry told me about another mission but my notes are terrible. What I wrote is: 'DSC (Distinguished Service Cross) event at least. We spent a lot of time circling, stopping, and refueling. After the last trip we were very low on fuel. We got an Air Metal with 'V' for that day. We took several hits that day. I have pictures of the metal patches we put over the holes.']

CPT Dale Dunham recalls: I completed flight school as a 1LT and was a brand-new CPT when I arrived in Vietnam. I landed in Cam Ranh Bay early on the morning of 11 Jan 1970. I remember the

wheels were down and we almost touched down when the aircraft pulled up because of incoming at Cam Ranh late at night on the 10th. We orbited out over the water an hour or so, then landed. Later they gave Christmas drops and, you guessed it, I missed the drop by one day! I was assigned to A Troop and joined the Lift Platoon. 1LT David 'Tiny' Sims was my roommate for the first few months. I have vivid memories of my first actual insert of the Blues. I'd finished my in-country training and initial check-ride and was flying combat for the first time with this young Warrant. He told me to just sit on my hands and watch – don't touch anything. OK with me! We start our descent into this complete green jungle for as far as the eye can see. I notice there is no LZ in sight. We keep going down. I notice the power coming up some and then some more but I don't see anything that looking like a place to land. Suddenly we are in this little hole in the trees and we start down. We go down for a while, then move over a ridge and under some of the canopy to insert the Blues. I said to myself – I'll never be able to do this!! But within a few weeks I was doing it and thought it was perfectly routine. I remember one of the Blues was scared of flying. He was a SP4 named Jones, I think. Anyway, he always sat in the middle of the aircraft just behind the radio console. He always watches the gauges and knew when one of the wasn't 'in the green.' Once I was flying with a pilot that decided to play a joke on SP4 Jones. When Jones looked away, the pilot pretended to stretch his arms and back but reached up and pulled a circuit breaker that controlled part of the instrument panel. When Jones looks back at the instruments many were showing zero readings. Well Jones goes crazy and starts yelling. Naturally everyone had a good laugh and they did that to him several times. You know, looking back – that was a cruel joke to play on him. He was a faithful soldier – never missed a mission – always got in the helicopter even though he was scared to death of flying. I wish we hadn't done that to him. I remember returning to Enari during daylight hours one afternoon and seeing the flare conex container on fire. It was so bright you couldn't look at it. The fire melted that steel conex into a twisted pile of metal. I remember one sad experience I had with Tiny Sims. I was returning from the PX once when I met him. I asked him if he wanted a lifesaver because I'd just bought some. He said sure. I handed him the package of wintergreen-flavored lifesavers and his face turned green as a gourd when he got a whiff of the wintergreen. As it turned out Tiny had flown a slick to pickup the bodies of a Spad crew that had been recovered after some sad circumstances. The recovery team had to cover the body bags with wintergreen before anyone could come near them.

1LT Ken Wilson concludes: B Troop moved back to Pleiku the first part of January but it wasn't long until we went to Phan Rang for operations for about a month but action was pretty slow. We then flew out of Phan Rang for operations up in the real highlands, around Dalat, where the airfield was about 5000 feet. Again action was light. We moved back to Pleiku at the end of March. I got a 10-day drop and found out about it from the Chaplain in Dalat with 8 days to go. I had moved 8 times in the year; had flown the first 3 months in country; been the Blue Platoon leader for 5 months; 2 weeks in the Quonset Hut hospital in Pleiku; 2 weeks on R&R; and the last 3 months flying again. It was a great run! In keeping with the Cavalry spirit I took the long, risky way home. I caught a CH-47 to An Khe and then a C-123 down to Saigon to buy my wife some gifts. I thought I was going to die on the Streets of Saigon after making it thru a year of combat. I got the gifts at the PX and caught another hop on a C-130 up to Cam Ranh where I caught the Big Bird back to the good Ole USA. As a footnote, I have nothing but great memories of all the above 'Comrades in Arms.' Even though we weren't all perfect we had one thing in common and that was to never let our fellow soldiers down. To this day I can't help but wonder if I could have possibly done more to rescue our guys on that fateful day on 2 November 1969.

March 1970

On the 1st, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that the Squadron was officially released from OPCON to the 4th Infantry Division and returned to the 17th CAG for control. A, B and D Troops

would, however, continue to support the 4th during much of the month of March. During this entire month, C Troop continued to support the 173rd Abn in the An Loa valley area. D Troop worked the Pleiku TAOR conducting sweeps to the south of Camp Holloway in search of the mortars that had been hitting the post from the south. Two one-day sweeps were also conducted in this area. They were unable to locate these mortars even though an intensive effort was made that included the use of mine sweepers.

Also on the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss record with injuries for C Troop OH-6A #66-14403 flown by CW2 C.J. Harrington and copilot WO1 J.H. Labruyere who had major injuries at grid BS576078. The record indicates that MAJ J.S. Hahn was a passenger but it is more realistic that he was the accident investigation officer. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

CW2 Harrington and WO1 Labruyere departed LZ English at approximately 1330 hours en route to the AO to perform a VR. They were flying the wing ship of a team of two scouts. The lead ship was piloted by CPT John W. Sartor. At 1430 hours both aircraft were at an approximately five feet hover over the trees with CW2 Harrington moving in a right drift, counterclockwise direction around the lead scout. CW2 Harrington came to some taller trees to his right and pulled in more power to clear the trees. This increase in power was too great for the amount of anti-torque pedal remaining and the aircraft spun to the right. CW2 Harrington lowered the collective to slow the spin and then tried to fly out of it. The aircraft started to descent into the trees. CW2 Harrington then pulled in power to try to spiral and fly out of the spin. When CW2 Harrington did this, the nose of the aircraft pitched down and the spin became violent. He lowered the collective to slow the spin and saw that he was going into the trees. CW2 Harrington leveled the aircraft and rolled the throttle off as the aircraft settled into the trees. The aircraft stopped on the ground, resting on its left side in about a 45-degree angle. As the pilots were getting out of the aircraft, a white phosphorous grenade which had been hanging by the pin exploded, caused burns to WO1 Labruyere and destroyed the aircraft.

Vito Flitt recalls: I remember this event. The pilots hadn't been in country all that long. The trees were tall and the terrain didn't help with the recovery. I am pretty sure they had to use a jungle penetrator to get them out. It was that difficult. The C&C told us to destroy to LOH, so we shot it up and finally put so WP and fragmentation grenades on it until it burned.

The ORLL dated 10 May mentions this accident and states: The pilot exceeded the operating limitations of the aircraft while on a low altitude low airspeed visual reconnaissance mission. He demanded more power than the aircraft had anti-torque pedal to compensate for and spun into the trees. A white phosphorus grenade, hung by the pin, exploded on impact. The copilot received burns on his legs. The pilot was not injured.

On the 2nd, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that CPT Vincent Falconio assumed command of D Troop replacing CPT Ken Lininger.

On the 3rd, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that LTC Rudy DeFrance assumes command of the 7/17th Cav replacing LTC George Murry. The same ORLL states that CPT Kenneth G. Lininger assumed the duties of S-1 on this date from CPT David E. Huckriede.

On the 4th, SP4 Gary Phillips (third award) and SP4 Floyd Hansen (second award) of C Troop were awarded the ACMs with "V" for heroism via HQ 1st Aviation Brigade General Orders 2911 dated 29 April 1970. The citation reads in part – these men distinguished themselves by exceptionally valorous actions while serving aboard a light observation helicopter supporting the extraction of a long range patrol in Bien Dien Province. The patrol was surrounded by a superior enemy force and sustained one casualty. As their ship entered the area, they immediately came under intense automatic weapons fire, but they quickly pinpointed the sources of fire and placed effective suppressive fire on the enemy

while keeping the pilot aware of the situation. They provided effective covering fire for the medevac ship and the extraction ship as they hovered above 100 foot trees for the extraction. With the patrol safely extracted these men continued to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy while marking enemy concentrations for helicopter gunships.

Also on the 4th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that CPT Walter W. White assumed the duties of Sqdn Maintenance Officer replacing CPT Steven L. White.

On the 5th, the ORLL dated 10 May states that B Troop stopped working the area north of An Khe for the 4th Inf Div and started supporting the 24th STZ again west of Pleiku and on the 6th found an arms and munitions cache. They continued working for the 24th STZ until 10 March.

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15809 flown by 1LT R.L. Foster and SGT D. Walsh. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

At approximately 1030 hours, 1LT Foster and SGT Walsh took off from Ruthless Heliport, Camp Enari to perform a test flight in the local area. The test flight was to check the power turbine rigging which had been adjusted because it had been over compensating which caused a rise in the N2 above normal. The aircraft was loaded in a normal operating configuration. 1LT Foster determined the rigging to be within operating limits and returned to the helicopter and refueled his aircraft at the hot refueling point at the south end of the heliport. 1LT Foster filled the fuel tanks to 1400 pounds and decided to hover to his aircraft's revetment approximately 300 meters to the north. The wind was almost calm and not a factor. 1LT Foster hovered to within 75 meters of his intended revetment and hovered over an area that had not been recently used and was extremely dusty. 1LT Foster started to lose ground reference and attempted to back out of the dust. SGT Walsh stated there was a revetment behind them so 1LT Foster moved the aircraft forward and attempted to set the aircraft down. SGT Walsh stated that they were over a ditch so 1LT Foster attempted to move the aircraft forward and gain translational lift and fly out of the dusty area. A revetment loomed ahead. 1LT Foster pulled collective pitch to clear the revetment. The aircraft climbed 10 to 15 feet and cleared the revetment but at this time low RPM warning buzzing started turning to the right and the nose lowered. 1LT Foster lost directional control of the aircraft but was able to level it just before impact. The aircraft landed hard and remained upright. 1LT Foster shut down the engine. There was no fire and neither crew member was injured. The aircraft had turned 270 degrees to the right and traveled 50 meters from the point where the dust was first encountered.

The ORLL dated 10 May mentions this accident and states: The pilot entered IMC conditions in dust and lost control of the aircraft, resulting in a hard landing. There were no injuries.

B Troop Moves to Phan Rang from Camp Enari

From the 10th until the 27th B Troop moved from Camp Enari to Phan Rang and returned to Camp Holloway. The Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that B Troop made this deployment to support the ARVN forces in Tuyen Duc Province near Dalat. This relocation was part of the close-out of Camp Enari. While working in the Dalat area, B Troop found several very large bunker (one with over 200) complexes and screens for the ARVN forces that worked several cache sites.

On the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17831 flown by an unnamed crew at grid BR627801 with two injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at a hover, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail rotor system, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

Squadron Moves to Camp Holloway from Camp Enari

From the 13th until the 1st of April, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that the Squadron (-) moved from Camp Enari (AR812355) to Camp Holloway (AR800465). At this time the Squadron (-) consisted of HHT, A and D Troops. It is easy to notice changes in functional areas and personnel staffing as a result of the relocation to Holloway. The following are specific examples. In the logistics section, the ORLL states that HHT and D Troop operated a consolidated mess hall from the 13 March until the end of the reporting period. However, D Troop assumed responsibility for the mess hall after 10 April. Once the 4th Inf Div's logistical support ceased about mid-March, the 88th S&S Bn provided most of the non-aviation, non-fuel and ammunition logistical support for the Sqdn elements (save C Troop). The ORLL states that the Sqdn Communications Platoon started building a new communications center at Holloway on 16 Mar but it was closed on the 23rd. From that point on the 43rd Signal Bn provided the Sqdn with its link to the 17th CAG. Only a back-up HF radio teletype circuit was maintained at the Sqdn Communication Center. The Sqdn Communications Platoon maintained a forward RTT detachment at An Khe until 12 March when it was closed. Some things remained the same. For example the 604th TC CO (DSU) at Holloway continued to provide aircraft direct support for all save C Troop who had the 78th TC CO (DSU) at Camp Radcliff. For vehicle support everyone used the 62nd Mnt Bn) at Camp Wilson) save C Troop who used the 5th Mnt Bn at Qui Nhon.

CPT Ralph Foster, was A Troop's Service Platoon Leader with the maintenance detachment based at Camp Enari, recalls: When we moved, everyone took everything that wasn't nailed down. After the South Vietnamese inspected the billets, we had to go back to Enari and replace the light bulbs. Then within a week or two after they took Enari, the entire camp was leveled. They took it apart piece by piece.

WO1 Matt Zuccaro, a pilot in the Aviation Section of HHT, recalls: I was sick for about a week just prior to the move. I considered the move as a non-event because it was well planned and easy to do. There was one event that got us off on the wrong foot with the folks at Holloway. We flew our hooch maids from Enari to Holloway. So went the Vietnamese left to return home for the evening, the gate head-count was inaccurate. The Holloway Security guys thought the Cav guys were really jerks for doing this.

SSG Jim Littlejohn, had been D Troop's radar detachment NCOIC at Enari since about April 1969 and recalls: About October 1969 //check this date with Jim//, I moved with D Troop to Camp Holloway and there I took over the Mortar Platoon from SSG Bill Reisen. I stayed in that position until I DEROSed. I recall CPT Arthur H. Trujillo and the Mortar Platoon Leader being LT Chattman. He was a big man, 6'3" with a red handlebar mustache. I also remember a First Sergeant Barbar who was not will liked.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for C Troop UH-1H #66-16569 flown by CW2 D.W. Bragg and Instructor Pilot 1LT G.M. Bass. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

At 0850 hours 1LT Bass and CW2 Bragg departed Lane AHP en route to the south field for a 90 day standardization check ride. After all normal operating maneuvers were completed 1LT Bass demonstrated a low level autorotation with a slight climb. The maneuver was initiated at an altitude of 50 feet and an airspeed of 80 knots. The aircraft climbed 50 feet and the airspeed decreased to 40 knots. The rotor RPM was in the low green. 1LT Bass initiated his flare at 30 feet without a noticeable effect on his closure rate or rotor RPM. Initial collective pitch was applied at 10 feet, again without noticeable effect. 1LT Bass continued to pull collective pitch until the control stops were reached. The aircraft landed hard in an almost level attitude. It bounced one time and turned approximately 60 degrees to the right. The aircraft came to a rest leaning to the left rear. 1LT Bass

shut down the engine and both pilots exited the aircraft. There was no post accident fire and there were no injuries.

The ORLL dated 10 May mentions this accident and states: The standardization instructor pilot was demonstrating an autorotation and let his rotor RPM and airspeed decay excessively, resulting in a hard landing and major damage to the aircraft. There were no injuries.

C Troop Moves to An Khe from An Son

From the 23rd until the 28th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that C Troop completed the move from Lane at An Son to Camp Radcliff at An Khe. The OR-LL states that C Troop was OPCON to Task Force Pursuit. This Task Force was controlled by the 4th Inf Div. It operated in the enemy base areas to the south of the Mang Yang Pass. Those who remember this move state that C Troop did not leave anything at An Son – no rear detachment, no heavy maintenance, no nothing.

CPT Barry Speare recalls: In early February orders came for Charlie Troop to move to Camp Radcliff by early March. I think this got delayed a little but I remember CPT ? being on the advanced party. Our new mission was to support three major combat elements: our friends in the 173rd Abn Bde, the 4th Inf, and the 22d ARVN. Our AO was expanded from the South China Sea to the Cambodian tri-border area northwest of Kontum. We completed the move without incident and on time but two days after we arrived we were hit by sappers. They destroyed the two LOHs closest to the billet area and attempted to destroy two snakes and a slick. To the best of my memory the others were repairable; but the LOHs were nothing more than piles of white magnesium with vertical stabilizers. Our officers' quadrangle and billeting area turned out very nice. We all did some work on our own rooms and pitched in to finish our small club that included a beer cooler obtained from an old PX Snack Bar and a highly shined, varnished bar.

On the 25th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for A Troop UH-1H #68-15406 flown by an unnamed crew at grid BR446710.

B Troop Moves to Camp Holloway from Phan Rang

On the 27th, B Troop moved from Phan Rang to Camp Holloway. The Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that relocation was completed on the 29th.

On the 27th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that CPT Dale L. Dunham assumed the duties of Sqdn S-2 replacing CPT Henry G. Wall. CPT Dale Dunham recalls: After about three months in A Troop, I was assigned to be the Squadron S-2. I served in that job about six months. MAJ Billy J. Bowling was the S-3 at the time. He was a huge help to me. I still have a mental image of him as a 'wheeler dealer' – he had friends everywhere! I'd never been a staff officer before. He was my mentor. The S-2 shop was small. I had an E-7 NCO plus a SP4 clerk. I don't recall any of their names. After we moved to Holloway the NCO was a black man. He was a good sergeant. Holloway received more mortar and rocket attacks than Enari. For some reason or other, we received the job of collecting fins after these attacks. We had a 'fin puller' – a long wire with a hook on the end of it. We'd insert this into the hole and recover the fins. We'd collect these and report the fin numbers through channels. I remember inserting the puller into a hole and bringing out an un-exploded round. I turned to the sergeant and asked, 'What do I do now?' I noticed he was already some distance from me and accelerating rapidly! I placed the whole thing on the ground and called EOD. The S-2 job was very interesting. I was expected to write an Intelligence Summary each day. Getting the tactical information was easy in a way. I interviewed lots of LOH and gun pilots plus the Blues. It was actually fun to write up what they saw and uncovered. Our biggest challenge was always having credible sources for the strategic information we processed. As it turned out the Cav had a good relationship with the B-52 Special Forces guys at Kontum. I and other pilots flew lots of 'extra missions' for them. I became friends with their intelligence man. He got us stuff that we never received via the 1st Avn Bde. I

remember one interesting fact that I learned in the S-2 job. When I first arrived the average age of the NVA soldiers the Cav guys killed was about 22 years old but at the end of my tour it was near 19. That was really telling to me. I also remember that bad luck NVA battalion the Cav discovered near Pleiku. I stood atop one of the bunkers at Holloway and watched the Cobras fire them up. The Sqdn Civic Affairs team once brought me a 'present' that I'll never forget. Six medics from the team came toward me all smiles like the proverbial 'Cheshire Cat' and put what is left of an enemy 20-lb satchel charge on my desk. They were very proud of themselves and acted as if they'd just given me something of great value. As it turned out, our Civic Affairs team had a pretty good relationship with this village. When the bad guys placed the satchel charge under the bridge leading to the vil, the kids see it and tell the GIs when they arrive. So would the team call EOD to take care of the satchel charge? No, they shoot it up with their weapons, then pull it down and bring it to me!! The detonator wires looked like they were still connected. I call the local EOD guys. They say, 'Well if it hasn't already gone off, it's probably not too dangerous.' I take it outside to a bunker and wait for the EOD team. I remember collecting a series of Mohawk aerial photos of the NVA's zig-zag siege trenches approaching the base at Dak Seang. One of the photos showed the ash outline of an A Troop slick destroyed there. I used to tell the Cobra pilots where I thought the NVA were working and hoped they would be able to fire into those trenches.

Also on the 27th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that CSM Percy Armes Jr. assumed the duties for Sqdn Command Sergeant Major replacing CSM Robert M. Couch.

On the 30th, A Troop and C/75th Ranger (which were opconed to the Squadron from the 30th until 19 April) formed TF Dagger which operated to the southwest of Plei Me and to the southwest of Plei Mrong. No significant findings were made by TF Dagger as the NVA were not operating in its AO.

Pilot Ray Connolly remembers these times: I was in A Troop's Gun platoon from Sep until Jan of 1970. It seemed like there was about a million Captains in the platoon at that time and I wasn't all that senior. About the beginning of the year I ended up in HHT as the Asst S-4 though I really wanted to be flying Cobras. It was during the period that the 7/17th moved from Enari to Holloway and I was given the general assignment to acquire all the construction materials I could get my hands on, to make living there more comfortable. The Squadron had a number of 40 ft S&P (Stake and Platform) trailers that were pulled by big diesel tractors. We made many trips from Pleiku over the Mang Yang Pass to Qui Nhon empty and returned with 2x4s, plywood, wiring, lights, etc. At that time the 75th Ranger Company was attached to the 7/17th, so we could draw LRRP rations through normal supply. I am still amazed at how much stuff we acquired simply by trading for a couple of cases of LRRPs!! We even made one trip all the way to Phan Rang to get materials. My other duty was to establish ammo and refuel points. The evening before, the HHT CO would tell us where to go; we'd load up a 2 1/2 ton with minigun ammo and another with rockets plus a 5,000 gal tankers. Early in the morning we head out to Kontum, Plei Me, Plei Djereng, places like that. We mostly supported A Troop because even after B Troop returned to the Pleiku area, they still flow down south a lot and someone else supported them. We rarely were part of a convoy and we didn't have any escort from D Troop or the MPs. We'd just drive out the gate and head to the forward base. We carried a PRC 77 to call in case something happened. We never got hit but I can remember riding in a jeep many of time and thinking "Why am I in a jeep and not a helicopter?" We used the Chinooks to lift fuel and ammo whenever we could but when they weren't available we'd drive. Rarely would we spend the night at these places. We'd drive back every evening. In July, I guess someone had decided that I'd paid my dues because I returned to A Troop's Gun platoon. I flew with them until I DEROSed in Sep.

