

1972

The primary source materials for this year are: For HHT, a Yearbook titled "71 - 72 Anson, Vietnam" which has ten significant pages provided the CPT Kiltau. For A Troop, a 15 page 1971 AUH prepared by 1LT Dan P. Slona. For B Troop and H Troop, 17th Cav a 70 page Camp Holloway Vietnam 1972 Yearbook provided by SP4 Jimmy Gibson. For C Troop a 68 page 1972 Yearbook which has ten significant pages. For H Troop, 10th Cav, a Yearbook titled "1972 Anson" which has ten significant pages. Also for H Troop, 10th Cav, a ORLL for the period 2 May – 31 Oct plus an AAR: Pre-X-Day documentate dated 2 Feb 1973. For D Troop, a more than 20 page 1971 – 1972 yearbook showing CPT Arthur H. Trujillo as CO provided by SGT Luis A. Rodriguez "Pancho". For the Squadron, nothing. Additionally, the Eagle Combat Aviation Battalion was formed about April 1972 to manage the 17th CAG aviation units at Lane AAF. The National Archives has a nice collection of Eagle Battalion S-3 logs. The Battle of Kontum website <www.thebattleofkontum.com> built by then CPT John G. "Jack" Heslin who served as the 52nd CAB S-3 and Briefing Officer provides great details about the Battle and the period of time from

January 1972

A Troop – Reassigned to 7/17th Cav from the 10th CAB

On the 1st, A Troop was reassigned to the Squadron from the 10th CAB and supported the last elements of the 101st Abn Div located at Cam Ranh. Poor weather hampered A Troop's activities from the 4th to the 6th.

C Troop Returns to Lane from Camp Holloway

Sometime during early 1972 C Troop returned its main operational assets to Lane after having served at Camp Holloway from November 1971.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record C Troop OH-6A #69-16044 flown by un-named crew. The aircraft was recovered to An Son. The Goldbook database indicates the aircraft had served with A Troop during Dec 1971. It was turned in to the 604th TC Co for CONUS repairs. There are no other details in this record and there is no accident summary. Anyone with additional information about this incident should contact Mike Law.

On the 8th, A Troop was chased from an AO near Bao Loc by high winds and friendly artillery. The C&C was asked to evac two ARVN wounded from a FSB to Phan Rang. For the remainder of the month and for February, A Troop's assignments would change again. The thinning of American forces in MR II, A Troop's resources were deployed on a piece meal basis, making it virtually ineffective as an ACT. For the first half of the month, C Troop was operating from Camp Hollowing but about mid-month they returned to Lane.

CPT Arthur H. Trujillo, the departing CO of D Troop, wrote the following in the 1971 – 1972 yearbook:

It was from a sincere desire to command Delta Troop "The Falcons" that I was privileged in being selected as its commander in July, 1971. Through the direct and indirect association of all its members, I too have learned much about life and living. In so doing, I reaped your loyalty as I, in return, bestowed it upon you. Many of you have given much to our unit and taken little and (words missing) have given little and taken much. We reap the harvest of what we have sown. The nation has called each and everyone of us to serve her, whether it is to our bidding or not. You did not shirk your duty upon her call. Many of you will be the responsible leaders of the future and in so being, you can dip into the cup of experience to guide you along the path of leadership, whether at the heights of the ship of state or as a concerned citizenry in our cities and towns. For those of you

who will be returning to civilian life, I wish you the best of everything and hope that your experience in Delta Troop and in Vietnam will make you a better citizen, a credit to the Nation in your depth of understanding and experience. To you, like myself, who have chosen the profession of a soldier and guardian of our beloved country, I can only hope that your experience with our unit enhanced your spectrum regarding our profession, our obligation, our responsibility, and last but not least, our integrity. I bid you my officers, my NCOs, and especially men, farewell, and may God be with you upon your chosen course and take you home safely to your loved ones. CPT Arthur H. Trujillo, Infantry, Commanding

In the yearbook all the officers and many of the NCOs and EM are wearing a beret and some have the Ruthless Riders pocket patch. The Operations TOC was called the Puzzle Palace. The following individuals are listed in the Delta Troop 'Falcons' Pleiku 1971-1972 Yearbook. The list is presented alphabetical by last name.

Abran SP4	Font SP4	Nutting SGT
Allen SSG	Freeman SP4	Oddo SGT
Ashcraft PV2	Froncek PFC	Ogren, Roger 1LT, 2 nd Platoon
Atkins, John 1LT, Motor Officer	Gates SP4	O'Keefe, Raymond W. CPT, XO
Bailey SSG, 3 rd Platoon Sergeant	Gordon SGT	Owens PV2
Bailey SGT	Gorski PFC Mortar	Page SGT
Bailey SP4	Gray SGT	Parker SSG
Baker SP4	Gray SP4	Pauk SP4
Baxter PVT	Griffith SP4	Reed SGT
Bebelez SP4	Grinstead SGT	Reed, Norman SP5, Motor Pool
Blanton, Claude SFC, Field 1 st SGT	Halamka SGT, 3 rd Platoon 106 jeep	Robert SSG
Bloesser SP4	Hall, Franklin SP4, Motor Pool	Robertson SGT
Bluford SSG	Hallman SP4	Robinson PV2
Bray PFC	Halskad, Bruce SP4	Rodriguez, Luis A. SP4 Mortar
Dennis H. Brookover 1LT, Operations Officer and 1 st Platoon	Halstead SP4	Ryerson, Bill SSG Mortar Platoon Sergeant
Brotherson SP4	Harbacek SP4 Mortar	Santiago SP4
Callahan SGT	Harsh, Mike CPT grounded pilot	Segura CPL
Callahan SP4	Hipp SP4	Sears, Mike SGT, Supply SGT
Caluori SP4	Hite, Joey SSG, Operations SGT	Shaw PFC
Camp PV2	Horseay SP4	Smedley SGT
Carlyle SGT	Jackson SP4 Mortar	Stahl SP4
Carney PFC	Jett SP4	Stevens SSG
Carnley SP4	Kaltwasser SGT	Strohl PFC
Castillo SGT	Kanaris SP4	Sullivan SP4
Chatham 1LT grounded pilot	Kemock SGT Mortar	Taylor SGT
Childree SGT Mortar	Kendricks, Ken 1LT, Supply Officer, 3 rd Plat Ldr	Tetzlaff SP4

Collins PV2	Kushinsky SSG	Thomas SP4
Cox SSG	Lalonde PFC, Motor Pool	Thorton PFC
Cox SP4	Lehman SGT	Trujillo, Arthur H. CPT, CO
Craft PFC	Lepinski SP4	Uzzle, Jim SGT, 3 rd Plat
Cupp SP4	Littlejohn, Jim SSG Mortar	Vaughn SP4
Cuppett SGT	Lynch PFC Mortar	Villwock SP4
Danczuk SP4	Marien SP4	Volk SP4
Davis SP4	McKinnie SP4	Wallace SP5
Davidson PFC	McMoore SSG	Welborn SP4
Dengler SP4	Means SGT	Westwood, Donald E. 1SG, First SGT
Diaz SP4	Mellil SP4	White SSG
Downey, Fred CPT	Misner SGT Mortar	Whitis SP4
Eaton SP4	Monjar SGT Mortar	Wiggins SP4 Mortar
Emanuelson SGT	Moore, Thomas SGT	Yaklin PFC
Fisher PFC	Murphy SGT	Yates SP4
Foley SP4	Nelson SSG	

1LT Ken Kendricks provided the following comments concerning the Delta Troop Yearbook: CPT Trujillo was a pilot. He always wore a flight suit as his workday uniform. I believe he was both fixed and rotary wing rated. He DEROSed soon after the Yearbook was published. CPT Ray O'Keefe moved up from XO to CO. He was the last CO Delta Troop had in Vietnam. CPT Fred Downey was an Infantry officer.

On the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft loss record for C Troop AH-1G #68-17081 at grid BR788652. CPT Chuck Scribner provides:

This event happened on my birthday. I was new in-country and I was being orientated by CPT Denny B. Bedard who was the gun platoon leader. I was going to take over that platoon. I was in the front seat and he was in the rear. We had gone up to this SF unit because they had some sort of movement in their AO. This was not far from LZ Crystal in the Suoi Ca Valley. We started looking at this ridgeline and suddenly started taking 51-cal fire from it. I think we were a heavy team – at least two Snakes plus at least one LOH, maybe more. I believe WO1 Roger Lone was in the other Cobra. It was a routine mission. We'd done this many times before and never found a darn thing. This time they opened up from one ridgeline, so we rolled in on that point. We were in our second pass. All of a sudden another 51 opened up from another position and shot our tail rotor. Denny was still flying. He did a marvelous job of bring us down in the bamboo patch. The thing I remember is that the horizon was just going around and around, but he kept the aircraft amazingly level. When we hit the canopy exploded right off. The blade may have flexed down to take off the canopy. So we were two lucky guys that it didn't get us. I remember un-strapping and going straight back to Denny. I think he was a little dazed. I sort of helped him out and at the same time reached behind him to get an M-16. There was one magazine near it but like a dummy I didn't pick it up. So I had the M-16 with only one clip of ammo! We definitely could hear people so we started down the hill. I fired the M-16 a little. I don't remember exactly how far we ran but we came to this clearing. It was like magic! There was this LOH sitting in this clearing waiting for us! So we got in the back of the LOH and there was firing. Denny was shooting his pistol and I still had the M-16. It was like some kind of combat movie or something. The LOH pilot's name was Blevins, I think. Afterwards I asked him why he'd landed there. He said, 'Well, Sir, that was the only place I could have landed.' God had blessed us – we had just happened onto the only clearing in the area. Neither of us were hurt but it is my opinion that we would have been captured quickly without that rescue. Then we went to the SF camp. They gave us some liquor. I remember them toasting us because it was my

birthday. As far as I know the Cobra was not recovered. It was C Troop's custom to call in an airstrike on Cobras rather than try to recover them.