SP4 Ron Strickland relates: I was a PFC with the MOS of 67A10 when I arrival in Vietnam the 4th of July 1969 and was assigned to the 7/17 CAV. I waited at headquarters at Camp Enari for a few days then joined C Troop at Lane AHP. I worked on the LOH for a couple of months in the

Maintenance Detachment before I was recruited as a Scout. When I was in the Maintenance Detachment, Lew Walters and I became very good friends and still are today. We keep in touch with Gary Phillips, Breck Chabeck, Loyd Hanson, Vito Flitt, Dave Rainey plus our Platoon Sergeant Preston. We were quit to crew! I took time to learn the Vietnamese language. That became quite useful for my time in Vietnam as well as my next tour. Being the speaker of the language I was somewhat the one who got the entertainment onto post. Most of the time we used the mess truck or an ambulance. I recall going across post with two girls in flight suits one night, when we meet CPT Barry Speare had to render the old salute. I should have trained those girls for that! Anyway I'm sure he knew they weren't really soldiers. He greeted us, walked on past but then stopped and looked back at us. I recall telling the young ladies not to twist their butts. We just kept moving. I think a lot of us EM saw the front side 'This Side Toward Enemy' of the claymore mines around the perimeter more often than the rear. We spent a lot of time on our bellies be able to visit the town at night. I also remember lying dead still when the flares descended overhead. Before moving to An Khe I ran a confederate flag up the flagpole in front of the Orderly Room. MAJ Joe Tobin was the CO at the time. During a Troop formation, he stated, "If you are so proud of your flag, then come and take it down!" Needless to say but I didn't claim it. The 1st Sergeant knew it was mine because he had seen it on my bunk many times. The CO kept it in a neat fold behind his desk in his office from then on. I never got my flag back. Once when Vito and I were on our way to R&R in Sydney, Australia, the truck taking us to Qui Nhon went through An Son. We just could not wait for Sydney, so we got off the truck. We were caught being in an off-limits area, locked in a conex and then sent back to An Khe. We lost our R&R. At this time, the CO also had our promotion orders. We were promoted instead of being punished, but our R&R was cancelled because we got caught. After being introduced as an aerial scout, I was first to learn how to take control of the aircraft and radio operation in the event the pilot was no longer able to fly. On my first mission I got pretty airsick and spent most of the flight with my head hanging out side of the aircraft. I flew front seat at first with my M60 striped and using a Charlie model M60 butt plate. That butt plate became my best friend. I flew a lot of missions and saw a lot of action. I am unable to put dates and places with many of them. I flew with honor with great pilots like WO Bruce Carlson, CPT Barry Spear and WO Richard (Dick) Bradley, and Lenny Smith. One mission I recall was finding a hospital cache while flying with Barry Spears. The Blues were put on the ground. They carried the medical supplies to an LZ to be picked up by American helicopters. A Vietnamese helicopter landed and forced the ground soldiers by gunpoint to load it on to their ship. We sure wanted to fire that chopper up. I believe in May C Troop worked in the Central Highlands around Pla Drang //maybe Plei Djereng SF Camp// The unit found a very large weapons cache. I am not sure of the date when we found an NVA base camp along the Se-Song River that bordered Laos. The tin roof tops glared in the sun like a lighted city at night. We were called away from the camp before we got any closer. I believe the Air Force was called in for an air strike, but not before the VC had time to realize they had been spotted. They had time to load up and convoy out of the camp and in to the jungle, leaving behind a complete camp with heavily fortified anti aircraft positions and tracks that told where the convoy entered the dense jungle. Again an air strike or Arclight was successful leaving behind a convoy of trucks and tanks. Word was that the operators of the tanks were chained in.

SP4 Ken Boes, who attended the Squadron Reunion in 2010, recalls: I was a married man and even had a daughter when I finished AIT. I was an 11B40. I arrived in Vietnam in June 1969 and served with the 1st Inf Div. SGT William A. Devries and I came together from the 1st ID to A Troop's Blues. My hobby was model airplanes so I made friends with anyone who was also interested in them. I certainly remember SSG Tom Wells. I remember a SP4 Smell but don't know why I remember him. Time certainly blurs the details. I believe I was in the 2nd squad and usually rode on the 2nd Huey when we were inserted. On the day I was wounded (sometime in March 1970), I remember being on the 2nd Huey with SP4 Hector De Mengus who had an M60. I was standing on

the skid on the left side – getting ready to jump. I remember thinking just one more second and I'll jump. Bang! An enemy round hit my right leg and forced me back into the Huey. There was no doc on our ship. I was bleeding pretty bad. Someone put a tourniquet on me. I stayed in the Huey because I was not ambulatory without someone else helping me move. The Huey landed someplace but the Dustoff ship couldn't land near us. I believe the area was receiving mortar fire. I believe this lasted about 30 minutes or so – seemed like hours to me at the time. Finally I remember the Dustoff ship came in with Cobras on both sides of it. They took me to an Aid Station at Tan Canh. They cleaned me up and arranged for a Dustoff to take me to Cam Ranh Bay. I was there at least four days, then Japan for about two months, then Ft Riley. I was discharged from the Army in September. I've been in the accounting field since leaving the Army. I want you all to know that I only have one complaint about A Troop – I didn't get any of my stuff back after I was evacuated!

April 1970

For most of the month A Troop worked the Dak Seang area. On 6 Sep 1970 A Troop submitted a Recommendation for a Valorous Unit Citation (VUC) for the period 6 – 15 April for A Troop plus the 568 TC Det and the 288th Signal Det. SP4 James Thurmond of A Troop's Blues provided a copy of the documentation and extracts were inserted into this history. While the award was not approved, the documentation is a valuable reference and makes for very interesting reading. The first page of the document states that above named units are cited for extraordinary heroism against NVA forces which operated in the II Corps Tactical Zone, conducting major thrusts against Camp Dak Seang and heavy diversionary attacks at Dak Pek and Ben Het Special Forces Camps. These camps were part of the 24th Special Tactical Zone (STZ). Inclosure 3 lists friendly force strength at 215 men, KHA at 2, WHA at 8, MHA at 1, and CAP at 0. The enemy section lists 23 enemy body count and one captured.

For most of this month according to the ORLL dated 10 May, B Troop worked the Dak Seang area and south to Dak To along Rocket Ridge. Intense AW fire was received on nearly every mission. Contact was made on numerous occasions with squad and platoon size elements. They were very successful in locating the 122mm rocket positions along Rocket Ridge that had been firing on Dak To and Tan Canh. Their Guns and tac air were used to destroy several launch positions and storage areas. A large number of bunker complexes, mortar positions, and MG positions were reported.

On the 1st, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On the morning of 1 Apr 1970, Camp Dak Seang was found to be completely encircled by a large NVA force. The camp received 40 rounds of indirect fire during the morning hours and all communications were lost. By 1550 hours, the camp was reported under heavy attack and NVA troops had dug positions within 30 meters of the camp perimeter. Intense fighting began and would continue for the next 39 days.

On the 2nd, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that MAJ Leighton Haselgrove assumed command of B Troop replacing MAJ Billy Bowling. MAJ Haselgrove recalls:

Basically Billy and I swapped jobs. I'd been the S-3 since I arrived in early November. During my first tour I served with B Troop 1/9th Cav and then HHT/1/9th Cav. In late March 1970, I went on R&R then returned to assume command of B Troop. I think Billy was gone for a little while as well because I remember CPT Ron Bath 'watched the store' in B Troop for awhile. One of the most significant events in my tour happened right after I assumed command. I've often told people that I believe I would have been court-martialed if I had been in a divisional air cavalry unit for doing what I did while commanding B Troop. Let me explain. It is a well-documented fact that during this period B Troop was heavily engaged in the Dak Seang and Dak To areas. The ARVNs had lost the better part of five battalions during combat operations against several NVA regiments. The US Special Forces and US Advisors at the 23rd STZ were pulling out all the stops on anything they could get their hands on to defeat the NVA in the Dak Seang area. Ron briefed me on what had happened while I was on R&R and said I was 'invited' to a briefing the next day at the 23rd STZ HQ

in Kontum. When I arrived I met this US Army Brigadier General who gave me a mission to 'put everything I had into the valley to fight the NVA.' I told him that the Cavalry's job was to find the enemy but everyone already knew exactly where the NVA were, so that I believed the Cav should be looking for supply and reinforcing routes so those could be bombed by B-52s. He said something to the effect – 'No, I want you guys to duke it out with the NVA.' I told him that we had disarmed our LOHs (removed the miniguns), that our Hueys only had M-60s and we wouldn't want to insert our Blues in situations where they could be trapped by a larger force; but that I would fly Cobra missions all day long to dump on the NVA. He said, 'So you are disobeying my direct order?' I replied with something like, 'Well, if your telling me to sacrifice my people in a fight that really belongs to the ARVNs, then I guess I am disobeying your direct order.' He told me to go wait outside. Naturally, he called LTC Rudy DeFrance and our common command, I Field Force Vietnam at Nha Trang. A little while later, LTC DeFrance arrives to 'come get me.' He has a chat with the BG and soon we are on a call with IFFV. After some discussion, basically IFFV agrees with me – that it would be better to have the Cav working the flanks and rear areas of the NVA than to try shooting it out with main line NVA regiments.

On the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16141 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 one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left skid, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop AH-1G #67-15609 flown by an unnamed crew who were both injured at grid YB998158. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from a 12.7mm type weapon in the engine compartment and fuel cell, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. CPT Tom Lewis, Undertaker 22, remembers:

I will always remember 4 April 1970! I joined B Troop in November as a Cobra pilot. The day prior to this, the Troop had worked this same general area in search of 122mm rocket sites plaguing the SF camp and airstrip. We were diverted to assist an ARVN unit in heavy contact with the NVA, so we knew we were in for more of the same today. As Team Lead of the first team (2 Snakes, 2 LOHs), I was to start working this section of 'rocket ridge' that was north of Kontum but south of Dak To II. The ridge is at the north end of the Ia Drang, only a few kilometers east of the Cambodian border, and was a major route of resupply into the south from the Ho Chi Minh trail. We had refueled at Kontum, so the Cobra was full of fuel, rockets, ammo, everything. Pat Bilyk was my wingman with Rick Guidry in his front seat. As the LOHs started down, I made a quick recon pass through the area we planned to work. On the first pass, we took two hits from what I think must have been at least a 51-cal weapon because they actually kicked the aircraft sideways. Almost immediately the warning lights came on, the low RPM warning horn started sounding, and the controls got stiff. It seems logical to assume the rounds must have cut into the fuel and hydraulics systems. I didn't know it at the time but we had a trail of flame coming from the lower left side of the fuselage. Later Kirk Curran, who was flying the C&C Huey, would describe us as a shooting star heading for a bomb crater! The only good thing I had going for us was that we were already on the downward slope of this mountain ridge and I could see what looked like a small clearing straight ahead. Since it was the only clearing in sight, I knew that that was all we had to work with. A few seconds later, the engine quit. With the controls getting much stiffer and no engine, I knew I'd overshoot the clearing or run out of hydraulics all together. I pretty much zeroed everything out at about 50 feet over the clearing that I now realized was just a bomb crater. As the airspeed dropped to nothing, this huge ball of fire appeared on the left side of the canopy. That's the first I knew that we were on fire. Apparently Kirk and others had been calling us on the radio to tell us about the fire, but with the low RPM horn and all the other things going on in the cockpit, I don't

remember hearing them. I actually got it level and made a no-ground-run-touchdown on the left skid. Then as the aircraft began to settle to the right skid, it collapsed and one of the main blades hit what was left of a tall tree. This flipped the aircraft and it came to rest almost upside down on the right side with a small berm blocking my canopy from opening. When I came to (I think I blacked out for a short time), I started working to get the canopy open but it was blocked. Luckily there was a hole in it so I broke a hole big enough to crawl through. I could smell and feel the fire. I damn near broke my neck three times before I realized my helmet was still plugged into the jack and was keeping me in the cockpit. All I could think about by then was the fire. I got out and starting moving away from the ship. After going about 10 feet I remember thinking – "Oh, I'm by myself..." and turned back to the aircraft. Mark Saum was in the front seat. He was a slick pilot and had only recently decided to fly front seat in Cobras. Rick Guidry was supposed to fly with me that day but he ended up with Pat. Anyway, I couldn't really see Mark still inside the canopy but could hear him yelling something. When I got to his area I could see smoke and fire inside. I carried a small carbine bayonet on my belt and began to stab the canopy (which wouldn't open) in order to break the tensile strength and break it out. When I stabbed the bayonet into the canopy, Mark stopped yelling. I remember thinking – "My God, I've stabbed him!" Luckily I hadn't. With the hole in the canopy, I was able to break away more of it with my hands until I could reach in and help pull him out. We headed down a steep ravine for a stand of bamboo on the edge of the bomb crater. As we got near it, we saw one of the LOHs over us. The terrain was such that we couldn't reach his skids but saw that he was pointing for us to move in a certain direction. About that time the aircraft exploded. I believe all the ammo and fuel must have gone up at once. It was a HUGE EXPLOSION! The LOH crew directed us toward a rocky promontory. It took us 30 - 45 minutes of scrambling to get there. The pilot put one skid on the rock ledge and we got in. Neither Mark nor I were hurt too bad. My biggest problem was a long cut on my chin from my chicken plate. I also had a hole in my left shin from what might have been a spent round. The front seat flex sight had pretty much thrashed Mark. We were both banged up and bruised in lots of places. Medics cleaned us up and checked us out at Pleiku. We were both back in our own bunks that night. The next day I was so stiff and sore I thought I couldn't dress myself. I remember a LOH pilot, Rich Hassman, got a jeep and took me downtown for about three sessions of steam cabinet and massage. After about an hour or so in the steam room I started feeling better and went by the flight surgeon's office to get released to fly. The next day I was flying again in the same area. When we stopped at the Dak To II Special Forces camp to refuel, an SF NCO walked up and said he had watched one of our Cobras go down in flames on the 4th and was sorry for the guys we lost. When I told him I was one of them and we were both OK. We both got a big s#\$& eating grin and he shook my hand. Funny the way things work out.

Also on the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #67-17248 flown by WO1 R.E. Cunningham. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

On takeoff and prior to reaching translational lift, rotor wash raised a portion of PSP. The aircraft's skids were hooked under the raised PSP. This caused damage to skids and cross tubes.

On the 6th, according to the ORLL dated 10 May A Troop stopped working with TF Dagger and worked the Dak Seang and Ben Het areas for the rest of the month. From the 6th to the 10th, C Troop replaced A Troop as part of TF Dagger and worked around Plei Mrong but only made light contact. With all the ACTs working basically north and west of Pleiku and making contact with squad and platoon sized units on almost a daily basis, D Troop was alerted to maintain a standby airmobile reaction force for most of the month. Everyone still remembered B Troop's battle in November near Bu Prang and the general lack of ARVN support. The ORLL concludes by saying that D Troop was not inserted during this standby period.

Also on the 6th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On the morning of the 6th, A Troop began reconnaissance operations in the Dak Seang area. The enemy had moved to within 1000 meters of the camp before being detected, and consequently a more thorough reconnaissance was needed in the area. Elements of A Troop began it's search west of Dak Seang and immediately determined that a force larger than previous estimations had infiltrated from Laos. At coordinates YB881341 an A Troop observation helicopter came under intense AK-47 fire taking one hit. Cobra gunships rolled in expending rockets on numerous bunkers and structures in which an estimated squad size enemy force was entrenched. After the gunship strikes, the scouts attempted to return to the area, but received a heavy volume of enemy fire. The command and control ship immediately called in an air strike on the area, resulting in four (4) bunkers destroyed. A Troop scouts later counted one enemy body for the gunships, but were unable to conduct a more thorough search due to the hostile fire. The troop elements then received an urgent call for assistance from ground forces engaged in a fierce battle six (6) kilometers south of Dan Seang. Upon arriving at the area, the scouts found that contact had been broken. Efforts at locating the main elements of the NVA force were unsuccessful. However, the routes of enemy withdrawal were found and reported to the friendly ground force, greatly assisting them in the operation that followed.

Also on the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07860 flown by an unnamed crew in Laos. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the top cockpit, they made a forced landing and completed the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

Also on the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop AH-1G #67-15652. The decoded details of the record state that the aircraft was parked at the helo pad, where it took one hit from satchel type exploding weapon in the engine compartment. The helicopter was not destroyed. According to the Goldbook database it was repaired in CONUS and returned to serve in Vietnam in Feb 1971 with another unit. SP5 Jim Yamnitz has a photo of this aircraft taken the day after this attack.

Also on the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16605 at grid BR484876. The decoded details of the record state that the aircraft was parked at the helo pad, where it took one hit from satchel type exploding weapon in the cockpit, the helicopter was lost to inventory. SP5 Jim Yamnitz has a photo of the remains of this aircraft taken the day after the attack.

Vito Flitt a Scout with C Troop recalls: I stayed with C Troop at An Khe until I DEROSed in August 1970. I remember the Scouts turned a bunker into a club. I also remember we hadn't been at An Khe very long before the sappers attacked the flight line. We lost a couple of Cobras and had several LOHs if I remember correctly. The day after the attack, I remember we had a mission to recover the bodies of some Special Forces guys in the tri-border area. We found the bodies which were covered by ponchos. Then they brought in a Huey to carry to bodies out.

On the 7th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On the morning of the 7th, elements of A Troop began reconnoitering an area southwest of Dak Seang. Heavy trails indicated that the scouts had found an important infiltration route. Further reconnaissance revealed that two (2) platoons of NVA soldiers had used the trail very recently. At approximately 1100 hours, A Troops' gunships engaged a large enemy force at YB800340. The Cobras received intense fire, but continued to expend rockets and minigun ordnance on the area. Time and time again, the scouts were driven from the area by heavy enemy fire. At 1235 hours, A Troop launched its lift ships with the organic Aero-Rifle platoon in an effort to further develop the situation by means of ground reconnaissance. The ships, however, were forced to execute three (3) go-arounds because of anti-aircraft fire and enemy personnel in the proposed landing zone. After the gunships made several more accurate rockets runs on the prospective

landing zone, it finally appeared to be cold and the lift ships inserted the aero-rifle platoon. The ground soldiers searched the area and found ten (10) NVA bodies along with numerous recoilless rifle and mortar rounds. The infantry also found many enemy weapons and rounds of ammunition. Throughout the remainder of the day, the contact was light. However, after inspecting the light observation helicopters, it was determined that the aircraft had received numerous small arms hits.

The following is an edited version of article titled "7/17th Air Cavalry Kills 10 NVA Northwest of Dak To" dated sometime between June and September 1970 and believed to be from the Army Times.

Camp Holloway, Vietnam - Ruthless Riders of the 17th CAG, A/7/17th Cav, while working in support of the 24th ARVN, killed 10 NVA soldiers and captured numerous enemy arms 15 miles west northwest of Dak To Number Two on April 7. Around 10 a.m., Cobra gunships led by MAJ Robert L. Rackley, of Ashville, NC, started flying over valleys and hillsides covered with triple canopy jungle and concentrating in an area where enemy were numerous. About 15 enemy soldiers were spotted from an unknown size element which was operating in the area. The lead LOH came upon a heavily used trail and saw five individuals wearing green fatigues, sitting by their field packs with mortar rounds laying by them. Lead scout pilot Thomas E. O'Neil of Columbia, OH, had his observer mark the spot with a grenade. Two Cobra gunships flown by CWO Maurice J. Sanchez, of Susanville, CA, and James D. Chapman, of Woodworth, WI, made two runs over the position killing four enemy soldiers. A LOH team lead by CWO Gary B. Enderle of Chilicothe, OH, moved in and started sweeping an area where an ARP was going to be inserted. CWO Enderle, spotted some movement from a tree line and came upon several NVA wearing fatigues and carrying AK-47s. His minigun killed one of them. By this time lift ships were inserting the ARP members who started receiving heavy enemy fire as soon as they were on the ground. Ground troops led by SSG Thomas F. Wells of Jersey City, NJ, swept the area and found a pistol belt, nine mortar rounds, four recoilless rifles, 700 pounds of rice, two home made grenades, 6 boxes of AK-47 rounds, three boxes of dynamite, and the bodies of enemy soldiers killed earlier by Cobra gunships. O'Neil found two more and killed them with his minigun. The ARP was finally extracted along with captured weapons and ammunition. There were no friendly casualties.

Also on the 7th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16553 flown by an unknown crew in Laos. The decoded details of the record state that this was an armed recon mission, while at an altitude of 10 feet with an airspeed of 10 knots over the target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom engine compartment and left cockpit areas. They continued the mission. The helicopter was repaired in theater by the 604th TC Company who submitted the record.

On the 8th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On 8 April, the 22^d and the 23rd ARVN Ranger Battalions were experiencing heavy attacks from NVA forces. The 22nd Battalion, located on Hill 763, coordinates YB893325 and the 23rd Battalion located on Hill 629, coordinates YB902329, were attempting to link up and repel the attack. The A Troop scout ships began screening for the units, and received continuous fire from enemy units. The cobra gunships made rocket runs on the hostile positions but to no avail. The A Troop command and control ship called in airstrikes on the area, but the determined enemy was strongly entrenched. A Troop began a screening mission to the east of the area, and helped guide the beleaguered friendly forces from the overwhelming odds that prevailed. The scouts suffered numerous aircraft hits, but never waivered in their mission. Undoubtedly, the ground forces would have never made it out of the battle area without the courageous effort from A Troop. Later in the day the Troop moved further south in support of forces from Ben Het. The scouts found many high-speed trails and recently used foxholes and bunkers. All available information was relayed to the intelligence personnel for analysis.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16361 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon

mission, while at an altitude of 10 feet and 30 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right bottom cockpit, right bottom engine compartment, main rotor blade system, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16136 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while attack the on target, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

The following article titled "A Big 'Whooy' as Shot-Up Huey Lands" appeared in the Friday April 10 issue of the Pacific Stars & Stripes:

Saigon (Special) - Cool thinking and some old-fashioned "seat of the pants" flying saved a 17th Combat Aviation Group Huey helicopter from destruction after it was heavily damaged by enemy ground fire, U.S. spokesmen reported. The dramatic incident began over the dense forests of Vietnam's Central Highlands when the chopper, carrying crew and four passengers including two colonels, swept over a ridgeline southwest of Dak To. "We were waiting to observe results of an artillery barrage when we started receiving .30 caliber fire," said WO Ronald Stokes of B Troop, 7th Sq., 17th Air Cav. "Suddenly I was facing an instrument panel full of blinking lights and a dropping oil pressure gauge," he added. The helicopter shuddered under the impact of a second long burst of fire and Stokes felt the controls go stiff as the hydraulic system lost its vital fluids. With the runway in sight, Stokes was concentrating on his descent when he found he no longer had control of the tail rotor. "My pedals weren't functioning properly and I couldn't keep the ship from angling off to the left," Stokes recalled. "Finally, as I reduced the main rotor's pitch, the nose spun to the right." Instead of fighting the spin itself, Stokes concentrated on keeping the helicopter level and let it glide down onto the runway. The Huey, laden with 1,200 pounds of fuel, came to a safe stop and the passengers and crew scrambled out unharmed.