On the 21st, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft loss with a fatality record for B Troop OH-6A #69-16051 at grid YA972491. CPT William 'Wild Bill' Norton was the pilot. **SGT Jimmy Lyn Dunagan** died while flying as an observer in this aircraft. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 8 Mar 1971 and his MOS as 11D2F.

WO1 Rich Clayton provided the following to the VHPA in May 1999: SGT Jimmy Lyn Dunagan was KIA serving with B Troop. I was present when he was shot down. There was also a CPT aboard the LOH and I always thought that he was KIA at the same time. He was the platoon leader. I can't remember his name. I was new to the unit, flying my orientation as a gunner, I think it was my second time out. I became a scout pilot the next day. Later I was the LOH IP for the troop. The incident I remember involved the LOHs coming under enemy fire, Dunagan's aircraft went in an additional time and there was an explosion in the cockpit, a WP grenade went off in the aircraft. The aircraft went straight in from about 30 feet up. I didn't think anyone survived. It would be great if I am mistaken.

WO Steven James provides: Concerning the day SGT Dunagan died, I ate breakfast with him in the messhall that morning and carried his body from the field that afternoon. The reason I ate breakfast with Dunagan and a couple of other EM that morning was because most of the EM flight crews and AOs were on their 2nd and 3rd tours. They had extended to stay in this Cav Troop. Growing up I worked summers with my Step-Dad and his painting crew carrying ladders, mixing paint, and sanding sheetrock and anything else that a painter's helper did and they were all WWII Navy and Army combat veterans. They had seen a lot of combat and without knowing it they educated me to understand that the NCO's ran the military. I gained a lot of insight from those guys and I naturally gravitated to them in my own military career. I learned to listen to those who know early, regardless of rank. SGT Dunagan was looked up to by everyone. I was considering taking an OH-6A transition at Vung Tau and wanted to fly with the Scouts until he got killed, then I woke up to the reality that I could end up like him and my primary mission was to survive!! Not that I had a much better chance as a Pallbearer as it turned out. Anyway that was my reasoning at the time. SGT Dunagan was the first KIA I had seen since I arrived in country in August. I was still a peter pilot and Dunagan was an AO with several tours under his belt. We were flying out of Plei Djerling to find some NVA with the scouts and insert an ARVN platoon nearby. The Secretary of the Army was in the C&C bird watching the operation. I didn't see the aircraft get hit, but they said it was an RPG. The former Scout lead (CPT Mike Trees) was flying in a Huey as Pallbearer Lead and he went in and picked up "Wild Bill." My ship came into the LZ and picked up the body of Dunagan. I looked over my shoulder and saw that he was partially burned and his body was oozing blood onto the floor where he had been dumped by a couple of ARVN troops. When we pulled out and headed back toward Pleiku I heard Trees say he was taking fire. He was maybe a mile ahead of us and I saw no indication of ground fire or heard any. A month or so later Trees got the Silver Star for getting "Wild Bill" out while taking heavy ground fire. Norton had a twisted ankle, maybe it was broken. He was medivaced and we never heard from him after that.

On the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft accident record for C Troop UH-1H #67-1726 crewed by WO1 Ted W. Clymer as pilot, and WO1 Terry Cornelison as co-pilot near An Son. According to the website guestbook, Mac Fulton served as CE for this aircraft. An edited version of the accident summary states: The pilot was taking off from a heavily stumped and treed PZ with 8 Vietnamese soldiers on board when the aircraft struck a tree. The aircraft continued its mission and on return to An Khe shut down to inspect the blades. Aircraft was flown back to Lane AHP for inspection by maintenance. Both blades were slightly damaged.

On the 25th, A Troop sent three AH-1Gs and two Hueys to An Khe due to a heavy enemy build-up in the central highlands. At the same time, two LOHs were sent to An Son for convoy cover.

On the 29th, an A Troop LOH performing VR for the 101st Abn saw seven enemy near Cam Ranh. The LOH took fire and was hit, but the Guns killed five.

On the 30th, A Troop found a small enemy force in the same area as yesterday's action. The Guns fired on this force with unknown results.

A Troop Reassigned to the 17th CAG

CPT Billy Miller provides the following comments on life in A Troop during this time:

After the 10th CAB stood down, A Troop reverted back to Squadron control but really the 17th CAG in Nha Trang was calling the shots. We made several trips to both An Son and Nha Trang to see who we would be working for and to determine what future plans they might have in mind for us. As it turned out for the first couple months we were THE aviation resource for the southern half of MR II. We actually picked up resources from former 10th CAB units as they stood down. I'd guess we got up to about 50 aircraft plus crews which was about double our normal TO&E compliment. About 20 of these were Hueys but we picked up some Cobras too. This information may help explain how we were able to send three or four ships a day to the various Province Senior Advisors, have a Scout and Gun team at Dong Be Thin as a quick reaction - ready reserve, send a couple LOHs to do road recons in the Dalat, Boc Loc, and Song Mao areas, and still conduct relatively normal Air Cavalry operations. It might make reading the Operations reports from that period a little easier to understand. There were rumors that A Troop had 58s instead of OH- 6s. This is not true. A Troop had only 6s right up until the end. I must admit that the NVA did not have a major presence in that area and the most of the opposition came from the VC who had been hunted and hurt for a long time. This made our operations less dangerous. We rarely experience large cal AA fire. But, whenever we went back to Pleiku or other northern areas in MR II we quickly changed tactics as we flew against the NVA. As more units stood down, Phan Rang was one of the few places where helicopters could refuel. I know this sounds strange, but the days of going most any place and being able to get fuel were gone. We often called ahead to make certain we could get fuel. Because Phan Rang had fuel, we got lots of visitors. Many of them brought rumors that we would be standing down as well.

The 31st was the ending period the RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm Awards In 1973 via DA General Order #32, the B Troop was awarded the RVN Gallantry Cross for the period 1 Oct 1971 to 31 Jan 1972. for B Troop.

The HHT 71-72 Anson Yearbook contains a one page history section. Until a better date is determined we will use the end of January 1972 as the date for this book. The Squadron Medical Officer, CPT 'Doc' Kiltau provided only ten pages from this Yearbook. Mike Law is very interested in obtaining a complete copy of it. The following individuals are mentioned in alphabetic order:

Anderson, Jack W LTC Squadron CO	Dowdy SGT	Morrow 1LT
Belden CPT	Harvey, Thomas H. Jr. MAJ Squadron XO	Patterson SGT
Blake SGT	Hatcher SGT	Post SGT
Bodelson, Patrick J. CPT Squadron S-3	Hood SP5	Smith, Bryon CPT Squadron S-1
Boghain SGT	Geraghty, Richard CPT	Smith, William G. 1SG HHT 1SG
Bowers 1LT	Gibbs CPT	Splichal, Jimmy WO1

Bowman SGT	Glenn, James A. CW2	Stoeser CW2
Brown MAJ	Glenn SGT	Tidwell SGT
Carlisle SGT	Kegelmeyer CPT Aircraft Maintenance Officer	Vietti LT
Cole, Christopher CPT HHT CO	Kiltau CPT Squadron Flight Surgeon	Voss CW2
Citrino SGT	Lane 1LT	West, Orby L. CSM Squadron CSM
Cromnell SGT	Mabe CW2	Weston CPT
Daniels SGT	McDagald, John C. 1LT HHT XO	Wilder CPT HHT Flight Platoon Leader
DeLacy CPT Squadron S-2 Domin SP4	Morrell 1LT	Williams CPT

The second page of the Yearbook hosts a photo of ‘Ruthless Six,’ LTC Jack Anderson’s C&C UH-1H. It clearly shows a 50-cal doorgun of the left. A hand-written note beneath the photo reads: “There were two 507s. 15507 (UH-1H #68-16507) and 16507 (UH-1H #69-15507). 507B (assumed to be #69-15507) was the Commander’s AC with 50 cal.”

The last few sentences of the unit history page read as follows: In late January 1971, the Squadron was split with the line troops being assigned to battalions with 17th Combat Aviation Group and Headquarters Troop moving to Qui Nhon, RVN. Again in June the troop moved, this time to its present location at Lane Army Heliport, An Son, RVN. With the last move came increased responsibility for two Air Cavalry Troops, three Assault Helicopter Companies, one Assault Support Helicopter Company, and one VIP Aviation Company.