On the 9th, the ORLL dated 10 May states that the Sqdn Communications Platoon sent an AN/GRC-106 and two operators to Tan Canh. It was still in operation there at the end of April.

On the 10th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On 10 April, following a maintenance-down day, A Troop resumed its visual mission. While conducting a visual reconnaissance at coordinates YB894107, an A Troop scout received intense automatic weapons fire. The scout circled the area and found one (1) NVA soldier and engaged him, resulting in one KIA. Further search of the area revealed many caves, bunkers, and indications of very recent enemy activity. Going further north, at coordinates YB885175 the scouts discovered numerous bunkers and rocket sites. The gunships expended on the area resulting in five (5) bunkers destroyed. The visual reconnaissance was extended to include areas to the north and northwest of the bunker complex, with numerous findings reported during the remainder of the day.

On the 11th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On 11 April, A Troop began its visual reconnaissance to the south of Ben Het uncovering numerous small trails. However, the general area was free of enemy activity. Later, at 1410 hours, an A Troop scout received heavy AK-47 fire and crashed. The uninjured crewmen were quickly extracted by rope ladder from a hastily cut landing zone. The imminent battle never materialized however, because of an urgent call for help from a Civilian Irregular Defense Group unit for an immediate extraction. The A Troop lift ships, guided by the scouts and covered by the cobras, began the extraction at 1530 hours and finished at 1625 hours. The intrepid crews, disregarding the deadly enemy fusillade, safely extracted 110 allied soldiers, saving them from certain death or capture.

Also on the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #65-12942 flown by an unnamed crew at grid YB854175. The decoded details of the record state

that this was a recon mission, while hovering in the AO, they took one hit from an unknown source, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

Also on the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17790 flown by an unnamed crew in Laos. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 10 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

From the 11th to the last week of the month, C Troop returned to support the 173rd Abn in its efforts against the 3rd NVA Div.

On the 11th, **SP4 Alonzo Garrett** was killed while flying in a C Troop LOH piloted by WO Chick Harrington in the Soui Ca Valley. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 26 Oct 1969 and his MOS as 11D2F. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with fatality record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16573 at grid BR806651. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 90 knots of airspeed, they took several hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

CPT Pete Kacerguis recalls: I was Mission Lead (C&C) that day. Their LOH was making its second pass over a suspected NVA position (believed to be part of the 3rd NVA "Yellow Star" Division, in the Soui Cau Valley, north of Qui Nhon), when he was hit in the chest by a .51 Cal machine gun. The rounds went right through his chicken plate. The LOH crashed about 500 yards from where the enemy gun position. With cover from two Cobras and the second LOH, we landed the C&C (UH-1H) and recovered his body just as the ship exploded. The rest of the crew escaped with minor injuries suffered in the crash.

CPT Barry Speare recalls: I was the team leader for the second team. We were staging out of LZ Two-bits but we refueled at LZ Uplift. As soon as we learned there was a bird down, we scrambled. Now Two-bits was near the northern entrance to the Suoi Ca Valley. We were on station in about 10 minutes. The C&C ship was able to extract the pilot and Garrett's body. We all went back to Uplift which had B Med for the Airborne Battalion. While we were there I went over an IDed Garrett's body. I believe I remember Chick Harrington had burns on his hands.

Vito Flitt recalls: I remember going out to the AO in the replacement LOH. I saw LOH 573 when they brought the wreckage back to base. There was just no way to repair that LOH.

SP4 James Irvine wrote in his letter home: 'We had a man get killed yesterday. He was flying a helicopter when he took fire. He had a leg blown off and his chest and back blown out. He was hit by three 51 caliber rounds. We had another helicopter shot down today. They were able to fly it back out though. We have found a regiment of NVA. We are supposed to be hit by VC and sappers tonight. I'm carrying the radio for the reaction force.'

On the 12th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On 12 April, the yellowcrafts began working northwest of Hill 763. The NVA forces were infiltrating to the southeast toward Hill 763, and the scouts were employed to cut the infiltration routes. At 1545 hours, an A Troop scout ship was shot down at coordinates YB853347. His wingman also received numerous hits, but continued to search for the downed crew. The enemy fire was extremely intense, and airstrikes were called in continuously in a futile attempt to subdue the intense enemy fire. Moments later, another scout received hits while attempting to find some sign of the downed crew. The enemy resistance continued throughout the day and because of the many other battles in the Dak Seang area, a sufficient ground force was not available to react to the NVA uprising. The cobra gunships were employed in order to cover an insertion of the A Troop Aero-Rifle platoon. However, the triple canopied jungle, poor weather, and a lack of a reaction element forced the cavalrymen to discontinue the search efforts.

Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with a POW report record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16634 at grid YB853347 flown by **CPT Gus Blakely Robinson** and SSG Robert E. Tabb. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 17 Nov 1969 and his MOS as 1204. The decode Helicopter database record states they were on an armed recon combat mission in Vietnam (east and south of Dak To) and while over the target at an altitude of 10 feet with an airspeed of 20 knots that took a large number of hits from unknown type weapons that caused them to crash. The helicopter burned and was destroyed. CPT Robinson was killed and SSG Tabb became a POW of the NVA. Also for the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database also has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07860 flown by an unnamed crew that had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left bottom cockpit and main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was recovered to Dak To and repaired in theater. This is the second LOH mentioned in the unit history and was CPT Robinson's wingman. The A Troop unit history states that because of the terrain, heavy fighting, and other forces in the area; they could not complete the search for the downed crew. It wasn't until the 14th and then only after many of the Lift ships were hit that 14 Blues were inserted. They found Gus's body in the wreckage but the observer SSG Tabb was not found. They also came upon an NVA AA team in a bunker and quickly killed them. Tabb was listed as MIA and was, indeed, captured. He was kept by the NVA and released in March 1973. If anyone learns where SSG Tabb is now living, they are encouraged to contact Mike Law who is very interested in adding his first person information to this history.

CPT Gary Downs recalls: Gus and I were West Point Classmates and had been through a lot together. The events surrounding his death are some of the strongest memories I have of Vietnam. Two NVA Regts had had the SF camp at Dak Seang under siege for some time. During that period NOTHING was getting in and out of the camp without getting shot down. I remember when things quieted down that there was a medevac, another Huey and two wrecked Caribou on the runway. We worked the flanks of the battle most of the time. We are always putting in airstrikes or shooting lots of artillery and doing BDAs for Arclights. I wasn't flying the day Gus was shot down but I was the next two days. It took us that long to get our Blues into the area. They had to blow an LZ with a 5,000 Daisy Cutter near the top of Hill 763 for us to get the Blues in. They found an NVA AA crew in a bunker and killed them before they could get the gun operational again. We displayed it outside our place at Holloway for some time after that. They found that Gus' LOH had rolled down the hill and that he was still strapped inside. He had two bullets in the head, so it was no wonder that it crashed. The Blues also found Tabb's shirt in a tree, so we figured he had been captured. I'll never forget that valley north of Dak To. It was very beautiful, but you never had any trouble drawing fire there!

Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16536 flown by an unnamed crew who had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left engine compartment, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired. This is the third battle damage record for an A Troop LOH on this day.

Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop AH-1G #67-15607 flown by an unnamed crew in Laos. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, bottom and forward fuselage, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. For this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16453 flown by unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon missions, during the attack on target, they took

one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom tail section, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #66-17808 flown by an unnamed crew who had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

On the 13th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On 13 April, A Troop elements arrived in the Dak Seang area again attempting to locate the missing crewmen shot down the previous day at coordinates YB853347. Coordination with the Air Force to clear a landing zone in the immediate vicinity of the crash site was completed. Large bombs were used to clear a landing zone, but the continual resistance by the enemy forces hindered operations in the area. The scouts continued their attempt to find the enemy strong points, never failed to receive a heavy volume of enemy fire from the immediate area.

Also on the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16027 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system and tail section, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

Also on the 13th, the following fourteen C Troopers were awarded the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) via HQ USARV Special Orders 103 dated 13 April 1970: SP4 John D. Donaldson, PFC Johnnie Miney, PFC Vern L. Ostrander, PFC Gregory Papineau, PFC Robert L. Schiefen, PFC Randy S. Godfrey, PFC Terry L. Kah1, PFC Douglas J. Guillaume, PFC Thomas Glassburn, PFC Ronnie L. Hutchins, PFC Rodney Lindell, PFC James B. Irvine, PFC Wendell D. Irving, and PFC Samuel Rairden. Doug Guillaume provided a copy of this award and believes all these men were serving with C Troop's Blues at the time.

On the 14th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On the 14th of April, the A Troop scouts again began attempts to reach the downed crew. Making several passes over the area, only light fire was received and the decision was reached to insert the organic aero-rifle platoon. At 1000 hours, the aero-rifle platoon was inserted. The second ship in the flight received very heavy fire and was forced to abort the insertion, leaving the area to make an emergency landing. The remainder of the platoon, a total of fourteen (14) men, were then inserted. The crippled aircraft made it to Dak Seang and landed amidst heavy recoilless rifle fire. The lead ship had followed the disabled aircraft and successfully rescued the crew and passengers from the besieged camp. The troop efforts were then directed to the aero-rifle platoon in the landing zone. The platoon began moving to the northeast, encountering occasional sniper fire, while the scouts hovering above received continuous intense enemy fire from the southern portion of the landing zone. Upon arrival at the crash site, the platoon reported the discovery of the pilot's body, with no sign of the observer. They then worked their way back to the landing zone and began receiving heavy fire. Working their way around the clearer area, the first squad came upon the anti-aircraft weapon and the NVA soldiers operating it. They immediately silenced the enemy and killed the other NVA soldiers in their bunkers. At 1246 hours, the extraction was begun with occasional fire from other areas of the landing zone, but without further injury to members of the troop. The pilot's body was immediately flown back to home station.

For their action on the 14th, A Troop's Blues were awarded the Army Commendation Medal with 'V' for heroism via HQ 1st Aviation Brigade General Orders 7022 dated 21 July 1970. The citation reads in part – these men distinguished themselves by exceptionally valorous actions while serving with an aero-rifle platoon when they were inserted on an enemy-infested hill to recover the bodies of two downed aviators. Moving down the enemy-infested slope, they received sporadic enemy automatic

weapons fire and with complete disregard for their own safety, they placed accurate suppressive fire to insure the safety of the platoon. After recovering the body of the pilot and finding no trace of the observer, they moved back up the hill where they once again encountered heavy enemy fire. They placed covering fire and neutralized an enemy anti-aircraft position, eliminating three enemy soldiers and capturing an enemy machinegun. Their undaunted courage and composure under fire were instrumental in the success of this mission without further Allied casualties. The following were listed for this award [members of the platoon added the nicknames and duties]: PFC Harold D. McCoy, PFC James H. Thurmond, PFC Anthony Morton, PFC Albert L. Regan, SP4 Rudie R. Ortega, PFC Wilnes 'Professor' Plactacis, SP4 James 'Cowboy' McGowan who was the RTO, SGT William A. Devries, SFC Roger L. Runyon, PFC Michael S. Burkland, SP4 Calvin McGee, PFC Stuart 'Young Blood' C. Furman, and SP4 Jimmy Simmons.

SSG Tom Wells wrote the following piece he calls 'Getting in and out of Dodge:' In April of 1970, A Troop was in support of a siege at the Dak Seang Special Forces camp. It was surrounded by a division of NVA. Approximately a week before this the Blues received a new Captain and Platoon Sergeant. There was quite a battle going on. The Air Force and the artillery were pounding the area and we were getting numerous hits on our scouts who were directing most of the fire. On the 12th of April, a scout helicopter went down with CPT Robinson and SSG Tabb. We tried to get in for the next two days. It was quite a bombardment. They even came in and dropped a daisy cutter, which is a 10,000 pound bomb flown in by a C-130 and is extracted by parachute from the C-130. Numerous NVA were killed. Our initial staging area for this operation was at Dak To, but after CPT Roberts ship went down we moved to another base that was much closer. I believe we were at Ben Het. PFC Tony Morton remembers that they had 175 mm howitzers at this base. He was impressed with those guns! We moved there because we would be closer to the action and we would be able to get in quicker. They were using everything they had to quiet the area and to make an LZ for us. They were only able to make a one ship LZ with all their efforts. On the 14th of April we finally got word to insert the Blues. The captain said that he wasn't going. I had no time to discuss this with him so we hooked up and left the staging area. My Kit Carson scout and the Captain were the only people left at the staging area. I was on the first ship going in. After we landed, we moved up the incline to make room for the other ships coming in. It was only a one ship LZ. The second ship received numerous hits from the top of the hill. We immediately responded with suppressive fire. The second ship never landed. It was spewing fuel as it went down the valley toward Dak Seang, about three miles away. The third and fourth ships made it in without any hits. The enemy stopped firing. I was then asked by the C&C if we wanted to be lifted out. I declined and indicated that we would continue the mission. We moved down a couple hundred yards where the helicopter crashed. We found CPT Robinson's body, but no sign of SSG Tabb. CPT Robinson's body had been booby trapped. I took care of the booby traps and we started removing his body. I noticed his right leg had a compound fracture and he had no boots. I thought he would never be taken a prisoner with his right leg broken like that and then noticed that he had a bullet hole in the back of his head. We then started to search for SSG Tabb, going so far as to yelling for him. We found his shirt hanging from a tree. We thought perhaps the NVA had put it up there to draw in the ships so they could fire on them. We looked about a hundred yards in three different directions, but came up with nothing. After two days, I thought he was captured. He might have been unconscious after the crash and taken prisoner. The area was crawling with NVA and capable of moving him out quickly. We started receiving fire from the top of the hill and the guns rolled in. We continued moving up. I told SGT Dion Soliz to take the left flank and move his squad up that side of the hill. The men called him SGT Rock. He had spent some time with the 101st ABN. He was tough and I could always depend upon him. As we approached the top near the LZ, there was a huge grass fire that we had to move through. Upon reaching the other side we could hear the enemy yelling in the bunkers. I took off my web gear, grabbed a 45 and a baseball hand grenade, which I didn't realize had a short fuse.

I pulled the pin and went up the hill toward the position. I could see the three enemy soldiers lining up the AA gun down toward us and were about ready to fire. I threw the grenade which air burst over their heads and killed all three of them. I dove away from the line of fire back down the hill. I then got a call from the C&C that they were going to insert Delta Troop. I told them not to do that since we had things under control. This was a trap and I didn't want any more troops coming into the area. I felt that I had already lost the second lift ship, and we didn't need any more casualties. We then moved up the hill and secured the area. I told SGT Soliz to throw hand grenades at anything that looked like an opening, so we spent some time knocking out bunkers and tunnels. We didn't need any NVA popping out on us. We scoped out the area. I could see other AA emplacements. A couple of 51's, and what looked like 12.7mm up the slope under the vegetation. They had all been destroyed by the Air Force, the artillery or our guns. There was no movement of enemy troops to be seen. I then received another call from C&C saying they were going to drop a night packet of ammo and water to us. I told them that I didn't need it and that we were ready to come out. I thought they were trying the old bait and hook, sending in a small unit and drawing enemy into the area. They said they had to check with a higher command. I then formulated a plan of escape and invasion to Dak Seang, about 3 miles away, which was all downhill. (I had spent 18 months on my first tour in 1965. I was in one of the first formed L.R.R.P. units for a year, and then six months as an instructor at the Special Forces recon school in the Nha Trang.) It was eerie and quiet. I knew this was not a healthy place to stay that night. We received a radio call that they found enough lift ships to get us out. I told them to "Come on in!" The firing had stopped and things were calm. The first ship was from the 101st ABN. It was only hovering, making it difficult to load the captured AA gun and CPT Robinson's body. PFC Morton, being tall, was able to get on the ship, but he was the only one. The next ship was from A Troop. He landed and we loaded. The rest came in and landed. I was on the last ship that left and we all got out of Dodge. The new Captain and Platoon Sergeant found new jobs that day and never returned to the Blues. I extended six more months and led the Blues until November 1970.

PFC Tony Morton recalls: I had been in the Blues since January. When I first joined the platoon, they looked at my size and gave me the M-60. For the first month or so I was the 2nd Squad but joined the 1st Squad (called the Point Squad) to replace a guy who ETSed. On the day CPT Robinson was shot down we were staged at another base but they moved us up closer to the hill where he had gone down. This was the first time I'd been on the same base with 175-mm guns firing. The rest of that day and all of the next the Blues sat and watched the Air Force, the Cobras, and the artillery pound that hill. We went back home each night. On the third day, in the afternoon, we were inserted. I was on the first Huey with SSG Tom Wells who was the platoon leader. Even though he was an E-6 and SFC Runyon was an E-7, Wells was much more experienced and Runyon was smart enough to 'step aside' and let Wells run the operations. We had a Kit Carson Scout named 'Dick' who was also in the Point Squad. He was a good guy. I remember the Blues were getting nervous with all the waiting and we were worried that we couldn't get in. The first ship didn't take any fire but we watched the second ship take lots of fire. It didn't land and had WIAs on it. Watching it fly off, I feared that the 3rd and 4th would not be able to get in as well. Both ships did make it in, so we had 16 Blues on the ground. We had two guys who had served with the 1st ID and joined us after that unit stood-down. One was SGT Devries. During the insert, the NVA would fire at the Hueys but not at us. We moved about half way down the hill to the LOH. That took us about 15 to 20 minutes. While the top of the hill had been bombed, the vegetation on the rest of it was heavy. CPT Robinson was still in the LOH. I remember seeing that the NVA had taken his boots. His body had been rigged with a booby trap but it was very obvious. One of the ship's WPs was tied with a string. SSG Wells took care of that. There were no more booby traps. We put his body in a bag and started looking for SGT Tabb. About 50 yards down the hill we found his shirt but nothing else. We stayed in the area for about an hour looking for SGT Tabb. The aircraft detected

movement near the top of the hill and started firing. This was the first time I'd been on the ground when the Cobras were firing near us. I remember dirt and rocks flying all around. You could feel the concussion blasts. I remember SSG Wells saying that we might have to go to yet another area to be extracted. Eventually they stopped firing and we moved into that area without seeing any signs of the NVA. When we got the top of the hill, we found the vegetation was on fire. It wasn't a wall of frame but it was a couple feet high and we had to get across that to the PZ. I had my M60 in one hand and one handle of the body bag in the other. There were six guys carrying the bag and we ran through the fire then fell into a bomb crater. Don't ask me why, but I remember checking to see if my mustash was still there. We saw the back of this NVA bunker about 20 feet away and we could hear them talking. We must have surprised them because they weren't prepared for us at all. I know we scared them and we were certainly scared as well. A few second, SSG Wells and PFC Stimman (?) also heard the NVA and started firing into the appature of the bunker. We could see the 30-cal machine gun pointing away from us but could tell they were trying to swing it around to fire on us. SSG Wells put a grenade in the bunker and killed all of them. We quickly took the gun and moved to the PZ. I was on the first ship which was from the 101st ABN with the gun and the body. They used six ships for the extraction. I remember the Cobras were firing up part of the hill but don't recall receiving any fire. They took us back to Dak To and later that night went back home. The only Blue that was injured was PFC Stimman and he only had a flesh wound but he received a Purple Heart. SSG Wells received a Silver Star for his actions.

1LT David Sims, after reading the above accounts from Tommy Wells and Tony Morton, provided these details: The AC of Chalk 2, the second Huey, was a Squadron SIP and I don't recall his name. The other pilot was a CW2, so both were experienced Huey pilots. On short final they started taking hits. Apparently they'd over-flown a spider hole and the guy in it had a machine gun. He really stitched up the bottom of the Huey resulting in two WIAs from the Blues on board. I saw the Huey turn the other way from the pattern we planned to use. Then he radioed that he would make a forced landing at Dak Seang. I was behind him. They landed. Everyone jumps out and takes cover in a ditch that ran alongside the runway. I landed about 100 yards behind their Huey. I just sat there but they wouldn't come to my ship! Then I noticed SA fire hitting the ground near-by. I seem to recall seeing some explosions from incoming NVA mortar fire and maybe an NVA recoilless rifle. I remember seeing some Cobras working the tree line. After a few seconds I picked up and took off to avoid the mortar fire. I think about that time our Chalk 3 almost had a mid-air with a Cobra. Since they were recovering from that experience, I was the only Huey available. I land in front of the downed Huey. This time they did run to get onto my ship. So we had the two aircrews (8 people), five Blues (2 were WIA) and suddenly two Vietnamese men plus a woman with a baby get in as well. We lift off down the runway dodging pallets of supplies that had been parachuted in but not retrieved. We landed everyone at Dak To. I remember that the Captain who was to take over the Blues being a new guy and he suddenly was sent to a staff job someplace.

SSG Tom Wells wrote the following piece he calls 'The Saving of 16 Souls:' During the time we were engaged in the recovery mission for CPT Robinson and SSG Tabb 1LT David Sims was courageously making a plan to rescue the second ship which landed on Dak Seang's airstrip. Although I wasn't there, I heard that the second ship was completely out of fuel when it crash landed on the airstrip. They were between a rock and a hard place. Dak Seang was under siege and they were taking fire continuously. Since the ship lacked fuel, it didn't blow up. They had gotten off the ship into a drainage ditch along the airstrip while taking heavy fire. LT Sims took his ship and crew into the jaws of hell that day. He landed on the airstrip and loaded five of our infantry, of which there were two wounded, plus the four crew members from the downed Huey. Out of nowhere, while they were loading, a Vietnamese officer, his wife and small child came out of the camp and loaded on the aircraft. There was no time to decide who had priority on the ship. LT Sims pulled the aircraft off the airstrip, taking treetops with him at the end of the runway, and lifted 16

souls out of hell that day. 1LT Sims and I received Silver Star impact awards for that day's action. SGT Dion Soliz received a Bronze Star with V. I would like to thank LT Sims for rescuing the second ship, and to thank all the men that I served with in the CAV as a Platoon Sergeant/Platoon leader. In the 18 months, I never lost a single man under me. Thanks to your support, heroic efforts and risk of your own lives, you made it all possible.

SP4 Ken Boesenberg recalls: I was an 11B40. I came in country in July 1969 and served with the Big Red One until they went home. Then I was sent to join A Troop's Blues. I was shot in April 1970 and sent home because of my wounds. //Need exact date and details.// Via 1st Avn Bde General Orders number 5628 dated 27 June 1970 the following individuals were awarded ????: SP4 Ken Boesenberg, SP4 Hector Dominguez, SP4 Jerry Jones, PFC Lewis Lowe, and SP5 Joseph I. Perry. An edited version of the citation reads: "For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force, these men distinguished themselves by exceptionally valorous actions while on a combat assault southwest of Dak Seang. The helicopter in which they were riding came under heavy hostile fire and due to heavy damage, the pilot was forced to make an emergency landing at an Allied base. As the aircraft settled to the ground, the base came under a mortar and recoilless rifle fire, and these men immediately engaged the enemy positions. When a rescue helicopter was forced to abort its landing due to heavy enemy fire, they continued to place fire on the hostile positions, enabling the aircraft to land and pick up the downed soldiers. Their courageous performance and devotion to duty were exemplary."

Also on the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07786 flown by an unnamed crew who had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, right engine compartment, main rotor blade system, and ammunition, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

Also on the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16498 flown by WO1 M.L. Wagner and Instructor Pilot CPT R. Martines. The record makes reference to an unnamed passenger but this is most likely an error. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

At 1530 hours CPT Martines and WO1 Wagner departed Holloway for a post accident check ride for WO1 Wagner. After all maneuvers were completed, CPT Martines and WO1 Wagner proceeded to the Christmas Tree to refuel. After refueling, the tower cleared them to B Troop's OH-6A revetment area. CPT Martines was flying at the time the aircraft was parked in the revetment. CPT Martines then checked to see if the aircraft was completely in the revetment. It was not completely in the revetment so CPT Martines applied power to move the aircraft into the revetment. As the aircraft became light on the skids the nose of the aircraft turned to the right. The aircraft turned 30 degrees and CPT Martines smoothly applied full left anti-torque pedal. The aircraft continued to turn another 10 degrees and drifted approximately 2 feet to the left. The tail rotor made contact with the sandbags on the top of the revetment. The aircraft came to rest about 40 degrees to the right of the revetment heading. CPT Martines shut down the engine and both pilots exited the aircraft. There was no post accident fire and there were no injuries. The prevailing winds were 5-10 knots from 110 degrees. CPT Martines' initial heading into the revetment was 230 degrees.

CPT Marty Martines provides: Now I'll tell you what really happened that day. Some time prior to this, we were instructed NOT to hover the OH-6As into a revetment that had metal plates on the aircraft parking position. When you lower the collective to land a hovering OH-6A on a metal plated surface, the metal skids on the OH-6A slide on the metal plate. The instructions directed us to land the OH-6A outside the revetment and shut down. The crewchief would then attach the ground wheels and move the aircraft into the revetment. After the check ride, I landed outside the revetment and the crewchief was standing there with the ground wheels. He motioned for me to hover the

LOH into the revement. I thought to myself – I have lots of experience in the LOH (I'd been flying them for 17 months at this point) – I can do it. So I did. Turn to form, the aircraft slid to the left when I lowered the collective and the tail rotor hit the sandbags. Dust went flying everywhere! I thought we were on fire and said to WO Wagner – get out, we're on fire. Well, we weren't. I seem to recall the crewchief just walking away at that point. So I was giving WO Warner a post accident check ride and I have an accident myself! I remember being grounded for about a week. I remember taking a lot of gaff from the other IPs I lived with – Marty's an SIP but he doesn't follow the rules. I remember having a 'chat' with either the Squadron CO or XO. Well, this required that I have a check ride from another OH-6A SIP and they couldn't find one in I Corps or II Corps. Finally a guy from III Corps comes up, gives me a check ride, then I can fly again. I would DEROS the next month, in May. But I was 'famous' with many of my friends because of this accident.

The ORLL dated 10 May mentions this accident and states: The aircraft struck the side of a revetment while Standardization Instructor Pilot CPT Martines was attempting to park under downwind conditions causing major damage to the aircraft. There were no injuries.

On the 14th, C Troop was diverted to help a downed 498th Med DUSTOFF that had been forced down while trying to pick up a couple 173rd ABN troopers. This was northwest of LZ English on a plain near the side of a hill covered by large boulders with caves. The enemy was shooting from the caves and had pinned down the infantry. They had shot up the DUSTOFF ship to the point it couldn't be flown any more.

CPT Barry Speare recalls: I was flying lead on the second Scout team. I don't recall who was flying my wing. When we arrived the second DUSTOFF was trying to get in but was also taking fire. So we put our LOH in between the cave and the DUSTOFF. Naturally, we could return fire and did this while the DUSTOFF landed. They were able to extract not only the WIAs but also the DUSTOFF crew. Once they were on the ground, we moved up the hover over the caves. Later I received a DFC for this mission.

On the 15th, the A Troop VUC Recommendation states: On 15 April, the elements of A Troop began working the high ground east of Dak Seang and found many fresh bunkers with the capability of withstanding sever air attacks. At 1320 hours at coordinates YB926428, another A Troop scout ship received heavy enemy fire and crashed. The gunships immediately moved in the area placing heavy suppressive fire on the enemy positions. The wind scout and the replacement scout dropped their observers at the crash site to assist in the rescue efforts. The observer was killed in the crash and the injured pilot was unable to assist himself. However, the observers and a squad from the aero-rifle platoon, which repelled in, cut a landing zone and the body of the observer was extracted and the pilot was rescued. While on the ground, the platoon discovered six (6) NVA bodies, numerous packs and twelve (12) weapons. At 1530 hours, the lift helicopters removed the troops from the crash site. Continuing the reconnaissance, the remaining scout ships again received fire from the immediate area, but were unable to determine the exact location of the enemy. Repeated rocket runs on the area produced many secondary explosions, with the cobras receiving light anti-aircraft fire.

Also on the 15th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with fatality record for A Troop LOH #67-16553 at grid YB923415. The observer **SP4 Larry Ray Slagle** was killed but the injured pilot, CW2 Ken Meyer, was rescued. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 20 feet, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail section and crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The Wall database states that Larry's MOS was 11D2F and his tour in Vietnam started on 26 July 1969.

CW2 Ken Meyer provides: I don't have a clear memory of the events of 15 April. I believe I was flying wing to CW2 Gary Enderle. He was certainly a much more experienced Scout pilot. I have the feeling that SP4 Slagle had only been flying with the Scouts for a short period of time. We were

flying a minigun ship that day and Larry was armed with a Car-15. I think it was late morning. I recall that the mission was a typical cavalry reconnaissance and we were working a ridgeline. I don't recall that we were in a major firefight, but I do remember taking fire and Larry getting the smoke out. I nosed the aircraft over to exit the area but didn't get very far before the engine quit. I remember the tail hitting the trees. They were tall trees and we started down. The last thing I remember is this huge CRACK sound. When I came too, I was still strapped in what was left of the LOH. The skids must have stripped off because the floor of the helicopter was resting on the ground. I could see Larry laying face down about 20 yards from me. I don't recall that he had any gunshot wounds. He still had his chicken plate. Some of his uniform was flipped up so I could see some of his exposed skin near his mid-section. I noticed he was breathing. I remember thinking that I needed to get to him. About this time I looked down at my right leg and noticed it was laying at a weird angle and there was a tree across my lap. I wasn't in any pain until I tried to move. My right femur was broken. I blacked out and came too a few times during the next 30 or 40 minutes I was on the ground. I was able to unstrap myself and crawl out of the wreckage toward Larry but I never made it to him. I remember taking out my 38 pistol and hoping the NVA wouldn't find us. I was also talking to the aircraft on my emergency radio. I remember seeing the DUSTOFF ship overhead. They sent their medic down on the jungle penetrator. I actually heard him coming towards me in the brush and remember pointing the 38 at the sound. After he checked me out briefly, he went to Larry; but he was not breathing anymore. Other than the broken leg, I had a cut lip from the chicken plate but they didn't even put a stitch in it. I believe I was in the hospital at Holloway for two or three days, then on to Japan and finally eleven months at Fitzsimmons Hospital in Denver. I was released from active duty but flew OH-6As again for the South Dakota Guard. I took over my father's construction business and eventually retired from the Guard.

SSG Tom Wells wrote the following piece he calls 'The long repel:' On the 15th of April 1970, we were back at the Dak To airstrip in support of Dak Seang, when one of our scout helicopters was shot down in the Dak Seang area. There was no LZ to make the rescue. I volunteered, with three of my men, PFC Hasley, SP4 Smith and SP4 McGowan, to repel in for the rescue. I was told that it was a long way down with lots of trees. We took the ship with the four 100-ft. ropes, which was the longest we had. We took a radio with us, and a chainsaw which we would need to cut trees to get out. Four of us sat on each end of the doors with our feet on the skids. We flew over once and then came back around. We stopped, and I yelled, "Go!" All four of us left the ship. The ropes were 100 feet long, but not quite long enough. When we reached the end of the ropes, we fell another 10 feet. The ship left the area. We were on our own. I checked on the RTO and SP4 Smith who had the chainsaw. They were all okay. I took the point and we moved toward the downed ship. About 100 yards down we encountered about a dozen NVA heading for the ship. We took them under fire and killed about four, and wounded some. They turned around and moved back up the slope. We didn't have time to fight over real estate. We were on a rescue mission. We popped a purple smoke and told the guns to roll in 300 yards to the northeast of the smoke. It looked like a large congregation of troops up the slope where they were heading. We continued moving to the ship. I noticed a mound approximately 40 feet high with trees on it, which was about 100 yards from the ship, a good place for an extraction. We got to the downed aircraft. The pilot was nervous and wanted out. The crew member, SP4 Slagle, was dead and was still in the twisted wreckage. I called for a Medivac and got a really quick response. They dropped a harness to us. We put the pilot in it and got him out of there. The flyboys didn't like being on the ground. Nothing derogatory – I was 27 years old and older than most of them. A pilot would fly through hell, but he didn't like walking through it. We continued working on removing SP4 Slagle out of the wreckage. I took my rope harness off, from the repel, and tied SP4 Slagle so that when the ship came in they could easily remove him. The ship arrived and dropped a rope to us. We attached their rope for quick extraction. They informed us that they were going to drop a rope ladder for us to climb up to help pull him in. They didn't want the

body to be seen going into Dak To since it might hurt the morale of the men on the airstrip. Our morale was rather low at this time also. We were tired and I didn't think we would make it up the rope with all the equipment we had to remove. I told PFC Hasley to open up with the M-60 we had taken out of the ship, and told SP4 McGowan to yell "Taking fire" into the radio. They left the area quickly because they thought we were taking fire. It started to rain hard as we were getting the rest of the equipment out of the wreckage. We then started to move back up the slope to the location where I saw the mound. We moved to the top of the mound and started cutting trees. I called for an extraction. The sun came out. A ship appeared and was coming to get us. We talked the pilot down. He was able to put one skid of the ship on the mound and we climbed aboard. I was the last one getting on when the gunners opened up on enemy troops moving into our area. The ship jolted and came back down. I got aboard. I pulled a smoke off the radio. As we pulled out I popped it and dropped it where we were at. I then told the pilot to have someone direct artillery at the smoke because they were closing in on us. That was the end of the long repel. Bronze Stars with V device were awarded for this action to SP4 McGowan, SP4 Smith and PFC Hasley. I received my 5th oak leaf cluster. SP4 McGowan was the best RTO that I ever had in my 28 years in the army. He was cool and calm under fire and kept the C&C off my back with chit chat when we were busy dealing with the enemy on the ground. SP4 Smith and PFC Hasley could do anything, walk point, RTO, use any weapon and had no fear. They were all part of my Magnificent Seven.

Also on the 15th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop AH-1G #68-15076 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack approach target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 16th, the ORLL dated 10 May states that D Troop conducted another ground sweep to the north of Pleiku.

On the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an AVDAC record for C Troop AH-1G #67-15637. The record states this was Combat Minor Damage caused by other combat by ground fire less than .50 cal in size while the aircraft was on an armed escort and direct fire support mission. There were no casualties. Search and rescue operations were not required. The helicopter was recovered.

On the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16027 flown by an unnamed crew who had three injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cockpit, cargo section, and tail section, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated.

SP4 Ron Strickland says: I can recall this day as if it was yesterday! I was flying in the front with CPT Barry Spear and Jim Yamnitz in the backseat. We took numerous hits from what was believed to have been a 51-caliber machine gun. Flames were coming out of the jungle and above the trees about 20-30 feet. Members aboard the aircraft were saying, "I'm hit!" Barry Spears put the damage aircraft down in a small clearing as the C and C bird landed. The Blues secured the area and prepared the LOH for sling load. We, the crew, were taken I believe to LZ Uplift for treatment. Jim Yamnitz had taken a round. The aircraft had taken 13 rounds; talk about an unlucky number! We were all lucky that day.

SP5 Jim Yamnitz was award the Purple Heart via 67th Evacuation Hospital GO 97, TC 439 dated 20 April 1970 for wounds received in action on the 19th.

Also on the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for Headquarters Troop UH-1H #67-17315 flown by Instructor Pilot WO1 Matt Zuccaro at Camp Holloway. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

An autorotation was entered. The aircraft was flared for minimum rate of descent. At 60 feet, the flare was executed to slow the rate of descent. At 10-15 feet, collective pitch was pulled and the RPM dropped off rapidly. A power recovery was initiated but the left rear skid contacted the ground. Inspection continues to determine total damage.

Matt provided: Not too long after I had joined the Squadron, I was taking a check ride and the IP asked if I was interested in becoming one of the unit IPs. I said yes and they sent me to Long Binh to attend the IP school. So I became one of the Huey IPs. On this day, one of the senior officers, a Major I think from one of the line Troops, needed a 90-day check-ride. We flew over to Holloway and shot some autorotations. The Major was a master aviator and had lots of time, but this one autorotation went badly. I took control and did a power recovery. After the check-ride, I asked the maintenance guys to check the aircraft over just to make certain there was nothing that needed fixing. The aircraft flew the next day. It's my opinion this was a non-event.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16027 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, bottom cockpit, and left bubble, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

Also on the 20th, the following twelve C Troopers were awarded the Air Medal via HQ 1st Aviation Brigade General Orders 2514 dated 20 April 1970: SP4 John D. Donaldson, PFC Thomas Glassburn, PFC Randy S. Godfrey, PFC Douglas J. Guillaume, PFC Ronnie L. Hutchins, PFC James B. Irvine, PFC Wendell D. Irving, PFC Terry L. Kah1, PFC Rodney Lindell, PFC Johnnie Miney, SP4 Thomas V. Cartwright, and SGT Henry L. Montgomery. Most of the men have service dates of 2 Mar to 19 Mar 1970. Doug Guillaume provided a copy of this award and believes all these men were serving with C Troop's Blues at the time.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16354 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 one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the top of the cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

From the 23rd until the end of the month, the ORLL dated 10 May states that D Troop was released from its standby role for the ACTs and returned to the search and clear operations in the western Pleiku TAOR.

Also on the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16453 flown by an unnamed crew who had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW that hit a crew member, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

During the last week of the month, C Troop joined TF Pursuit which was a 4th Div effort against enemy base camps south of the Mang Yang Pass. A large number of bunkers and structures were spotted by C Troop that had recent usage and many were destroyed. C Troop also worked with C/75 Rangers as part of TF Dagger.

On the 25th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop AH-1G #68-17026 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, during the attack on target, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15806 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 two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the vertical

stabilizer and armament, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 29th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16453 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left and right fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

On the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with facilities record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16126 flown by **WO1 Larry Wayne Rabren** and **SP5 Jack Charles Everts** at grid ZB106196. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Everts, 6 Jul 1969, 67V2F; Rabren, 3 Jul 1969, 100B.

CPT Ron Bath provides: I was flying C&C this day with CPT Kirk Curran. Our mission was to look for the mortars shooting at Dak To. We were working the first ridge line east of Dak To. The Scouts found some people and started shooting. I was good friends with WO Rabren even though we didn't start off too well. I was flying a Cobra back to base when he came up behind me and to my left. Then he said on the radio, 'Is it really 5 minutes after 5?' – he was reading the clock on my instrument panel. I said, 'What are you talking about?' He said, 'Look to your left rear.' He was flying under my rotors. I was really upset and told him not to do that ever again – if I'd decided to make a turn it would have been terrible for all of us. He was a great Scout but this day he made a mistake. Like I said they had started shooting at the bad guys. He made two or three figure 8 passes over the bad guys firing their M60. I told him to get the heck out of there and let the Cobras deal with them. Tom E.G. Lewis was flying the lead Cobra. Rabren said he'd make one more pass. I watched as him whip a hard turn and start back into the target. He was about 50 to 100 feet above the trees when suddenly the LOH exploded. There was a lot of white smoke in the explosion which may indicate that a WP grenade had gone off. The LOH dropped straight into the trees. I don't recall who was flying Rabren's wing. We called for the Blues. They came in but the Lift ships couldn't find the insert point I described to them over the radio. They wanted a smoke, so I made a dumb mistake to mark it. I drove down into this valley for a high speed, low level pass. The crew chief put out the smoke. We're doing about 120 knots. I look up and see that I'm probably not going to make it over this ridge line in front of us. The Huey isn't too agile in that condition. At the last second I see a gap in the trees and roll the Huey on its side through the gap. I darn near killed all of us. Kirk was really scared after that. Apparently this flight brought back all the bad memories of when he went down on 2 Nov 1969. Anyway, the Blues landed and worked their way to the wrecked LOH. The bad guys had moved out. The Blues recovered the bodies and were extracted.

Also on the 30th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that CPT Lester C. Helmke assumed command of HHT replacing CPT Clyde A. 'Lou' Hennies. Again these men basically swapped jobs because the A Troop history states that CPT Helmke had served as the XO since the previous October and that Lou Hennies would become the XO. This same ORLL states that MAJ Tracey A. Maness was the Sqdn Chaplain, CPT James F. Roberts the Sqdn Safety Officer, CPT Guy W. Fussell the Sqdn Signal Officer, and CPT Joseph P. Chollack Jr. the Sqdn Flight Surgeon.

Also on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16354 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 multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom engine compartment and the tail section, they made a forced landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

Also on the 30th, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 states that A and B Troops were in direct support of the 24th STZ and C Troop was OPCONed to TF Pursuit, so only D Troop remained under Squadron control.

For the period ending 30 April, the Sqdn ORLL dated 10 May 1970 provides the following Troop statistics for units supported and maintenance stand-down days: A Troop 4th Inf Div (generally in the vicinity of An Khe) 43 days, the 24th STZ (generally in the Dak To and Ben Het areas) 21 days, TF Dagger (generally in the Plei Me and Plei Mrong areas) 7 days, II Corps HQ for 1 day, other commands 7 days, and had 10 maintenance down days. B Troop 4th Inf Div 22 days, the 24th STZ 33 days, Tuyen Duc Prov 15 days, other commands 7 days, and had 12 maintenance down days. C Troop 173rd Abn 60 days, TF Dagger 5 days, TF Pursuit 7 days, other commands 8 days, and had 9 maintenance down days. D Troop 4th Inf Div 8 days, 24th STZ 2 days, II Corps HQ 18 days, other commands 48 days, and had 13 maintenance down days.