MAJ Thomas H. ‘Mike’ Harvey Jr. recalls: During the summer of 1971 I attended Cobra school en route to Vietnam for my third tour. On my first tour in 1963-64 I flew Caribou. Then in 1967 I served with B/1/9th Cav and in 1968 I commanded C/1/9th Cav. I joined the 7/17th Cav in September 1971. I got along well with LTC Jack Anderson. Jack loved to fly combat and was very interested in maintenance – you had to be in those days. He made me the Squadron XO. I had that job for 4 or 5 months until I was assigned to USARV to help administrate all the units that were standing down. I think that was about Dec 1971 or Jan 1972. I remember CPT Byron Smith was the S-1. He was a real ‘Cav hero’ having flown Scouts for a while. He was serving in one of the lift companies until we needed him in the S-1 job. I also remember CPT Larry Smith who was given the S-4 job. We really needed that are cleaned up. He later became a Major General. CPT Pat Bodelson was a good officer. He served at the S-3 after being in one of the lift companies. Whenever I needed flight time, I’d fly with C Troop in the front of a Cobra. Jack basically made me the Anson base commander even though there was another officer in that position. These were very interesting times. I’d say the race relations was nearly all consuming for me. It was a real nightmare. I remember going with another Major to meet a group of I’d guess more than 40 black soldiers near the swimming pool. They had some legitimate grips and were demanding fair treatment. I promised them that everyone would be treatment fairly even if it was unpleasant for all parties involved. There had been a fight between the Koreans and some blacks. This was difficult to work out because the Koreans did pretty much whatever they wanted. Not long after that a Warrant Officer got drunk and started threatening those around him (blacks and whites) with an M-79. By the time I got down there with just my 45, he’d tried to fire the thing but it misfired, so they jumped him. The MPs took him away. I also got to answer the congressional letters. Someone had complained about the whorehouse located in the no-man’s land between the Anson compound and where the Koreans lived. I also answered with the truth. Yes there was a whorehouse there but we had no control over that area. Yes we tried to discourage soldiers from going there, but clearly that wasn’t going to happen. So we

sent our medical team to inspect the ladies weekly. Never heard anything else after I sent that letter. Drugs were also a big problem. I remember once a CH-47 that wasn't from Anson accidentally passed very low over a hooch and blew part of the metal roof off. I'd guess there was about 200 lbs of pot stored in the rafters that ended up all over the area. Like I said I got along with Jack Anderson very well and with the 17th CAG CO, COL Merriman. We had a few OH-58s and everyone wanted to get checked out in them. There were big arguments. Finally I said – I am the one who decides who will get checked out. Things quieted down on that subject. I remember there was considerable discussion around the idea that the bad buys were spying on us from the nearby hills. We started interviewing guys to lead some SRP (short range patrols). One guy came in and announced he was ready to kill those guys. Out the door he went. We really need observation teams and that is what we deployed. At least one of the teams reported seeing what they believed was a Chinese Officer. Years later when I was a BG I attended a function in Chinese and was talking with a Chinese general officer about my age. I suggested to him that maybe we served in Vietnam about the same time. He just looked at me with an interesting smile on his face. Like I said – I was only in the Squadron a few months but they were interesting time for sure.

WO Jimmy Splichal provides: After flight school I received an OH-58 transition en route to Vietnam. I arrived in May 1971 and served with the Casper Platoon (the Aviation Platoon of HHC/173rd ABD BDE) at LZ English. While I flew Hueys a little with them, I spent most of my time in an OH-58. I joined HHT 7/17th Cav in September 1971 when the 173rd stood down. Almost immediately the 7/17th Cav sent me to OH-58 IP training in Vung Tau. I think that was in October. I remember my first 'student' (to receive an OH-58 transition) was MAJ 'Mike' Harvey. He was a good pilot but rather head strong (in a good way). I remember we were making a poweroff autorotation once and it was going poorly. I said to him, "I've got it." Remember I'm still a WO1 and he was a senior Major; but I was the Instructor Pilot and certainly had a lot of experience flying the OH-58. He replied, "No, I'm going to get this thing on the ground one way or the other." And he did without crashing. I remember CPT Chris Cole very well. He was a very likely guy. A West Pointer but not a rated pilot. He and I were roommates for awhile. I DERORED in March 1972 after receiving one of the first 60-day drops to be handed out. That didn't make me sad at all!

The C Troop 1972 Yearbook contains no history section. Until a better date is determined we will use the end of January 1972 as the date for this book. [Editor's Note: The names of 10 EM are missing because the copy used to develop this list did not include their names. Anyone with a copy of this yearbook is encouraged to contact Mike Law so this situation can be corrected.] The following individuals are mentioned in alphabetic order:

Adams SP4	Fofanoff SP6	Powell, Tom CPT
Agamao PFC	Gabriel SP4	Prather SP4
Aiken PFC	Galbreath, Robert SP4	Priest SP5
Allen SP5	Gallegos PFC	Rader SP4
Anclien, Charles SP5	Garthwaite SP4	Reid WO1
Bedard, Dennis CPT	Gilpin SP4	Reynolds SP4
Beers SP5	Gonzales SP4	Richards, Larry WO1
Blackwell SP4	Hall SP4	Robinson J. WO1
Blazek, Patrich 1LT	Hammerich SFC	Rockhold, Neal CPT
	Maintenance	
Botnen, Bob CPT	Harrison SP5	Romer PSG 1SG
Bradshaw SP4	Henson SP4	Rose SP4
Bridges SP4	Hoefle SP4	Russell WO1
Brown, Edward MAJ CO	Hughes SSG	Russell SP5
Brown, Zane CPT	Humphries SSG	Scribner, Chuck CPT
Bullerwell SP4	Isaacs, David WO1	Scruggs PFC

Bussiere SP4	Johnson PFC	Sheppard, Rick WO1
Butz, Tom CPT	Johnson CW2	Signor SP4
Chadwick SP4	Jones SP4	Slocum, Jim 1LT
Charles SP4	Jorge PFC	Smalls SP4
Chilman, David 1LT	Kleiner, Martin CPT	Smith PFC
Chimenti PFC	Krabec, Warren 1LT	Snodgrass SP4
	Maintenance	
Clarke, Kevin CW2 Pilot	Leary PFC	Soden SP4
Clink, Jeff CW2	Lone, Roger WO1 AH-1G	Stacey, Douglas S. SGT
	Pilot	Mess Sergeant
Clymer, Ted WO1	Lucius, John WO1 Pilot	Stark SP4
Coker PFC	Macmillan SP4	Starnes, Bill 1LT
Cole CW2	Madsen SP4	Stobbe SP4
Coon SP4	Martin SP4	Strzynski SGT
Cornelison, Terry WO1	McNutt, Ron CW2	Sudeck, Roy CPT
Culwell, Ken CPT Scout Plat	Meeker SP5	Suttle, Fred CPT
Daniels PFC	Meister SP4	Terry SP4
Davis PFC	Mickerson SP4	Thurman, Jerry 1LT
Davis SP4	Middendorf, Richard CPT	Tyson PFC
Davis SGT	Middleton SP4	Valenzuela SGT
Decker SGT	Mojica PFC	Varner, LD 'Al' WO1
Dooley SP5	Morgan PFC	Veacht SP4
Drolshagen, Jeff CW2	Morphew SP4	Vecchione SP4
Durham SP5	Moore J. SP4	Wagner WO1
Ellis SP4	Mundy SP4	Waido PFC
Elmore SSG	Neal SP6	Walton SP5
Estrada SSG	Nielson, Rolf WO1	Waugh, Frank CPT
		Maintenance
Fisher SFC	O'Donnell SSG	Webster 1LT
Fix, Don CPT XO	Pesce, Paul PFC	Wieland SP4
Flagle SP4	Peterson SGT	Wolfe SP4
Fox SP4	Phelps SP4	Woods SP4
Fulton, Mac SP5	Polachowski SSG	Wyatt, Wallace 1LT

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to A Troop UH-1H #68-15689. The Goldbook database states that after serving with A Troop since it came from the factory in June, 1969 for a total of 1,300 hours including 3 in December, 1971; this aircraft does not appear in the Goldbook database after December, 1971. The VHPA Helicopter database is silent about any battle damage or loss event during this period of time for this aircraft. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to B Troop OH-6A #67-16084. The Goldbook database states that after serving with B Troop since October, 1971 this aircraft logged 41 hours in December, 1971. This is the last record in the Goldbook database for this aircraft. The VHPA Helicopter database has nothing for this aircraft during this period of time. One can assume that something bad happened to this aircraft in January, 1972. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to C Troop OH-6A #67-16113. According to the Goldbook database, this aircraft logged 5 hours in Dec 1971 and zero

hours in Jan 1972. Sometime during that period, most likely, December, it was transferred to the 604th TC Company and hence to Hughes Aircraft for some major repairs.

SP4 Glenn E. Carpenter recalls: [Need to insert a transcription of his tape recorded interview here.] I served with A Troop from Mar 1971 until it stood-down and left for CONUS. Most of the time I was the CE on UH-1H #68-15301.

February 1972

A Troop Assigned Cam Ranh base Security Mission

On the 1st, A Troop supported elements from Phan Rang to An Khe. Each day the pilots were forced to become more flexible. They were now doubling as resupply for what remained of the 101st as well as base security for Cam Ranh. Two Cobras and two LOHs performed a daily VR of the Cam Ranh area. Each night a Huey Night Hawk patrolled the Cam Ranh perimeter. The LOHs also doubled as VIP couriers.