The ORLL includes a quarterly operations section for each Troop. When a specific date is mentioned, information from this section is inserted into this document on that date. The following summarizes items from these sections that do not appear elsewhere in this document. For A Troop, the section states the Blues were inserted 15 times to develop the tactical situation and search enemy complexes. Several ranger teams were also extracted by the Lift. The troop reported 40 confirmed enemy kills and one probable for the period. For B Troop, the section states the troop was very successful in locating enemy base areas, bunker and cave complexes, and weapons positions. Their Blues were inserted 6 times to develop the situation and secure downed aircraft. The troop reported 99 confirmed enemy kills and 23 probables for the period. For C Troop, the section states that the troop reported destroying a large number of enemy complexes during the reporting period. Their Blues were inserted 14 times to develop the tactical situation, search enemy complexes, and secure downed aircraft. In addition, their Lift extracted several ranger teams that had been in contact. The troop reported 5 enemy confirmed kills and 4 probables for the period. For D Troop, the sections states they conducted several sweeps in the southwest and northern TAOR of Cam Enari. A search and cordon of a village and several night ambushes were set without significant findings. The troop reported 1 NVA KIA and 6 WIAs for the period. AW fire and B-40 rocket fire was received on several occasions. Several enemy mines and booby traps were destroyed by the troop. For C/75th Ranger, the section states the ranger sightings were reacted to and exploited by the ATCs. Most of the actual inserts and extracts were made by the 52nd CAB with the ATCs extracting the teams only when there was a lack of other air assets. The ranger teams initially operated to the south and southeast of Plei Me until 7 April when the TF changed to the mountains west of Plei Mrong. This proved that the enemy was not generally operating in these areas. They initiated ambushes on 3 occasions accounting for 4 VC KIAs. From 19 April on the company moved to An Khe but again the enemy was not operating where they were deployed.

The ORLL's Civil Affairs section states the Sqdn's team received support from the Le Trong District, the Sqdn's Chaplain, D Troop, several medical units plus the Pleiku Air Base S5. They worked primarily with the Catholic Orphanage at Tu Tam, the Montagnard village of Plei Poo Ngo (AR830366), helped rebuild a Catholic church at La Son (AR817376). They helped improve the transportation route for the school children of Plei Poo Ngo, distributed 7,000 lbs of food and gave over 500 plague shots.

The ORLL's Religious Functions section states that the Sqdn's Chaplain conducted a total of 13 Sunday and 7 weekday protestant service attended by a total of 1,057. Catholic Mass was conducted 14 times with a total attendance of 633. The Chaplain made 610 visits to troop areas and made contact with 1,262 individuals. He visited 25 men in hospitals. Because of the reduced number of chaplains in country, the Sqdn Chaplain also covered the 604th TC CO.

The ORLL's Medical section states that the Sqdn's Medical team consists of a flight surgeon, a section sergeant, and 11 medics. The distribution of the medics changed since the last quarter. There are two medics with each Blue platoon (formerly one) and one with each of the three platoons in D Troop. With the exception of C Troop, all personnel receive their primary medical care from the Camp Holloway Dispensary. This dispensary is jointly run by the Flight Surgeons and medics of the 52nd

CAB and the Sqdn. C Troop receives its primary medical support from the 4th Avn Dispensary at Randcliff. The 71st Evac Hospital at Holloway provides laboratory and x-ray support. The section included the following statistics for the previous quarter and this quarter: Patient Visits 797, 863; Immunizations 1,766, 900; Veneral Disease 52, 54; Malaria 0,3; Diarrhea 0, 12; Hepatitis 1,0.

The ORLL's Commander's Observations, Evaluations and Recommendations section touched on the following subjects: Enemy use of abandoned firebases. The need to have U.S. advisors and/or ARVN interpreters on C&C aircraft. The advantage of having the Scouts on the same UHF frequency with the FACs and tac air aircraft. The advantage of using colored smoke with WP to mark targets during periods of reduced visibility due to smoke and haze. That AH-1G aircraft have one snap-on seat belt in each ammo bay to help with last resort rescues of two man LOH crews. The problem with all LRRPs in a given area using the same FM frequency. The advantages of having a scout dog and handler attached to each ground platoon. The Training section mentioned the problem of allowing individual to reenlist for aircraft maintenance assignment without prior training or knowledge in the area. The Logistics section mentioned all the Sqdn's tentage had to be collected and provided (for B Troop we assume) despite valid requisitions and 'due-in status' being confirmed. The plan concluded that during period of undersupply, the S-4 would maintain what one ATC would need in preplanned conex containers. The Material section mentioned the malfunction of the AH-1G Oil Coolers. The Safety section mentioned the problems AH-1G pilots experienced with estimating clearance in U-shaped revetments at Radcliff.

The ORLL's Organization Strength section shows the following: The Sqdn organized in accordance with MTOE 17-95T with 85 officers, 103 WOs and 848 EM for a total strength of 1,036. HHT MTOE 17-96T with 5 UH-1Hs with 23 officers, 7 WOs and 181 EM. HHT had five sections or platoons: HQ, Comm, Support, Maint, and the Aviation. A Troop MTOE 17-98T with 9 AH-1G, 10 LOH, and 8 UH-1Hs supported by the 568th TC Det and the 288th Signal Det with 19 officers, 32 WOs and 180 EM. B Troop MTOE 17-98T with 9 AH-1G, 10 LOH, and 8 UH-1Hs supported by the 569th TC Det and the 414th Signal Det. C Troop MTOE 17-98T with 9 AH-1G, 10 LOH, and 8 UH-1Hs supported by the 412th TC Det and the 238th Signal Det. MTOE 17-98T authorized a troop HQ section, the Aero Scout, Aero Weapons, and Aero Rifle Platoons plus the TC Det of 1 officer, 1 WO, and 54 EM and a Signal Det with no officer, 1 WO, and 5 EM. D Troop is a standard wheel vehicle mounted ground cavalry troop in accordance with MTOE 17-99T with 5 officers, no WOs and 127 EM. MTOE 17-99T authorized a troop HQ section and 3 cavalry platoons each with a Platoon HQ, a Security, Anti-tank, Rifle, and Mortar section. The Unit Strength section (authorized versus on-hand) shows all units were at or only a little short of officers and WOs while at or over strength in EM. The exceptions were the three TC Dets as follows: 568th TC authorized 54 EM, 50 on-hand; 569th TC 54-44; 412th TC 54-46. The Signal Dets were all at authorized levels. In the Civilian area, HHT and each ATC was authorized 2 and had 2. The in and out processing statistics show: Feb in 103, out 52; Mar 117, 116; Apr 92, 71. The Promotions statistics only report E-4, E-5 and E-6 as follows: Feb E-4 36, E-5 24, E-6 2; Mar 35, 34, 1; Apr 53, 26, 3. The Awards section shows by month (Feb, Mar, Apr) the following: CMH 0, 0, 2; DSC 0, 0, 0; SS 1, 3, 11; DFC 4, 26, 12; SM 0, 1, 1; BSM-V 6, 2, 6; DSM-S 33, 31, 46; AM-V 7, 27, 14; AM 38, 54, 100; ACM-V 10, 18, 1, ACM-S 52, 39, 55, PH 5, 1, 1. The Casualties section shows by month (Feb, Mar, Apr) the following: WIA 5, 5, 12; MIA 0, 0, 1, KIA 0, 0, 5. The Breakdown of rank for Aviators shows: LTC 1, MAJ 5, CPT 49, 1LT 12, 2LT 0, CW3 0, CW2 21, WO1 77 for a total of 165. The Aircraft Lost and Damaged section shows: HHT UH-1H lost 0, damaged 2; A Troop OH-6A lost 8 (5 combat loss, 3 extensive maintenance), damaged 11, UH-1H lost 2 (2 combat loss), damaged 1, AH-1G lost 2 (2 crash), damaged 5; B Troop OH-6A lost 1 (1 extensive maintenance), damaged 3, UH-1H lost 3 (2 extensive maintenance, 1 combat damage), damaged 4, AH-1G lost 1 (1 combat loss), damaged 3; C Troop OH-6A lost 3 (3 combat loss), damaged 3, UH-1H lost 2 (2 extensive maintenance), damaged 4, AH-1G lost 3 (3 extensive maintenance), damaged 4. The Flying Hours Statistics for the Period shows: HHT UH-1H 181; A Trp OH-6A 211, AH-1G 224, UH-1H 204;

B Trp OH-6A 209, AH-1G 195, UH-1H 172; C Trp OH-6A 202, AH-1G 163, UH-1H 269. Average flying hours by type of aircraft: OH-6A 190, AH-1G 195, UH-1H 206. Cumulative flying hours: HHT UH-1H 906; A Trp OH-6A 1773, AH-1G 1950, UH-1H 1428 total 5151; B Trp OH-6A 1817, AH-1G 1681, UH-1H 1283 total 4781; C Trp OH-6A 1821, AH-1G 1247, UH-1H 2149 total 5217. Grand total OH-6A 5411, AH-1G 4878, UH-1H 5766 total 16055.

SGT Leroy 'Arkie' Rutherford recalls:

I enlisted in the Army for the second time in the spring of 1969 and joined A Troop in June as a PFC. My first enlistment started in 1963 in the Infantry but by 1965 I was in aircraft maintenance. I served my first tour in Vietnam with the 116th AHC in 1967 and with the 21st RAC in 1968. I would stay with A Troop 18 months. They sent me to T-53 engine school in Vung Tau and I worked mostly on power train items for the Cobras. I must have shown some promise because they made me a SP4 within 90 days. Then about one week later pinned Sergeant stripes on me and put me in charge of the Lift Platoon. Because I had three tours in Vietnam with five units, my memories get a little mixed up at times. I recall having responsibility for 18 men, I guess 12 CEs and 6 gunners. But I also seem to remember being a CE on CW2 Maurice Sanchez's Cobra for a long time while I was still in the Lift Platoon. I remember working on Hueys flown by CW2 Donald Beaulieu and CW2 Richard Turnley and working with a CE, SP5 Steven Ross. Like I said, it is confusing! Like other platoon sergeants, I often flew as a replacement CE when one of my guys was gone on R&R or whatever. I recall flying on the C&C ship frequently. A Troop's missions to help rescue a USO team north of Dak To II and to support the SF in the Kontum, Dak To, and Ben Het areas really stick out in my mind. I remember leaving Enari in the dark and flying to Dak To where we'd refuel and pick up the SF team. The Scouts and Guns were perfect support for this type of operation. We'd insert the SF team about first light. I believe we worked not only the Plei Trap Valley but also inserted some across the fence in Cambodia. After the insert, we'd do normal Cav stuff while waiting for the SF to call. Usually by noon or early afternoon, the SF had found more bad guys than they wanted to and we call for an extraction. Again, with the LOHs and Cobras supporting and having our own Slicks, we were in the best position to get them out in one piece while hurting the bad guys the most. Back to the USO team which could have been during the Siege of Dak Seang (I can't date it with any certainty). I recall that another helicopter unit delivered the team of 6 to 8 Filipinos and one American woman to a base someplace north of Dak To II. When they went back to get them, the NVA had the place surrounded and prevented the Hueys from getting in or shot them up – I don't know for sure. Anyway, A Troop gets the mission to rescue the USO team. When the team was finally rescued and returned to Dak To II, I believe they had been stuck on that base for 29 days! I can still picture in my mind flying over a river near their camp and receiving lots of fire. Not only did the LOHs work the area looking for snipers but I seem to recall the Hueys taking different routes in and around the camp to see where the AA fire was coming from and to resupply the base. Finally, we built a smoke ship. I flew on it on the day we made the rescue. It was early in the morning and we made at least two passes laying down smoke on one side of the camp. I believe we sent two Hueys into the camp at the same time. One had to make a forced landing in the camp, so the other bird brought out the crew of the downed ship plus the USO team; about 13 in all! I remember walking over to the ship when they landed at Dak To II. There were lots of smiles and happy people to say the least! We had to change a main blade on that ship before it could fly again. I recall we were able to sling the other Huey out under a Chinook.

SGT Lee Parsons provides the following concerning the Commo Section of C Troop's Operations: I joined C Troop in April 1970 from Ban Me Thuot where I had been since the previous December. My MOS was 05C20, radioteletype specialist. The 459th Signal Battalion maintained a company-sized detachment at Ban Me Thuot to support the American MACV Advisors (especially with the ARVN 23rd Infantry Division) and the two Special Forces (B-50, which had the SOG missions, and,

B-23, which had the Mobile Strike Force (mostly Montagnards) units) commands. I was told that the 7/17th Cav had a critical need for my MOS, so I reported to Camp Enari. I worked with the Squadron HQ's Signal Detachment for two weeks before joining C Troop at An Khe. It is my impression that C Troop had only been at An Khe just a few days before I joined them. For example, I remember being there about one week before I pulled my first Guard Duty and that night the sappers came in! Like everyone else, I will ALWAYS remember the sapper attacks!! At that time CPT Nelson was the Opns Officer and 1LT Sullivan was his assistant. I don't remember the Operations NCO's name but SP4 Vernon or Ron Ostrander, a very level headed soldier, was one of the Operations specialists. SGT Bob McCutcheon was the Commo Section leader and was due to ETS in about a month. There were four men in the section. I remember feeling bad because he had these other experienced guys in the section and he immediately started training me as his replacement. Naturally, this 'sent a message' to both me and the others. The other team members were: SP4 George Rainey from Texas, Wayne Yakel (who worked in Avioncis most of the time), SP4 Diehl who transferred in from the 9th Inf Div, SP4 Mike Goff, and SP4 Mike Farris. Mike's real name is Milton Farris. He served with in the commo section during 1969 and 1970. Our primary function was to provide communications between the Troop and the Squadron, and between Operations and the C&C in the field. We took SITREPs and spot reports from the C&C or sometimes the Cobras, gave them to the CO if he wasn't flying and then sent the priority items onto Squadron. We also maintained the Opns situation map in the commo bunker. I have heard that other Troops and the Squadron maintained radio relays, but we didn't have them when I was with C Troop. Eventually I was promoted to SGT and awarded the 31G40 MOS as the Commo Chief. I returned to Vietnam in 1972 as an E-6 and served NCOIC of the HQ XXIV Corps Message Center and later the MACV First Region Advisory Command/Advisory Team 1 Message Center, both at Da Nang. C Troop had the following commo equipment: one AN/GRC106 HF radio, one AN/VSC-2 radio TTY set (that used the HF radio for transmissions), one KW7 crypto unit, and one UHF portable unit (allowed us to communicate with the aircraft with another means other than FM radios). These items were stored in our conex bunker near the Opns building. We also had an M151 jeep as part of the TTY system. I remember its bumper number was C-25. The reason I remember this is because I was forever on the radios or telephone asking where C-25 was because someone had borrowed it to run some place or other. We also had about five AN/VRC-46 FM jeep-mounted radios, five AN/PRC-25 back-packable FM radios with KY-38 crypto gear, one SB-22 switchboard and many TA-312 telephone for the Troop's use at base camps. If we needed maintenance support or parts, we got them from the 4th Signal Battalion when the 4th ID was near us. I served for eight years, leaving the Army as a Staff Sergeant E-6.

The following article titled "The Fighting Info Finders" by SP5 Alex Hybel appeared in an April issue of the Pacific Stars & Stripes. The date on the source is not readable but it was near the end of the microfilm so we can assume it is near the end of the month.

Camp Enari (Special) - "Find the enemy, establish contact, develop the situation and pull out with vital intelligence." These are the rules of operation for the 17th Combat Aviation group's 7th Sq., 17th Air Cav., commanded by Lt. Col. Rudolph B. DeFrance. Since its arrival in Vietnam 28 months ago the squadron has been working in such heavily contested areas as Dak To, Ben Het, Bu Prang, Ban Me Thuot, An Khe, Kontum and An Son. Aerial scout teams of two AH-1G Cobra gunships and two OH-6A Light Observation Helicopters (LOH), perform reconnaissance over large areas at tree-top level - and as often as not in the midst of a triple-canopy jungle. If the LOH starts drawing fire or if enemy activity of any kind is spotted, the observer begins firing with his M60 machine gun or the pilot opens up with the ship's minigun. If the suppressive fire does not contain the enemy, gunships are called in to spray the area in question with rockets and minigun fire. After the area has been saturated with air fire, UH1 Huey slicks will insert members of the Cav.'s aero-rifle platoon (ARP) to search the area.

Photo captions: Silhouetted against the rising sun, a Cobra gunship sets out from Camp Enari on a recon mission.

A light observation chopper opens up with its miniguns after spotting North Vietnamese troops in dense jungle.

A light observation chopper searches for enemy troops while a Cobra waits overhead.

Skimming over the treetops, an observer gets a close look at the jungle.

An injured trooper is helped to a light chopper for evacuation.

May 1970

The sqdn ORLL dated 10 Aug 1970 states that during this reporting period (May through July), A Troop supported the 4th Inf Div in Ratankiri Province, Cambodia west of Duc Co, the 24th STZ (now the 22nd ARVN Div Forward) in the Dak To, Ben Het, and Dak Seang area, and II Military Region units northeast and southwest of the Pleiku TAOR. During the month of May, A Troop operated in support of US and ARVN forces against enemy base areas 701, 702, and 740.

On the 2nd, the sqdn ORLL dated 10 Aug 1970 states that CPT Michael F. Fisher assume the duties of Sqdn Safety Officer replacing CPT James F. Roberts Jr..

On the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for C Troop AH-1G #68-15179 flown by CPT R.K. Vester and copilot CW2 J.L. Jackson. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and accident summary reads:

CPT Vester and CW2 Jackson departed the Golf Course at approximately 0600 hours with a full fuel and ammunition load. At approximately 0615 hours CPT Vester started a climb to gain attitude because of a low cloud layer. The N1 indicated 97%, the airspeed was 70 knots, and the altitude was 2600 MSL. A loud pop was heard in the aft section of the aircraft and the engine instruments indications decayed rapidly. CPT Vester entered autorotation and headed for a small clearing which had been located by his copilot. A stream of sparks and flames were observed spewing out the tail pipe. At approximately 100 feet above the ground CPT Vester initiated a deceleration which carried him to the desired area. At 15 to 20 feet above the ground he pulled initial collective pitch. Due to the heavy aircraft weight this did not slow his descent sufficiently. He pulled the remainder of the collective pitch. The aircraft landed hard hitting the tail stinger. The aircraft bounced and contacted the ground again and slid 20-25 feet and came to rest upright. The pilot and copilot exited the aircraft after shutting off all switches. The Command & Control ship landed and extracted the crew ten minutes later. The aircraft did not burn. The wing stores jettison system had not been activated.

The Goldbook database provides additional information about AH-1G #68-15179. In May 1970 it returned to Bell Helicopter in Fort Worth for repairs. By October 1970 it was back in Vietnam serving first with D/3/5th Cav and then C/3/17th Cav until March 1972 when it again returned to CONUS for ARADMAC repairs. It served with the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood for a number of years. Later it was converted to an AH-1S. In 2002 the Army dedicated 179 to the City of Hubbard, TX (northeast of Waco). As of 2009 it is still on display there. We are indebted to Dennis Petteys (younger brother of WO1 James Petteys KIA 15 Jan 1969) for the recent information on 179.

Also on the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17811 flown by an unnamed crew in Laos. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17762 flown by an unnamed crew in Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a

recon mission, in level flight at an altitude of 50 feet, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

The Cambodian Incursion

Starting on the 5th and ending on the 25th of June, various Squadron elements supported the 4th Infantry Division and the 22nd and 23rd ARVN Divisions in their Cambodian incursion. C Troop, from the 5th to the 25th, B Troop, from the 5th to the 16th, and A Troop, on the 6th and 7th, worked in Ratankiri Province to the west of Plei Djereng for first the 4th Div and then the 22nd ARVN. D Troop would commit two platoons to provide additional security around Plei Djereng which became a major logistical base. Operations for the ATCs were characterized by selecting LZs for the initial airmobile assaults, by screening for the ground units, and by the discovery of large bunker and living structure complexes with light enemy contacts save for the ground to air fire which was intense during many days.

On the 5th, MAJ Leighton Haselgrove from B Troop recalls:

B Troop was placed OPCON to 3rd Brigade for their insertion into Cambodia. The Brigade Commander, COL Dean Yow and I had worked together before. Our strategy was to go into company size LZs and B Troop initiated the reconnaissance based on aerial photos of the terrain provided by the USAF. We had no maps of the area. Once inside Cambodia, we met with heavy resistance and our scouts took fire from numerous planned LZs. Based on our recommendation, Colonel Yow made the decision to go into battalion size LZs and fan out from there. We initiated insertions mid morning and completed their insertions by late afternoon. B Troop made the recommendations on where to put the landing zones and the assets of the 4th ID actually made the insertions. It was rather uneventful after we started the insertions, but prior to that time, it was quite active. We flew over a small complex of hooches tucked under some of the few trees in the AO and caught the NVA sitting on the front porch cleaning their weapons. We called airstrikes in on the target and eliminated the village and scattered the occupants. We had a pair of USAF fast movers available every twenty minutes and worked through a FAC. We placed airstrikes in on several areas where we drew fire, but concentrated on our mission of locating suitable LZs for the Brigade to be inserted. We staged out of a landing zone set up by the 4th ID north of Plei Mei Special Forces Camp along the Cambodian border. As I remember, the 4th ID was ill prepared for such a large force of helicopters and refueling was a nightmare for the first two days. We finally declared a tactical emergency in order to get adequate refueling and rearming points set up to accommodate that size of an operation.

On the 5th, CPT Pete Kacerguis from C Troop recalls:

I was Mission Lead that day. As per our SOP, I departed the Golf Course at An Khe one hour prior to the rest of the Troop in order to get the day's mission briefing. We were supporting the 173rd Airborne Brigade out of LZ English. Upon receipt of said, I would join the Troop at LZ Two Bits, our normal rearm/refuel point. Halfway there I got a call from C Troop Operations to turn around and go to Camp Holloway, as there had been a mission change. Stopping back at An Khe to refuel, we went on to Camp Holloway and Squadron Headquarters. I received about 100 maps of the Central Highlands west of Pleiku, and into Cambodia, and was told to fly to Duc Co. I received a briefing from a U.S. one star (name forgotten) and was given a classic Cav screening mission. We were to cover the southern flank of what was to be a multi-Division insertion of U.S. and ARVN troops north of our location into Cambodia, part of the Sanctuary Counter-Offensive. With the rest of the Troop already there, I gave the mission brief. We departed for the AO with our standard 2 Scouts, 2 Guns, and the UH-1 C&C. Almost immediately we took fire from EVERYWHERE, and one of the Scouts went down. Normally, the C&C went in to extract the crew, but because of the dense vegetation and our position when the ship went in, the second Scout landed. SSG Pilk went to

the downed LOH which was about 200 yards away through some thick under-growth. He got to the pilot and was bringing him out when some NVA troops got between him and his ship. My doorgunners and the Cobras gave him covering fire and he was able to get back. When he did, the Scout immediately lifted off. SSG Pilk reported that SP4 Moden, the Observer aboard the downed Scout, was dead. Because of the intense ground fire we had to return to Duc Co. We were unable to retrieve SP4 Moden's body. Approximately three days later, CPT Lou Hennies and other members of A Troop while working in that AO, located and retrieved his body which had been dragged to and thrown into the Ia Drang (I believe it was the name of the river) River by the NVA. SSG Pilk received the Silver Star for his actions that day.

CPT Barry Speare was the team leader of the Scouts. He recalls: We had just crossed this bend in a river on the other side of the fence when we started taking fire when we were still flying at high speed about a 100 feet AGL. I remember Bob Pilk yelled taking fire and I could see the people all over. I called breaking left and now that I think about it, I think Dan Lindsey must have flown through the fire directed at us. He went in about a 100 yards after that. As I was making the turn I called on the radio, 15 are you with me? No answer. I didn't see him on the first circle and I climbed to about 250 feet. I remember the C&C asking where 15 was and I answered that I didn't know but was looking. On the second pass, I saw smoke coming up from the trees. I pointed this out to BLUE 6 (Pete in the C&C Huey) and soon he was on short final to the location. I called him off because he had all the C&C radios and there really wasn't space for a Huey. He went back up joined the Cobras providing cover. I landed may be about 150 feet from the burning LOH. We flew with an M60 for both men. On the way in we talked about both Pilk and Yeager going to the downed LOH but when we got down, I had Yeager stay with his M60 to cover the left side. [Note: the Army Times article saying that two observers helped rescue the pilot – this is not correct.] Yeager was firing the whole time we were on the ground! With the other aircraft firing, we had them pinned down to a certain degree. Pilk ran to the LOH. He saw that SP4 Moden was dead and helped LT Lindsey back to our LOH. Pilk later said that he could hear voices and thought the NVA were trying to get around him so he took a different route back. You could tell Lindsey was in a lot of pain but he was able to walk with Pilk's arm around him. Pilk layed Lindsey down in the back of the LOH and even with my helmet on I could hear Lindsey screaming. I tried to takeoff but it was red lining, so I had them kick out some ammo and we were just able to get out of there. We flew to Duc Co and en route we tried to contact a DUSTOFF but they said it would be 30 minutes, so we kicked out some more ammo and one gun and flew to the 71st Evac at Pleiku. The people there quickly took LT Lindsey from us. We refueled, went back to Duc Co and joined up with the Troop. It was getting dark by then and we were unable to get some ground troops to go back in there, so we left for An Khe. En route I stopped at the 71st Evac to see Lindsey. They wouldn't let me see him but I learned that he had a broken back and would be evacuated.

For the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16554 at grid YA631250 in Cambodia flown by 1LT Daniel Lindsey with **SP4 Richard Sheldon Moden** as Observer. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 9 Dec 1969 and his MOS as 11D2F. The decoded Helicopter record states that they were on an unarmed recon combat mission in Cambodia and while approaching the target area from an altitude of 30 feet with 85 knots of airspeed they told a large number of hits from unknown weapons that caused them to crash. One crew member was killed and the other injured. The helicopter burned, was destroyed and lost to inventory. The following is an edited version of an article titled "Downed LOH Two Observers Save Pilot" that appeared in the June 3, 1970 issue of Army Times.

Camp Holloway, Vietnam - Two OH-6 LOHs from 17th CAG's C/7/17th Cav, rescued a downed LOH pilot with NVA soldiers pursuing them less than 20 yards away. The action occurred nine miles inside the Cambodian border, approximately ten miles west of the Vietnamese outpost of Duc

Co. A team of two LOHs, two Cobra gunships and one C&C Huey was conducting a VR mission in an area of known enemy activity in support of the 1st Bde, 4th Div. As the LOHs were scouting at tree top level, the wing aircraft received a heavy volume of enemy fire. It took volume of enemy fire. It took numerous hits and crashed in a small clearing surrounded by anti-aircraft positions. CPT Barry J. Speare of Albany, CA, was flying the lead LOH and his two observers, SSG Robert H. Pilk of Caselberry, FL, and SP4 Walter Yeager of Rochester, NY, maneuvered to locate the exact position of the wing aircraft. "It all happened so fast that for a short while we didn't even notice that our wing ship had been short down," Pilk recalled that evening. "We were all drawing fire and the wingship was quite a ways behind us. They went down so fast they didn't even have time to call for help on the radio. As soon as we noticed they were missing we started looking for them," he continued. "After a few tense minutes we spotted the LOH which was on fire with the crew members still inside. Speare landed our helicopter about 150 feet from an enemy position. Yeager and I jumped out of the ship and ran to the burning LOH. When we got there," Pilk said, "we found the pilot and the observer trapped inside. First we pulled out the pilot who was hanging outside in a state of shock. Just as we were going to reach for the observer I noticed that several NVA soldiers were sneaking up on us." The two LOH observers tried to get the downed observer unhooked from his seat, but found he was dead. Speare pulled pitch with a heavily overloaded scoutship. The pilot was flown to the 71st Evac Hosp in Pleiku, where he was reported in good condition.

The following article titled "Scouts Rescue Pilot With NVA Pursuing" appeared in 15 May edition of the Eagle Talons (the newspaper of the 17th Combat Aviation Group) provided by Barry Speare. Camp Holloway – Two light observation helicopter observers from Troop C, 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, rescued a downed LOH pilot with North Vietnamese Army soldiers pursuing them less than 20 yards away May 5. The action occurred nine miles inside the Cambodian border approximately 10 miles west of the Vietnamese outpost of Duc Co. A team of two LOHs, two Cobras and one command and control Huey were conducting a visual reconnaissance mission in an area of known enemy activity in support of the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. As the LOHs were scouting at treetop level the wing aircraft received a heavy volume of enemy fire. It took numerous hits and crashed in a small clearing surrounded by anti-aircraft positions. Captain Barry J. Speare of Albany, Calif., was flying the lead LOH and his two observers, Staff Sergeant Robert H. Pilk of Vasselberry, Fla., and Specialist Four Walter Yeager of Rochester, N.Y., immediately maneuvered to locate the exact position of the wing aircraft. "It all happened so fast that for a short while we didn't even notice that our wing ship had been shot down," SSG Pilk recalled that evening. "We were all drawing fire and the wing ship was quite a ways behind us. They went down so fast that they didn't even have time to call for help on the radio. As soon as we noticed they were missing we started looking for them," he continued. "After a few tense minutes we spotted the LOH which was on fire with the crew members still inside. Immediately CPT Speare landed our helicopter approximately 150 feet from an enemy position. SP4 Yeager and I jumped out of the ship and ran to the burning LOH. When we got there," SSG Pilk said, "we found both the pilot and observer trapped inside. First we pulled out the pilot, who was hanging out the door in a state of shock. Just as we were going to reach for the observer I noticed that several NVA soldiers were sneaking up on us." The two LOH observers tried to get the downed observer unhooked from his seat but found he was dead. "By this time we were taking fire," SSG Pilk recounted, "so we picked up the pilot and started carrying him back out to the LOH." "We were hustling across the 150 yards back to our waiting ship," SP4 Yeager said, "with several NVA chasing us. There also were some enemy ahead of us, cutting off our route of escape. They were just waiting for us. We took a detour through some heavy undergrowth and finally we reached the aircraft," he said. "We placed the wounded pilot in the rear of our LOH and hopped aboard." Immediately CPT Speare pulled pitch with the scout ship heavily loaded. "By the time we got off the ground, the NVA were firing at us from less than 20 yards

away,” SP4 Yeager said. The pilot was flown to the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku. He is reported in good condition.

Also on the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16141 flown by an unnamed crew in Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17762 flown by WO1 P. Bardsess at Camp Holloway. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

The aircraft lost lift power through decay in engine RPM while hovering for departure. The pilot landed and off loaded one passenger then again tried to hover. The aircraft again experienced a power loss. The aircraft came to rest level and upright but the skids caught on the PSP. This resulted in incidental damage to the skids and the skid fairings.

On the 6th, D Troop moved two platoons via roads to assist the 4th Div by securing the Plei Djereng airfield. This operation lasted until the 16th.

Also on the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #65-12940 flown by an unnamed crew in Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16141 flown by an unnamed crew in Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a logistics support resupply to forward area mission, while take-off in the LZ at an altitude of 10 feet, they took two hits from B-40 rocket type exploding weapon in the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

MAJ Leighton Haselgrove provides some details about the events during this period: My second ‘court-martial opportunity’ came during the famous Cambodian Incursion. The 7/17th Cav was once again opconed to the 4th Infantry Division that had the goal of getting its combat brigades and task forces into Cambodia as quickly as possible. Each of our ATCs was assigned to a brigade. You will remember that A Troop took some losses on Day 1. On Day 2 I was assigned to support one of the brigades and met with the Brigade CO. He told me MG Walker, the CG of the 4th ID, had directed him to tell me that I was to insert my Blues where an NVA battalion was believed to be located. They wanted to find that battalion. I told him that I would gladly get airborne and find the battalion with my Scouts and Cobras using standard air cavalry tactics, but I didn’t want to insert the Blues to find an NVA battalion. The Colonel was irate and asked if I was deliberately disregarding MG Walker’s orders. I said something like, ‘Well no – we will find that battalion for you, we’ll just do it a different way.’ He wanted the Blues inserted at that location and I thought that doing that was likely to get a bunch of them killed and tied the entire Troop down for hours. The Colonel had had enough, so he called MG Walker on the radio. MG Walker wasn’t happy with me at all and told me to get in my Huey and meet him at a certain POL. So I went – certainly expecting the worst. Well, I waited and then waited some more. MG Walker never showed; but LTC DeFrance arrived. He told me to get going with the air cavalry operations to location the battalion. Clearly, if I had been in the 1/9th Cav like I was on my first tour and told the CG, ‘No I wouldn’t insert my Blues’ - I would have been history. I was only a 28-year old Major at the time. That was the closest I’d ever come to ending my career. But I retired as an O-6. I was glad to have served in the Army and honored to have served with both the 1/9th Cav and the 7/17th Cav.

///// normalize the previous and the following paragraphs /////

To B Troop's north, A Troop was busy reconning for the 1st Brigade [I may have the Brigades backward.] They went into company size landing zones and encountered stiff resistance. Many of A Troop's aircraft were hit and non-flyable. Also, the 1st Bde had several units hit the first night with numerous casualties. B Troop was diverted to fly in support of the 1st Bde on the second day. When I reported to the Brigade Commander, he ordered me to insert the Blues into a landing zone where one of the infantry companies were chewed up the night before. He indicated this was the wishes of the Division Commander, a MG Walker, if I remember correctly. (I never met Gen. Walker). I attempted to give the Colonel a creative alternative that was more suitable for an Air Cavalry Troop. I recommended he use my assets to recon from the air by using scout helicopters until such time we picked up the trail of the sizeable force that had malled his infantry company and then allow B Troop to block egress until we could insert his larger force to handle the fight - a classic cavalry operation. He ordered me to insert the Blues. I refused but told him I would insert the blues as soon as the scouts located the enemy force and make contact. I left to take command of the operation for the day. General Walker's aircraft started circling my scout aircraft and called me to see when I planned on inserting the blues. When I told him as soon as I made contact with the enemy, he asked if I was refusing his order to insert the blues immediately and pursue the enemy force by foot. I again advised him of how I would like to rapidly find the enemy with the scouts and then insert the blues and not be slowed to an infantry pace in my search. He ordered me to the refuel rearm point for a meeting with him. I turned the operation over to the lead cobra pilot and left for the refuel point. He never showed up but my squadron commander, LTC Rudi DeFrance did. LTC DeFrance completely supported my tactical decision. To my knowledge there was never any repercussion from my refusing the order. We did receive a message from CG of IFFV stating that air cavalry assets would be employed at the discretion of the Air Cavalry commanders and they would not be told how to employ their assets. A victory for air cavalry operations in theater, because few ground commanders really knew how to employ this very valuable asset.

On the 7th, MAJ Leighton Haselgrove from B Troop recalls:

If my memory serves me correctly, on the third day of the Cambodian operation, a company of the 3rd Bde was getting hit just before sundown. My liaison officer in the 3rd Bde TOC called for all assets to support this company. I took charge of the area and placed a call on guard for all gunships to come up our frequency. Numerous gunships from various units in the area heard the call and responded. The B Troop Scout aircraft played a key role also in providing support for this unit. We loaded the Scouts with ammunition, flares, grenades, etc. and provided escort for them to run low level right into the company position then kick out the supplies. We did this for several hours using the Cobras with the 20mm cannons to provide close in support to the Scouts and accurately hit the very edge of the infantry company's position. We remained over that company for over sixteen hours; until daylight the next morning when reinforcements were landed and the situation cleared up. It is my opinion that if B Troop and the other units that answered my call had not responded the way we did, the infantry company would have suffered more casualties than they did. That was one of the highlights of B Troop's contributions during the Cambodian excursion. Just a side note to this incident - several years later, I was conducting a class on Air Cavalry tactics at the Armor School at Fort Knox. I related that story and a young Captain jumped up from his seat, made his way to the platform and gave me a big old bear hug. He was one of the infantry platoon leaders during that operation and he wanted to thank us for saving his life.

Also on the 7th, C Troop found several sets of tracks made by NVA tanks and indications that the vehicles had moved to the south. SP4 James Irvine wrote in his letter home: 'I have been in Cambodia two days. They are supposed to take pictures of our unit today. If you see pictures of a place called Duc Co, our helicopters will be in it. We found an NVA training base just inside Cambodia, along with

a hospital complex, and numerous huts. We had the first American man killed and first injured in Cambodia. Monson should be setting in any time now. It has rained just about every evening for a week. //May 9th// They put a bomb strike on a convoy yesterday and sent us in today to pick up documents. We searched 3 vehicles and found 5 bodies. They were burned nad blown up pretty bad. We were on the ground 25 minutes because of heavy enemy concentrations. This was in Cambodia. Other than this things are slow so I'll close for now.'

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #66-07907 flown by an unnamed crew in Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, at an altitude of 25 feet, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired. Vito Flitt recalls:

I was flying front seat on this aircraft. We were following a trail and saw some freshly cut wood along it. The NVA started shooting at us, so we put out a smoke and exited for the Cobras to shoot. The ship had too much damage for us to continue flying it. They had to sling it back to be repaired.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16453 flown by an unnamed crew in Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, at an altitude of 10 feet, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #66-17723 flown by CPT S.F. Hafner and Instructor Pilot WO1 R.E. Stokes at Camp Holloway. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads: The aircraft slid off a wet runway after completing a touch down autorotation during a standardization check ride. Inspection continues to determine total damage.

On the 9th, A Troop began support of the 22nd ARVN operating in Base Area 702 to the west of Duc Co. Several structures and two tons of rice were destroyed during those three days and four NVA were killed. That same day the lead A Troop LOH was shot down and **the observer killed**. The names of these individuals are not recorded. Please contact Mike Law if you have details. The Wall suggests it could be Dege or Peyton.

On the 9th, C Troop located two M-8 scout cars and a dump truck; all were destroyed by an air strike.

On the 10th, SGT Reginald A Humphries of B Troop received an Air Medal with V device for actions on this day. Please report details to Mike Law.

Also on the 10th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss with injuries record for A Troop AH-1G #68-15008 flown by Aircraft Commander CW2 M.E. Stefanski and copilot CPT T.E. Cook at Camp Holloway. Both pilots had injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

CPT Cook and CW2 Stefanski preflighted their AH-1G at approximately 0730 hours. No discrepancies were noted on the preflight inspection. The aircraft run-up and hover to takeoff were normal. The aircraft departed at approximately 0800 hours from the Christmas Tree at Camp Holloway and began a normal climb out. As the aircraft passed over the perimeter wire it was at an altitude of approximately 150 feet above the ground and indicating 60 knots airspeed. At this time a loud "pop" was heard from the tail boom section of the aircraft. Parts were observed flying from the tail rotor area. The nose of the aircraft assumed a 35 to 45 degree right yaw and nose low attitude. The pilot immediately applied left pedal to correct the situation but it had no effect. CW2 Stefanski lowered the collective pitch half way to bring the nose back to the left. The nose moved left slightly and stabilized for 4 to 5 seconds. The ship descended toward a large rice paddy at the bottom of a 150 foot slope. At about 150 feet altitude above the rice paddy the aircraft began a spin to the right. The rate of spin increased during descent and was violent at impact. When the aircraft entered the

spin, CW2 Stefanski completely lowered the collective pitch and centered the cyclic to keep the skids level. The wing stores were not jettisoned. The aircraft contacted the ground coming almost straight down in a fairly skid level attitude. It broke apart and rolled on its right side. There was no post accident fire. CW2 Stefanski climbed out the left top of the canopy and CPT Cook was pulled out of the front seat by the crew of a 155th AHC UH-1H that had landed to render assistance. The pilots were immediately evacuated to the 71st Evacuation hospital. The aircraft was recovered at 1430 hours.

Rick Gillihan recalls: I was wounded the night of 10 May 1970 about 10 p.m. but was finally treated at 4:10 a.m. on 11 May 1970 at the 71st Evac at Holloway. I had just finished loading rockets and ammo into a trailer behind a jeep when the first 122mm rocket impacted outside the perimeter. I was with two other guys. We stood and watched for a second or two when the next 122 crashed on or near a bunker on the perimeter. That got our attention and we started moving across the road for a ditch. The third 122 exploded near-by and I was hit by a piece of shrapnel in the café of my leg. Later I learned that it had either gone through someone or something prior to hitting me because the shard stopped when it hit my bone. I was bleeding rather heavily but when I walked into the Evac, I saw that all the tables were full of guys and there were lots of people on stretchers. The doctors and nurses were running around. There was a chair near the wall, so I sat in it. I think I must have experienced a little shock. I remember trying to talk to this guy on a stretcher with a ¼” hole in his hip, but he wouldn’t speak to me. Later I learned that the bullet or piece of metal had shattered several bones near his hip. He may have been feeling the effects of morphine as well. Finally they had cleared everyone out and this nurse came over to attend to me. There was a large government clock on the wall. I can still see it in my mind 4:10 am when they started treating me. They cleaned and stitched me up and wanted me to stay there that night. There were too many messed up people in that place, so I said – No, I need to get back to my unit. The Wall database indicates that at least four Army soldiers died in Pleiku Province due to rocket related injures on the 11th.

On the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16134 flown by CPT John Sartor, Red 6, in Cambodia. One crew member was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system and bubble, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated. CW2 Gary Spooner remembers that CPT Sartor’s helmet had two bullet holes in it from the same round. He would be evaced because of the head wound. For their actions on the 11th, the following C Troop Huey Aircraft Commanders were awarded the DFC: CW2 Michael Sipsey, CW2 Gary Spooner, and CPT Pete Kacerguis. The award citation reads in part: These lift helicopter aircraft commanders held their aircraft at a steady hover above the trees to insert infantry troops to rescue and recover a wounded crew while enemy gunners continuously concentrated heavy automatic weapons fire on their aircraft. It was again necessary for them to return to the same area to extract the infantry troops and crew. They hovered all their aircraft above the trees for the rope ladder extraction despite the intense enemy fire.

From the 12th to the 17th, A Troop supported the 4th Div and found an airfield with a POL storage area.

On the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage records for two A Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions in Cambodia. (1) #65-12940 took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the skid, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. (2) #67-16361 took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

On the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage records for two A Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions in Cambodia. (1) #67-16310 took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom chin bubble, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was

repaired. One crew member was injured. (2) #69-15981 took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right and bottom engine compartment, they made a forced landing and completed the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop AH-1G #68-17026 flown by an unnamed crew in Cambodia. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack on target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom engine compartment, they made a forced landing, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

On the 17th and 18th, B Troop took a break from the Cambodian operations and worked around Pleiku with no significant findings.

A Troop Moves to Ban Me Thuot East

On the 19th, A Troop and one platoon from D Troop moved to Ban Me Thuot, became operational on the 20th to support the 23rd ARVN in Mondol Kiri Province to the west of Ban Me Thuot. The A Troop history states this move was made in order to support the Cambodian operation with greater efficiency. The most significant activity was the destruction of several (at least seven) enemy 2 1/2 ton trucks plus the locations and destruction of at least three, huge enemy base camps complete with permanent buildings and very large bunker complexes and ammo caches.

Also on the 19th, WO1 Harold "Jim" Thomas of the 225th Avn Co (Surveillance Airplane) flew a relatively normal camera mission in his OV-1 Mohawk along the fence near Duc Co and south. He landed for fuel and lunch at Ban Me Thuot and then returned to the same area. He found a NVA wooden building complex complete with a flag pole. On his third pass, he took one hit from an AA machine-gun. After reporting this to his Operations, they arranged for some helicopter gunships to attack the site. Even though this would have been a mission for the 20th SOS based at Ban Me Thuot East, Jim maintains he worked with 7/17th Cav gunships to attack the target. He dates this action from an Air Medal with 'V' he received after this mission. Any 17th Cav person who recalls this event in asked to contact Mike Law.

Also on the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15485 flown by CW2 R.I. Brooks as AC and WO1 H.S. France as pilot. The record indicates that a LTC R.D. Nelson was the accident investigation officer. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was recovered, turned into the 604th TC CO and hence ARADMAC for CONUS repairs. After repairs it continued serving in the Army in CONUS. The accident summary reads:

At 0825, Army aircraft AH-1G, #67-15485 departed Pleiku, en route for a routine combat mission to escort a flight of slicks. The ships arrived at Phu Nhon at approximately 0855 and refueled. They were in the process of repositioning the aircraft to the northwest of the refueling point when the accident occurred. While the aircraft was being refueled the artillery battery located at Phu Nhon started firing on a 270 azimuth. This placed the gun target line directly across the normal departure path of the aircraft from the refueling point. With the assistance of the other AH-1G crewmembers to maintain clearance of other aircraft and obstacles, the pilot elected to hover the aircraft out of the refueling area. The wind at the time of the accident was from the southwest which required the pilot to hover sideways and rearward to clear the refueling area and maintain clearance of the rearming area which was in close proximity of the refueling area and keep the nose of the aircraft into the wind. After clearing the refueling area, the aircraft passed over uneven terrain and at the same time encountered extremely dusty conditions causing the pilot to lose visual contact with the surrounding area. The pilot attempted to hover the aircraft but was unable to keep it airborne. In the process of setting the aircraft on the ground it was moving to the right which caused the right skid to contact a mound of dirt. This caused the aircraft to tip to the right and the main rotor blades to strike the ground. The mast broke below the main rotor head and the aircraft continued tipping to the right

until it was almost in a full inverted attitude. The tail rotor then struck the ground and separated from the aircraft at the 90 degree gearbox. As the aircraft rolled over the pilot attempted to roll off throttle and turned off fuel. Both crew members exited the aircraft safely and a fire extinguisher was used in the engine and transmission areas to reduce the possibility of fire.

From the 19th to the 26th, B Troop supported the 22nd ARVN in Operation Binh Tay II as it conducted a search of Base Area 702. Large bunker complexes were located and destroyed by air strikes. On several occasions bombs were delivered within 15 minutes of request. This was the result of the personal interest and rapport of USAF LTC Hyland, the Senior FAC supporting the 22nd ARVN, with B Troop.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop AH-1G #68-15076 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the bottom forward fuselage, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17790 flown by an unnamed crew. One crew member was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

On the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss with fatalities and injuries record for A Troop UH-1H #69-15115 at grid YU830740 near the ARVN artillery compound at Bon Sar Pa. The crew consisted of Aircraft Commander CPT P.J. Blake, copilot 1LT J.W. Armstrong, gunner SP4 W. Pointer, and crew chief **SP5 James Herbert Craig**. The record indicates there was a local officer passenger. The Wall database gives Craig's tour start date as 18 Dec 1969 and his MOS as 67N20. The 1970 A Troop AUH is completely silent on this event and SP5 Craig is not listed in the In Memorium section. The accident summary states:

The aircraft was started and the crew prepared for departure from the Bon Sar Pa helipad vicinity coordinates YU830740. The takeoff was made into a light wind from the northeast. Before the aircraft reached translational lift, CPT Blake, the pilot, saw a strand of communication wire strung about fifteen (15) feet above the ground and perpendicular to his flight path. To avoid the wire he immediately lowered the collective and decelerated the aircraft into a tail low attitude, which compounded by a slight downslope, caused the tail stinger and heels of the skids to contact the ground and rapidly push the tail back into the air, thereby lowering the nose. The nose of the aircraft, specifically the chin bubbles and radio compartment, contacted the ground. The aircraft then pitched up and to the right in a tail high, nose low attitude causing the main rotor blade to strike the ground. The aircraft then pitched to the right on its nose and was flipped onto its left side when the main rotor blade struck the ground. The aircraft came to rest about twenty five (25) feet south of where the skids initially contacted the ground. The door gunner and two passengers immediately exited the aircraft. 1LT Armstrong turned off the fuel and was pulled from the wreckage by crew members of another helicopter. CPT Blake completed the shut down of the aircraft and exited. He then took a count of his crew and found that SP5 Craig was missing. SP5 Craig was located partly under the wreckage near the crewchief well. Numerous attempts were made to free SP5 Craig. Finally a wrecker truck arrived and lifted the wreckage from SP5 Craig. He was dead at that time. The aircraft did not burn although JP4 was running out the tanks and a red smoke grenade was set off. The smoke grenade also cooked off two or three .50 caliber rounds.

SGT Leroy 'Arkie' Rutherford recalls: I was the Lift Platoon Sergeant at this time. The Troop was living in tents at Ban Me Thuot East but I recall that we still had some aircraft at Camp Enari. 115 was our C&C ship. It had the extra radio console and a 50-cal mounted on the left side instead of

the normal M-60. As I understand it, when the aircraft rolled over on its side SP5 Craig was pinned by the 50-cal and died there. The passengers were the liaison team from the ARVN ground unit as well as FO for the ARVN artillery. This accident happened early in the morning. We had another ship that was our alternate C&C bird. By about 9 or 10 o'clock we had the console removed from 115 and installed in the other Huey, so the operation continued. The pilots and SP4 Pointer were taken back to East. Then a Chinook came in and lifted 115 out. SP5 Craig was well liked and there were a lot of hard feelings about his death. I think that CPT Blake was transferred out of the Troop the next day because we didn't see him anymore.

SP5 Chuck Strong provided: I remember SP5 Craig – he died when one of our Huey's hit a commo wire and crashed. He was a quiet guy. I remember he didn't go on R&R so he could save his money to buy a motorcycle when he got back home. My ship was refueling when we got the call that they'd crashed and he was pinned under the Huey. Our pilot told us to stop pumping fuel and we quickly flew to the crash site to see if we couldn't lift the Huey up to free Craig. That didn't happen. What a waste of a good man!

On the 24th, the sqdn ORLL dated 10 Aug 1970 states that WO1 Ernest P. Lyublanovits assumed the duties of Sqdn S-5 replacing WO1 Roy H. Majors.

Also on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16453 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, at an altitude of 10 feet, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 25th, A Troop's Scouts received intense fire while on a recon mission believed to be in Cambodia. Two observers were wounded and their Guns made runs with rockets and miniguns. This action resulted in the discovery of a very large enemy compound. The results of the mission were the completed destruction of all buildings, bunkers, and four vehicles. Three additional vehicles were also destroyed on a different approach to the area. Three enemy surrendered under the Chou Hoi program on this same day. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage records for two A Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions. (1) #67-16311 took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left and right bottom cockpit, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired. Two crew members were injured. (2) #67-16361 at an altitude of 100 feet, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and aborted the mission. One crew member was injured.

From the 27th to the end of the month, B Troop worked northeast of Pleiku and killed one NVA and detained another.

On the 28th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #67-16310 flown by an unnamed crew. One crew member was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the left bubble, they continued flying and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired.

From the 29th to the 31st, C Troop supported the 22nd ARVN Div in the Ben Het and Dak To area and reported receiving 37mm AA fire for the first time. Their Guns and an air strike were employed on the position resulting in several secondary explosions.

CPT Pete Kacerguis provided: On the 31st I was flying C&C with CWO Rodney Rowe. We were doing our usual stuff south of Dak To and north of Kontum. I got a call from the Squadron S-3 that the District HQs at Tan Canh was getting hit by a barrage from Rocket Ridge. We were to get there ASAP and help out. We had our usual five (two Scouts, two Guns and the C&C) ships working the AO. I talked to the folks at Tan Canh. We never landed but went straight for the attack by fire point of origin. Picture in your mind a 90 degree angle that had as its apex the District HQs. This was a

ridge that was to the west. Then dissect that with a 45 degree lower ridge that was hidden from the District HQs view and to the west of the 90 degree angle. Well, we crossed the 90 degree ridge at about 3000 AGL trying to get a good look for smoke, rocket trails, etc. Then all hell broke loose! We had AAA come after us BIG TIME! I am talking about airbursts!! It was a "12 O'clock High" kind of a day. Our five-ship formation broke up real quick. The Guns rolled in and shot up the 45 degree ridge. About 5 minutes later I sent the Scouts in to look around. The lead Scout got stood up on his tail with a secondary explosion - no smoke, just dirt going up about 100 feet into the air. I called the Air Force for help and the Fast Movers came in. They had all sorts of additional secondaries - twelve if I remember correctly. Again there was no smoke - just dirt spurting up from underground explosions down the length of the ridge after the Air Force nailed the place. It really ticked me off that I didn't bring my camera that day. It was just an incredible scene of awe with the FLAK and the secondaries. I landed at the Squadron HQs at Holloway and told them what we'd experienced. After refueling at An Khe we landed at An Son. Before I got drunk I had a phone call waiting for me. It was from the 1st Aviation Brigade HQ - BG Heminway. He mentioned the air bursts that we reported and said he didn't realize that the NVA had guns that big that far south. I said something really intelligent like, 'Well, they do!' To this day I know we really hurt them that day and we didn't loose anyone, so it was a real good mission.

On the 30th, A Troop's Scouts once again discovered a large compound of enemy soldiers in Cambodia. Closer observation revealed many buildings, bunkers, and a number of their installations for the use of enemy personnel. Their Guns made their runs and their efforts totaled out the complete destruction of the compound and an unknown number of enemy KIA.

Also on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for C Troop AH-1G #68-15047 flown by 1LT E.E. Whitehead. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads: During take-off, the RPM decayed. The aircraft flew to a level area but made a hard landing. Inspection continues to determine the total damage. Rotor wash from a nearby CH-47 may have contributed to this accident.

On the 31st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop AH-1G #67-15832 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack approach target area, they took hits from anti-aircraft fire in the left engine comp, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

During this month it is possible there was an undocumented event relating to B Troop UH-1H #66-16019. The Goldbook database states that after serving with B Troop since August, 1967 at Ft Knox for a total of 1,853 hours this aircraft was turned into the 604th TC CO in Pleiku and returned to CONUS where it did not fly for approximately one year. The aircraft's last duty station was with the US Army in Germany in 1975. According to the Ruthless Rider database SP5 Allen Reed was the CE on this aircraft during parts of 1969 and 1970. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

June 1970

During the last part of May and all of June, D Troop provided a ready reaction force for the ACTs and provided convoy escorts from Camp Holloway to Duc Co, the Oasis, and FSB Blackhawk.

On the 1st and until the 3rd, C Troop worked for the 1st Bde south of FSB Blackhawk and killed one NVA.

On the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage and loss records for two B Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions. The records state that both aircraft had one crew member fatality and one injury. The records indicate the aircraft were in the AO and may have been involved in a mid-air. (1) #66-14393 and (2) #67-16444 at grid ZA131587. The VHPA KIA database states that B

Troop lost **SP5 Edward Michael Dugan** possibly serving as a Scout observer and **SP4 Earl Ray Webb, Jr.** possibly an Infantry man serving as a Scout observer. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Dugan, 2 May 1969, 11D2F; Webb, 25 Oct 1969, 11D40.

SP5 Tim Flood recalls: I believe a CPT Roy Whitley was the pilot in Dugan's aircraft and they were the team leader. They were on a VR north and east of Pleiku. CPT Whitley make a right turn and the other aircraft clipped him.

CPT Kirk Curran provided: I was the Operations Officer during this period of time. The troop was very short of Cobra pilots. I'd guess we only had about nine. We had to fly at least eight each day unless we used guys that weren't Cobra qualified in the front seat. I recall flying C&C some of the time but mostly Cobras. I was flying a Cobra when this terrible event occurred. As I recall the events, we were in the process of replacing teams in the AO. Thus there were two teams of little birds and two teams of Cobras circling the area. The outgoing team leaders each briefing the replacement team leaders. It was just about time for the outgoing teams to depart when someone said on the radio – 'OK, lead, show me the target area again.' I don't know if the call came from the C&C or one of the Cobras, I just don't know. Anyway, we can only assume that both Scout team leaders thought the call was for them, so both started in to over fly target area. Somehow they didn't see each other and collided. [Editor's note: Others who were in B Troop at the time mention there is the possibility that one or both LOHs received fire and as they maneuvered to adjust for this situation, they collided.] They ricocheted off each other and crashed immediately within a few yards. Both were on fire. As I remember it, the pilots of both aircraft were on the up side of the wrecks, so they were able to get out. Both the Observers died. Both pilots were injured sufficiently to be evacuated out of country. Some months after I returned to CONUS, I met CPT Roy Whitley in California. His face was badly burned in this incident. I recall he told me that he couldn't smile anymore because the scare tissue robbed his face of that capability. He said he was most upset because he couldn't even smile at his newborn daughter. My heart always goes out to guys like that who have serious scares from their tour in Vietnam.

CPT Ron Bath was flying the C&C recalls: //Insert the material from his tape recording here.//

CPT Roy Whitley in a conversation with Mike Law provided: I really don't remember what happened that day. All I can tell you is that I started remembering when I woke up in this hospital. I recovered and completed a 27-year career in the Army. As a matter of professional courtesy I trust you will understand that I have no desire to provide details or data. Indeed if I had a wish it would be for the spring and summer of 1970 including my tour with the 7/17th Cav to just go away. Clearly that won't happen but those are my feelings.

The reassignment losses section of the 4 June B Troop morning report states that both CPT Roy Whitley and WO1 James L. Fitch were reassigned to the 6th Convl Cntr APO 96377. It is safe to assume that WO1 Fitch was the pilot of the second OH-6A involved in this tragic incident.

A Troop Moves to Camp Holloway from Ban Me Thuot East

On the 5th, A Troop moved back to Camp Holloway and until the 23rd was in direct support of MR II while working the Dak To, Ben Het, and south area.

From the 5th to the end of the month, C Troop supported the 173rd Abn Bde near LZ English save for the 24th to the 28th when they worked for the 4th Div north of An Khe. Activities throughout the area were characterized by moderate enemy contact. Ground to air fire was sporadically intense. Numerous caves and bunkers were destroyed by combined arms firepower. C Troop was credited with 24 NVA killed during this period.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with fatality record for C Troop LOH #65-12937 flown by WO1 Richard A. Bradley and **WO1 Danny Lee Dewey**. The Wall database states that Dewey began his tour in Vietnam on 29 Apr 1970 and his MOS was 100B.

1LT John Nelson recalls: This was my very first mission in country. I was flying with CPT Vern Overturf who was both an SIP and the Lift Platoon Leader. We were doing an orientation and check-ride flight when we received a call from the AO that a LOH had been shot down just outside of Phu Cat in the 506 Valley. I would later learn that Dick Bradley was giving Dewey an orientation flight in the LOH. During the VR, they received 12.7mm fire. Dewey was hit and mortally wounded. Dick wasn't hit but the LOH was damaged. At that time, C Troop was flying two LOHs and two Cobras with one C&C has the normal reconnaissance package. I don't recall who was flying the other aircraft. The Blues were going in about the time we arrived over the site of the downed LOH. Almost immediately we were asked to be the last ship on the insert because the Blues already had Dewey in a body bag. We landed. They put the body bag in the back of the Huey and we flew to the Grave Registration team at Phu Cat. That was my 'welcome to Vietnam' flight!

At the 2006 VHPA Reunion Charlie Deach visited the 7/17th Cav Mini-Reunion and provided the following information about Dewey: Danny and I became good friends in flight school. He wrote me a letter just a few days before he died. I received it a week later and learned from another friend of ours that he had been killed. It was special to received a letter from someone you knew was dead! In the letter he told me that he'd completed the OH-6A transition school at Vung Tau and was excited to start flying LOHs in the AO. He told me that he wanted us to go on R&R together. I believe I learned that he was killed on his first flight in the AO. Naturally, I was really impacted by his death. I flew for the 192nd AHC in Vietnam. The story doesn't end there. About 1993 I was loading a rock crusher by myself at work. I looked up and Danny was standing on the machine looking right at me! He simply said, 'Call my mother' in a very clear voice and then he was gone. I didn't have Mrs. Dewey's phone number or mailing address but recalled his home town and was able to speak to her. She shared with me that ????? [Editor's note: Sorry I can't recall what Charlie told me.]

SP4 James Irvine provides: I joined C Troop's Blues in Jan 1970 as an 11B after completing Leadership Training and AIT at Fort Polk. I was an RTO on many of our inserts. I was transferred to a security unit at Bien Hoa near the end of June. I was not in the Troop when the Blues had so many men injured in the July 4th crash but I heard about this sad event in Bien Hoa. I was pretty faithful in writing my parents and my mom kept all the letters and photos I mailed home. She even has part of my uniform and other things I had in Vietnam. In my letter dated 6 June, I wrote that I was wounded while riding in a Huey near LZ Two Bits. I wrote: 'I got some shrapnel in my left elbow as the result of a 50 cal machinegun round hitting our ship. I would have really got a good blast but my radio caught around 9 or 10 pieces of shrapnel. I had my radio on. We had been inserted to pick up the body of a loach pilot. We took fire going in and coming out from our Landing Zone. We got out without a scratch, and headed through the pass. The 50 cal machinegun opened up on our ship missing my back about 8 inches. If it had been a foot in any direction it would have killed 1 or 2 of about 8 on the helicopter, as it was it got closest to me. It gave me a good scare. By the end of 30 minutes we had lost one loach, two helicopters, and one Huey Cobra. They inserted a company of 173 AB rangers to secure the craft we got the body out of and from the time they hit the ground till this morning they were under heavy attack. We have all the helicopters running but one slick.' I was sitting near the pilots' radio console when a 51 cal round came up through a corner of the console and exited out the ceiling above me. The exit hole was at least an 8 inches rip. I never received my Purple Heart for those wounds. In addition to this event, I remember a red headed boy from Missouri couldn't take it anymore and shot himself in the foot with his M-16 while pulling guard duty at An Khe. I remember a SGT Stacowski(?) in the Blues and another sergeant E6 or

better – he was a dark complected ‘big old boy.’ I took pictures of every helicopter that was destroyed or damaged in the sapper attack at An Khe.

From the 6th to the 23rd, B Troop supported the 1st Bde, 4th Div in Operation Wayne Hurdle to the south of FSB Blackhawk. Light enemy contact typified the operation but numerous new bunker and structure complexes were found and destroyed by the Scouts and Guns.

On the 6th, the sqdn ORLL dated 10 Aug 1970 states that CPT Arthur H. Thomas assumed the duties of Sqdn Flight Surgeon replacing CPT Joseph P. Chollack Jr..

On the 9th, A Troop, while on a VR mission near Ban Me Thuot, uncovered a large bunker complex used to house a 50 caliber anti-aircraft weapon. Their Guns rolled in on the target completely destroying the weapon. Closer inspection revealed several large boxes labeled ‘Danger High Explosives.’ These were important ordnance that the enemy would never use against allied troops.

Also on the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16575 flown by an unnamed crew at grid BR335398. The record states the crew had two injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took one hit from B-40 rocket type exploding weapon, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

On the 10th, A Troop did a "day trip" back to Ban Me Thuot and found a large enemy complex including 10 bunkers with 4 under construction, a number of sleeping areas, several hooches, and personnel equipment spread throughout the area. After the Guns prepped the area, the Blues were inserted. They found a sizable quantity of food, NVA clothes, medical supplies, and an extensive array of personnel equipment. This was destroyed. The Scouts then had the ARP sweep through another nearby complex but this one was extensively booby trapped. The Blues’ skill and professionalism proved without measure once again as they analyzed and avoided the pending hazard. Taken from the second complex were useful documents left by the enemy. After the Blues were extracted, the Guns destroyed the second complex.

About this time 1LT John Nelson became the Blue Platoon Leader for C Troop. He recalls:

A few days after I joined C Troop I was assigned to be the Blue Platoon Leader because I was Infantry. For the next three or so months the only flying I did was from the base camp out to the staging area in the AO and back. That was the way I got my flight time. I remember serving with the following Blues: SSG William A. Ramsey was the platoon sergeant, SP4 Hodges was the point man, SP4 Randy Godfrey was one of the M-60 men, and the RTO was PFC McCarty. C Troop used the Blues regularly – I’d guess we were inserted about 15 times a month

On the 11th, the sqdn ORLL dated 10 Aug 1970 states that CPT Clyde A. ‘Lou’ Hennies assume command of C Troop replacing MAJ Hahn.

Also on the 11th, SP4 James Irvine wrote in his letter (12th June) home: ‘We went to check out a bomb strike. We found a lot of caves, clothes, and some huts. When we got back to An Khe we found out that we had walked through a NVA battalion base camp. It was occupied too. They were monitoring the NVA frequencies at a nearby fire base and the NVA said we were walking al around them. It was kind of unusual for 21 men to walk through a battalion base camp without a shot being fired.

On the 17th, A Troop's Scouts observed five men with weapons running toward a bunker complex near Dak To. The Guns killed three. The Scouts were checking the area out after the Guns had finished, when they received intense AK-47 fire. During a running battle, the Scouts killed three more.

On the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16244 flown by WO Richard A. ‘Dick’ Bradley and SP4 Ron Strickland in the front and **SFC Robert Harrison Pilk** in the back at grid BR842762. The decoded details of the record state that this

was a recon mission, during the attack on target, they took multiple hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. Both Bradley and Strickland were evacuated to the States because of burns they received in this incident. The Wall database gives Pilk's tour start date as 29 Dec 1969 and his MOS as 11D40.

SP4 Ron Strickland recalls: By this time I was flying as the backseat Scout in the lead ship. On June 18th, only a few weeks or days away from my DEROS, I was asked to fly a mission on the 19th with Dick Bradley as pilot, SFC Robert Pilk in the backseat and myself as front seat. We would be the lead ship. Our mission was to recon an area where an American advisor with ARVN unit had contact with a battalion-size NVA element the night before. During our recon we found rucksacks and a machine gun position. We used our skid to knock the machine gun over. Then we marked the position with smoke. We were told to hold the north of this position at about 500 feet. While climbing out of the area, the aircraft exploded and burst into flames. The aircraft exploded from the rear section and flames from the rear swept to the front of the aircraft like it was coming from a blowtorch. Then there was a second explosion. There was a lot of screaming on the radios. I recall the C&C saying over the radio to the other aircraft, "Get in and get them!" Our LOH crash landed on its right side with my door and windshield into the ground so I could not get out. The flames were going upwards so I was no longer in them. Mr. Bradley was above me trying to exit. His seatbelt was still fastened. I reached and pulled the lever on his seatbelt then pushed him out. Upon exiting the aircraft there was no one around. I did not know at this time that SFC Pilk had been blown from the aircraft. I checked the back of the aircraft for him and saw that he wasn't there. My flight suit had melted to me. I removed my gloves as they were melted and my flesh came off with them. The ammo inside the LOH was cooking off. I could see the VC moving through the jungle. I heard them talking and yelling and understood what they were saying about the aircraft that was down. They were yelling to kill them, meaning us survivors. By this time the Cobras were firing. I could only hear them but not see them as my eyes were burnt and the jungle was so dense. I was so afraid I was going to be captured and I was too messed up to become a POW. Not knowing which direction to go I was moving through the jungle when a Huey landed across a small creek in a clearing in front of me. I crossed the creek. The water felt so good to my burns! As I climbed into the Huey, one of the pilots said, "Oh My God!" This is when I knew I was screwed up. I was told at this time that Mr. Bradley had already been picked up. I did not see him anymore after he exited the aircraft until we linked up in the Qui Nhon hospital. The Huey took me to LZ Two Bits. The med team came out to the Huey, shot me up with meds, put me on ice and off I went to Qui Nhon Med. After a few days there I was sent to the Intensive Care unit at Camp Zama, Japan. The last time I saw Mr. Bradley was at Camp Zuma. After I was stabilized, they moved me to Brooke Army General in San Antonio, TX. After I got off the medical evacuation airplane in CONUS, I was interviewed by a reporter for the Time/Life magazine. He took pictures. While I have never seen the published material, I believe it was in the July or August issues.

CPT Pete Kacerguis recalls: I was flying as the Lift platoon leader with the Blues that day. SSG Pilk's LOH was flying near what we called 'The Crescent' which was northwest of LZ Uplift, when it just exploded. He was the only one killed. The pilot of the Scout was the same pilot who was with SP4 Garrett when he died.

SP4 James Irvine, serving with C Troop's Blues, wrote in his letter home: 'Well today we had another man killed and 2 men burned real bad. We had to go get the body. It was just a pile of ashes. He had burned inside the helicopter. We had two helicopters down with 30 meters of each other. There was a lot of hostile forces around the area.'

CPT Barry Speare recalls: I was flying with SP5 James Yamnitz in the second Scout team. We landed to recover Sergeant Pilk's body.

Also on the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16083 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 three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor blade system, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated.

Also on the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #65-12940 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 in the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16113 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 10 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the right bottom engine compartment and right bottom tail section, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated.

On the 21st, A Troop worked with a group of Pathfinders northwest of Dak To on the remains of five downed aircraft (one USAF Jolly Green Giant and four UH-1Cs). The Lift ships were busy all day with the Pathfinder teams as they recovered bodies and extracted equipment from the aircraft. Even though the area was infested by NVA, they avoided contact with A Troop during this day-long effort.

On the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for C Troop UH-1H #67-17327 flown by an unnamed crew at grid CR022760. 1LT John Nelson recalls:

I think WO1 Parmater was the CP on this ship. It was the second ship to insert the Blues. As the Blue Platoon Leader, I was on the first ship. This was a single ship LZ on natural bench on the side of a steep mountain. I believe the Scouts had seen something near the top of the mountain and the C&C inserted us to move up there to check it out. Almost immediately after the first ship left, we saw movement in the glass between us and the trees going up the slope so we started firing. As 327 approached the touch down point, I heard a loud BANG and saw blades and stuff flying everywhere. They may have been hit by a B-40 or something big. There were five or six Blues plus the crew on the ship. The Huey hit the ground near to front of the bench and flipped over going down the hill. I immediately told three guys to provide covering fire and three of us went to help with the injured. Amazingly enough everyone got out of that ship without serious injury!

SP4 John Basile recalls: I was rifleman and one of the Blues on this aircraft. There were three newer guys on the left side. I later learned one of them was SP4 Melvin K. Revels. I was on the right side facing the downward slope of the hill. We were still about 50 feet up when the engine seemed to sputter and the ship started acting funny. I had been with the Blues for 8 months and 27 days, so I knew it was time to get off! I remember shoving the guy in front of me out and then jumping. I broke my left arm and right leg in the fall but didn't know it immediately. While I was laying on the ground, I collected my weapon and tried to stand up. Naturally, I couldn't and it was then that I realized I was seriously hurt. The guy I had pushed out had a cut over his eye but was otherwise OK. We landed just below the point of the hill and the Huey touched down just above us on the hill about 5 to 10 feet from me. I remember thinking or fearing that it would roll over on us, but it hit the ground and bounced over me before tumbling down the hill. You know the glass bubble near the pilot's pedals – I remember seeing that go right over me! Revels had gotten out of the aircraft on the flat bench. The Huey's engine was thrown from the wreckage about 700 to 800 feet down the hill – it was fairly steep. I think everyone had gotten out with the first 50 to 100 feet. Someone helped carry me to the C&C bird. I must have been in shock by then because I can't remember too many details. I was in the Qui Nhon hospital for about two days, then Japan and finally home. I still have a copy of the telegram the Army sent my folks. It reads that I was 'slightly wounded in action in

Vietnam on 23 June 1970 while passenger on a military aircraft on a military mission when the aircraft landed and a booby trap detonated. He received a sprained right ankle. The aircraft burned but did not crash. He was treated and hospitalized in Vietnam. Address mail to him at the hospital mail section, APO SF 96347. Since he is not repeat not seriously wounded no further reports will be furnished.' When I think about the Blues, I'd say the platoon usually had about 18 men with 3 NCOs.

SP4 Randy Godfrey recalls: I arrived in country 6 Feb 1970. When I first joined C Troop I was in a group of seven guys: Greg Papineau, Ron Hutchins, Thomas Dryson(?), Terry Kahl, and ?? I wasn't in a squad as such. We always went out as one big grunt platoon. We'd go out to Two Bits or LZ Uplift and wait. Then they'd put us in when the Scouts found some gooks. I was in a couple three crashes. On 23 June 1970 I was in one on the side of a mountain near the coast in the Uminh Mountains. I had just stepped off the Huey. It either took a hit or he touched his tail rotor on a rock. I do remember a big explosion before it rolled down the mountain. I ran down the mountain and kicked in the window shield to get the pilot out. I can't remember his name, but I thought he was going to kiss me. He was hanging upside down in his straps. I cut the straps to get him out. It was starting to burn. I remember the pilot was from Savannah, GA. Every time I'd see him after that he always gave me a big smile. He told me he was going to get me every medal in the book but I never got anything. Well, that isn't true – I ended up with three Bronze Stars for my tour. I believe one was for this action. This crash was a few weeks before that chopper crashed down near LZ English – the one that was shot down at night – the one that Doug Guillaume was in. I know the crew chief got messed up on that chopper that went down the mountain because he was on the far side. I believe all the grunts go out all right. I think Thomas Glidewell was with me and Greg Papineau. Bob Schiefen was on the other side but the chopper just rolled over him. I remember a LOH came in to get the injured crew chief out. I'd guess we had at least four injured men that needed to be evacuated but I don't think any of them were grunts. We were going to do what I called 'scrub duty' – looking through scrub bushes and rocks. We'd clear them out. We were landing on the side of a hill about three quarters of the way up from a beach on a small flat area. We were shooting going in. I remember seeing the people on the ground firing. I was standing on the skid so I could fire as well. I remember grabbing the barrel of the M60 as I ran down the hill. I burned my hand on the hot barrel. After we got everyone out, we moved back up the hill because there was still a firefight going on.

Also on the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for C Troop UH-1H #67-17346 flown by WO1 R.G. Yetmar, copilot CPT W.B. Wilson, Crew Chief SP5 R.A. Yanz, and SP4 E.S. Grant. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

On or about 1620 hours, UH-1H crashed at CR038787 approximately 12 kms east northeast of LZ Uplift. (Editor's note: several words are missing here) was CPT William B. Wilson, the Crew Chief was SP5 Randall A. Yanz, the doorgunner was SP4 Edgar S. Grant, Jr. There were five passengers who were members of the Aero-Rifle Platoon of C Troop. They were SP4 Melvin K. Revels, SP4 Chouncy Reidout, SP4 Wendell P. Irving, PFC Robert L. Schiefen, and SP4 Kenneth L. Sager. All nine occupants of the aircraft were members of C Troop. As a result of the accident there was major damage done to the aircraft. At approximately 1620 hours a flight of three UH-1H aircraft were making an extraction from the PZ at approximately CR038787, aircraft #67-17346 had the above stated crew. The aircraft took off out of the PZ on a heading of 210 degrees. The copilot, CPT Wilson, was flying the aircraft. After clearing the trees he took up a 60 knot attitude and established a 500 foot per minute climb and was making a turn to a heading of 350 degrees. At approximately 500 feet AGL, the pilot and copilot heard a loud bang and the low RPM audio came on and experienced a severe drop in RPM. The pilot, WO1 Yetmar, took the controls and entered autorotation. The pilot and copilot went through the emergency procedures for low side governor

failure, due to the heavy weight, low airspeed, and low altitude the pilot did not have time to turn the aircraft 180 degrees into the wind. The area that the pilot had to autorotate into was a white sandy beach along the South China Sea. The beach consisted of rolling hills and sand dunes. The winds in the area were generally out of the south with strong omni gusts at ground level. The only area that WO1 Yetmar had to land to was a level area between two large sand dunes. He had to flare high and level to make it over the near dune and once over the dune had to flare the second time and start his pitch pull high to keep from hitting the far dune. The pilot ran out of pitch and the aircraft fell through from about five feet above the ground. The hard landing caused the major damage to the skids and tail boom. There were no injuries to any of the occupants. One passenger dislocated his thumb while exiting the aircraft. WO1 Yetmar completed his shutdown of the aircraft then exited the aircraft.

SP4 Randy Godfrey recalls: I remember that C Troop had another Huey crash that same afternoon when I was involved in the on the side of a mountain near the coast in the Uminh Mountains. This one was on the trip back from LZ Two Bits. We were already back and wondered what had happened to them. At first we thought they were going to take us back out there to secure it, but they'd already gotten them out. That was out there near the highway. I believe a tank was near-by to secure the site. Bob Schiefen was on that ship. He and I were pretty close. I'd lost touch with him after Vietnam but he met up with a cousin of mine and called me. I remember others in the Blues at this time where: SSG Ramsey made E-7 I think during my tour. SGT Deno Royez and a SGT Sky. I also remember of SGT Queen.

On the 24th, A Troop screened for the 22nd ARVN and B Troop for the 2/8 Mech Inf in Operation Binh Tay IV whose objective was to evacuate approximately 12,000 Cambodian military personnel and their dependents, with all their equipment and personal belonging, from the towns of Ba Kev and Labang Siek. For the rest of the month, A Troop supported MR II working AOs around Pleiku and north of Kontum with few significant activities and light enemy contact.

Also on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #69-15981 flown by WO1 R.N. Dalby and Crew Chief SP4 G. Branigan. The record indicates there was one unnamed passenger, but this could be an error. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary read:

WO1 Dalby preflighted the aircraft at 1645 hours. The only discrepancy noted was a cotter pin missing from the N1 linkage. This was replaced before the engine was started. There was some difficulty in starting the engine but the pilot attributed it to the fact the electric driven fuel pump was inoperable. The aircraft run-up and hover departure were normal. Then the aircraft departed Camp Holloway Christmas Tree heliport and headed south. Approximately 15 minutes after take-off the engine failed. At that time, the aircraft was about 400 feet AGL and had an airspeed of 40 to 50 knots, and autorotation was immediately entered. The autorotation was terminated one foot above the rice paddy water with no forward airspeed. The rice paddy was the nearest forced landing area, and had approximately two feet of water. Despite a full load of fuel, three passengers, and a density altitude of +4880 feet, the tail boom was not severed.

On the 28th, A Troop's Scouts came upon a small building complex with enemy soldiers and equipment north of Pleiku. The Guns rolled in, destroyed the complex and killed one NVA. The Blues were inserted to survey the damage and to make a sweep of the area for intelligence purposes. They found cooking supplies and equipment.

1SG Herbert Richie served as D Troop's First Sergeant from 4 July 69 to 4 July 70. During the 2006 Squadron Reunion, he provided: When I arrived at D Troop, I replaced an Acting 1SG named Jones but he was on emergency leave in the States at the time. My over all impression of my tour was how rewarding it was to work with these young people. The other idea that comes to mind is the lack of

leadership. We only had twelve sergeants E-6 and up. That made it very demanding for these men to look after the health and welfare of the men who sometimes seemed to be running wild. I didn't believe in Article 15s or Court Martials too much – I'd rather just work some guys' butts off. When guys didn't want to fly, they were often assigned to D Troop. That didn't make them bad people. I seem to recall we have about 150 men in D Troop. There was always something to do in Vietnam. Somethings, like the move to Camp Holloway, was just work but were not difficult. During my tour D Troop patrolled the Dragon Mountain area around Camp Enari and the road to the south. We also did convoy escorts especially after we moved to Camp Holloway. We also patrolled from Kontum south either by ourselves or with the ARVNs. I especially liked an E-7, PSG Grahousky. He was the 2nd platoon sergeant. I believe I had a good working relationship with the Squadron CSM.

The following article titled "B Troop, 7/17th Cavalry Slugs Enemy Near Dark To" dated about June 1970 and believed to be from the Army Times. (Editor: naturally Dark To should be Dak To).

Camp Holloway, Vietnam. LOH and Cobra gunships of the 17th CAG's B/7/17th Cav joined forces with Air Force Phantom jets and artillery fire to kill nine NVA soldiers and destroy 13 122mm rocket tubes and 24 enemy bunkers in a thickly wooded area five miles south of Dak To in Can Tun Province (Editor: should be Kontum Province). Just after 8 a.m. the Ruthless Rider element started screening for a platoon size element of the ARVN 24th STZ. LOH pilot CPT Clarence E. Rogers, of Williamstown, WV, after following several enemy trails came upon a 20 bunker complex and several trenches. "As I was flying on my second pass over the bunkers my observer spotted four 122mm rocket tubes aimed toward the Dak To-Tan Canh area," CPT Rogers said. WO James D. Salyer, of Kenton, OH, was flying lead scout helicopter for the second team which had just come on station, marked the enemy position. Immediately two flights of Air Force fighters struck the area with rockets and 1,000 pound bombs and destroyed approximately 15 bunkers and two trench lines. The air strike also resulted in a secondary explosion, according to the lead Cobra pilot CWO Ray H. Christ of Arcadia, FL. The scout LOHs then returned to the area and finished screening for the ARVN platoon. Before too long the lead scout aircraft drew heavy automatic fire. "Mr. Salyer's observer managed to mark the target just as they pulled out from the small arms fire," commented Mr. Christ, "and allowed the fighter planes to saturate the enemy position with rockets." Three NVA kills were credited to the Air Force. "It was almost time to relieve us," Mr. Christ noted, "when the friendly ground troops came upon what was estimated to be two platoons of enemy soldiers. I rolled in with my gunship, followed by my wingman, and we blew the place apart with our rockets and minigun fire," he said. Later in the day the ARVN platoon found six enemy soldiers. After returning to the area of operations, CPT Rogers' team, while screening ahead of the ARVNs, found six old bunkers with charcoal pits and four bamboo hooches. Due to the proximity to the friendly element, the commander of the mission, B Troop executive officer CPT Ronald R. Bath, of Lakeland, FL, called for artillery fire on the rocket and bunker positions which had been found earlier that morning. During the barrage a bunker which contained nine more rocket tubes and the entrance to several tunnels were blown open. CPT Bath again called for the fighter planes which destroyed five more bunkers and produced four secondary explosions. The lead scout ship of the first team flown by Mr. Salyer, meanwhile was working northeast of this bunker complex. There he found three more automatic weapon positions and called for Mr. Christ's Cobra. "One automatic weapon doughnut was destroyed. We then returned to our primary concern, the first rocket position," said Mr. Christ, "and continued marking targets for the phantom jets and screening for the ground elements." When the Ruthless Rider scouts and Cobras left they accounted for nine more rocket positions and three more bunker complexes destroyed.

Many 7/17ers may remember working on various Civil Affairs Projects during their tour. All battalion sized units were assigned one or more local villages. During this period, the Squadron had a number of Montagnard villages with names like Plei Poo Ngo, La Son, and Tu Tam. D Troop seemed to work

frequently with the orphanage at Tu Tam. The OR-LL reports that the NVA left a mine for the Squadron's S-5 team; but the villagers found it and showed it to the team who had it destroyed.

SGT Lew Waters, who served with the 412th TC Det and C Troop from June 1969 to December 1970, wrote an article titled *Maintaining the LOH* for the VHPA 2002 Membership Directory. His article reads:

An Easter egg with a stick, that is how I heard the OH-6A most often described. To me, the shape might have been somewhat unconventional, compared to the more notorious Hueys, Cobras, and multitude of Army helicopters that preceded it, but it was a pure dream to maintain. I still remember it being pretty much the hot rod of Army helicopters. For those of us who repaired or crewed them, the LOH was the absolute best chopper for the job it had to do. I always thought it designed to hold up to the rigors of combat flight in Vietnam. In fact, I can only remember two men ever being killed as a result of one crashing. The rest of our dead were killed by enemy fire. To this day, I don't think there was a more suitable helicopter in the Army inventory for Vietnam. Hydraulic systems were always a concern for helicopter mechanics as they were very susceptible to enemy fire and subsequent loss of flight controls. In the LOH, we had a cyclic vibration damper consisting of 6cc of hydraulic fluid. That was the entire hydraulic system. All of the flight controls were mechanical, consisting of tubes and bellcranks. The LOH pilots told me, the LOH flew just as easily, if not easier, than the rest of the helicopters. Hueys, Cobras and other helicopters were prone to what is known as a 1:1 vertical vibration, meaning one vibration per revolution of the main rotor. In the LOH, we all but completely eliminated that. You see we didn't track the main rotor with a flag, sticking it into the rotor while it was revolving. With the LOH, we could mount four sensors on the swashplate and a pick-up underneath to power a strobe light. Then, we could attach reflectors to the ends of the four main rotors and actually watch what each blade was doing, both on the ground and in flight. Pretty much like using a timing light on your car. With this, LOH jockeys got really used to smooth flights. In fact, I think we spoiled them a bit. For combat flying, you couldn't ask for a safer helicopter. Many didn't know that the 'Egg' shape was used for structural stability, as well as a 'keel beam' construction down the belly and two 'A' frame type supports behind the pilot and crew seats. This construction is much like the roll cage used in Stock Car racing today. Add to that, the engine mounted low and to the rear, at a 43-degree angle, it would actually pull itself and the main rotor transmission away from any occupants in the event of a crash. Many a pilot and observer are walking around today, telling their war stories, as a result of this design. The LOH was a tough little bird. One incident reminds me of how tough they really were. Our unit was flying in support of a 173rd Abn unit, sometime in the fall of 1969. As memory serves me, one of their 11Bs took some shrapnel in the throat, severing his jugular vein. His wound was so severe, there wasn't time to call in and wait for a Medevac chopper. One of our LOHs, a wing bird, landed, dropped their minigun and took the wounded soldier and the medic aboard. The pilot valiantly tried to fly that LOH as fast as it would go, exceeding its VNE by some 20 knots. Sadly, the man's wounds were so severe that he didn't make it. The LOH was brought back to Lane Army Heliport, at An Son and thoroughly inspected for possible airframe and mechanical damage. We had to clean a lot of blood out of the interior and replace a couple bubbles, but a tear down of the engine showed no significant damage to it and an airframe inspection showed little or no damage to the rivets or fuselage. In a matter of days, it was once again flying missions. I would have to say our sheet metal shop was probably the only ones over worked on the LOH and then, only because they had so many bullet holes to often patch up. I can remember our Maintenance Officer and Test Pilot, CW2 Al Whaley, shaping the first patch for a newly received LOH that had taken its first round in our unit, in the shape of a heart. Too bad we never came up with any purple paint. Another minor problem that developed with the little birds was losing some two feet of the horizontal stabilizer at the tail. This was traced back to a harmonic vibration set up in the airframe when firing the minigun at a rate of 2,000 rounds a minute. The faster rate of 4,000 rounds a minute did not set up this vibration, so our

pilots were stuck with one rate of fire. Good thing the miniguns were limited to a three second burst, as the LOH could only carry 2,000 rounds of ammo. Due to the conditions they were flown under, we spent many a night working into the wee hours of the morning repairing battle damage and readying LOHs for the next day's mission. In C Troop, it was the LOHs that always had the highest flight availability, one time actually achieving a 100% availability. Our reward for our hard work and determination to 'Keep Them Flying' was Mr. Whaley bringing the next scheduled Periodic Inspection in some 130 hours early. But, that was war. What else would we have done - go to Qui Nhon and enjoyed a day or two at the R & R Center?