1LT Doug Buchanan provides: I was in A/7/17 Cav late 71 through early 72 at Phan Rang when it stood down. I flew slicks. 1LT Bob Bickel and I were rangers, so we traded off each day flying and being inserted as the ARVN blue platoon leader. We operated from Phan Thiet to Plieku. Flew Nighthawk at Cam Ranh Bay awhile. Big spot light and 50 cal in Huey. When the Troop stood down, I went to 60th AHC supporting the Koreans at Nhin Hoa until March 73.

On the 3rd, A Troop began construction of defense bunkers and fighting positions in anticipation of a coming offensive.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07783 flown by an unknown crew at grid AS805149. The record provided no other details. Anyone who can provide details is encouraged to contact Mike Law.

On the 9th, elements of A Troop at An Khe came under sapper attack during the night. The Guns launched and expended onto the perimeter. Ten enemy were killed and the gunstrike helped the capture of two more. Again CPT Billy Miller provides us with a good insight for this period.

I am not certain when Tet was that year but it was a pivotal date. Many of the military leaders believed there would be a major enemy push before or near Tet that year, so we stayed in the over-strengthened situation I described earlier. But Tet was a non-event that year and I guess that by mid-Feb we started receiving disposition instructions to turn in equipment and to swap or turnover aircraft. I was pretty busy during those days because I was a Cobra IP and was in good demand giving 90-day check-rides. We actually started having problems keeping guys current. At that time we worked under the 179-day rule. If you had been in-country 179 days or more, then that would count as a full tour and you would DEROS with the unit; else you were reassigned to another unit. We started sending people out in February and this made many people very unhappy. MAJ Turecek was a master at organization. He broke the disposition instructions down into a series of tasks then assigned an officer and an NCO to each task. As pilots came off flying status because they were no longer current, they were given these tasks. We got a lot done in a very short period of time. I remember we made lots of trips to III Corps areas to drop off aircraft, equipment and/or people. We had a couple "turn over teams" that included a maintenance officer, a senior crew chief, plus the crew to bring them back. We'd TI the ship before it was sent and fix everything we could. Many of the receiving units were really surprised that we weren't giving them "dogs" but we went to extra effort to give them the best we could.

On the 13th, B Troop was involved in a very interesting operation.

WO Steven James wrote: On 13 Feb 1972 we captured some NVA. We found about 50 NVA in the open west of Dak To. We were staging out of Dak To II that day. A VNAF O-1 Birdog had over-

flown the NVA unit as it was crossing the border area west of Dak To. These were new, raw infantry types moving through an open field. This, of course, was a mistake because they got spotted. This might have been part of their training because they fell down on the ground as a group, put their rifles on their chests and just laid there. I guess they hoped that no one would see them because they weren't moving. Anyway the O-1 saw them. There was an American USAF pilot in the O-1 with the Vietnamese pilot. They had the standard load of four marking rockets. When they fired a rocket, one or two of the NVA got up to run out of the field; so they fired another rocket ahead of them. This second rocket caused the NVA to turn around, return to the group and lay back down. At that point they called up B Troop. First the LOHs and Cobras got there. The Cobras fired everything they had; fleshettes, HE, minigun and 20mm. Then they called in several sets of F-4s. Then the Scouts went back in and found some still alive. They were trying to decide if they would use the Pallbearers to bring in an ARVN ground force to capture some of them. We had already heard rumors of troop and tank movements in the Ben Het area. These people were a little south of Ben Het. You could also see the roads being built. Naturally this was all part of the build-up and preparations for what would be the Easter Offensive. There were several that were still alive but only two were moving around. One of them decided he was not going to be captured by the LOH. He took a hand grenade, pulled the pin and tossed it up in the air trying to get an airburst under the LOH. He called to the C&C and asked if they could kill him. They said yes, so the Observer killed him with his M-60. I was listening to this on the radio. The Pallbearers landed in this big open field that had lots of bomb craters. There were bodies all around the craters. You could see rows of bodies, some pinned together. Many were badly mangled. As we were going in we were going to fire our door guns just to keep anyone's head down in case they were going to shoot at us. Each of my gunners fired just one round and their gun jammed. I was a little scared and nervous at the time. I think I was Chalk 3 of a flight of three carrying about a platoon of ARVN. So I pulled out my 45. I'm in the left seat and I start firing it out the window. I could actually see the rounds arc out toward the distance point of impact. The empty casings were bouncing off the windshield and falling back on me. I'd never done this before. One of the casings got into my shirt and burned my chest. Anyway we landed, the ARVN got out and policed up three NVA. They were young guys. They looked like kids. They had packs and AKs. The ARVN separated them and put one on each aircraft. The NVA they put on our ship was only slightly wounded. Actually I think he was really more shell shocked from the bombs than wounded. He was bleeding from the groin area. So I had my camera. After we got back to Dak To, I took some pictures. I titled one 'Photo of 18 captured NVA.' Other than the fact that they didn't have a helmet on, they looked just like the ARVN. Even their uniforms looked that same.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop AH-1G #67-15675 flown by CW2 Ralph O. Davis as AC and CPT Richard Delgado as pilot/gunner. The Accident Summary reads:

At 0655 hours CW2 Ralph O. Davis aircraft commander and CPT Richard Delgado pilot/gunner, of Bravo Troop 7/17th Cavalry Squadron, Camp Holloway completed their preflight and run-up of AH-1G 67-15675 without incident and began their hover out of the revetment towards the active on a properly scheduled and authorized flight. Shortly after departing the revetment while hovering on the taxiway, the aircraft experienced a sudden loss of power and the aircraft commander performed a hovering autorotation without damage or incident. Thinking that he had merely failed to roll the throttle on all of the way, the aircraft commander performed another run-up check without incident with all systems operating normally. The aircraft commander then took the active, formed his flight and took off as the lead aircraft of a flight of eight other aircraft and proceeded north towards his destination. Approximately five minutes later at 0710 hours while flying enroute at approximately 500 feet AGL the aircraft commander attempted to increase his power from 24 lbs of torque to 30 lbs of torque. The power increase caused an immediated decay in engine RPM down to 6000 RPM

and the N1 dropped to 90%. The aircraft commander was unable to maintain altitude or RPM and elected to attempt a minimum power landing to the highway (QL/14) running parallel to his flight path. The aircraft commander made a left 180 degree turn towards the highway and was approximately 200 feet from the intended touchdown point at approximately 50 feet AGL when the engine lost all power. The aircraft fell through and landed exceptionally hard with approximately 20 knots of forward airspeed. Both skids were spread on the aircraft as it landed. The aircraft slid approximately 167 feet down the road, veering off of the road to the right and came to rest upright across a shallow ditch heading 260 degrees.

Also on the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop UH-1H #67-17849 flown by WO1 LD 'Larry' Roedel as AC, 1LT RJ Battaglia as pilot, an unnamed maintenance WO1 as a passenger, SP4 KJ Loughren as CE, and PFC LK Morrow as gunner. The Accident Summary reads:

UH-1H 67-17849 was called to assist in the removal of an AH-1G that had gone down 4 NM NW of Pleiku Airfield. The aircraft was landed in the vicinity of the downed AH-1G and shut down. The Aircraft Commander supervised the loading of the Cobra's armament. The aircraft was started with no Abnormal indications during run-up. It was brought to a hover; checks were green with 40 PSI torque and 97% N1. The AC and pilot referred to the Go-No-Go placard which listed 98.5% Max N1 RPM for a standard day. No note was taken of OAT. The AC then maneuvered his ship for takeoff. Taking off on about 340 degrees, the crew suddenly heard a high pitch whine aft. All realized immediately something was wrong, but just as quick, a loud bang was heard aft. The ship yawed left and the AC corrected the yaw. The aircraft was cushioned with skids level and forward motion. The aircraft had been at a point just prior to translational lift and four to five feet off the ground. The crew exited the aircraft unhampeted. The aircraft traveled approximately 10 feet before the landing gear assembly collapsed. Skids marks verified the above noted skids level, forward motion aspect and 340 degree flight path. Minimal skid spread was determined prior to collapse. The aircraft continued for another 23 feet before coming to rest.

C Troop Assigned Cam Ranh base Security Mission

C Troop assumed responsibility for the Cam Ranh base Security Mission previously assigned to A Troop.

On the 25th, there was a tragic accident. **1LT David Neal Johnston**, AC; **1LT Mark Joseph Fitzgerald**, pilot; **SP4 Roman Lee Jones**, CE; **SP4 Marvin Louis Hall**, gunner; **SP4 Robert Gene Galbreath**, a passenger, all died in C Troop UH-1H #66-16840. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Fitzgerald, 14 Oct 1971, 01981; Galbreath, 28 Jun 1971, unknown; Hall, 7 Sep 1971, unknown; Johnston, 31 Aug 1971, 01981; Jones, 21 Sep 1971, unknown. An edited version of the accident summary follows:

At 1725 local, Night Hawk aircraft #66-16840 took off from Cam Ranh Air Force Base to test the Night Hawk system aboard before being released for that mission. At 1732 local, they requested permission to cross Cam Ranh's southern extension of runway 20. At approximately 1736 the transmission "Engine failure, going down at this time!" was heard from the aircraft. The aircraft was flying north bound at approximately 100 feet when a left and right yawing occurred and the aircraft started descending. One witness stated it sounded like the engine was running down. At about 25 to 30 feet AGL it was noted that the main rotor had slowed noticeably and the aircraft was in a 30 degree nose high attitude. The aircraft impacted tail stinger/end of tail boom first, leaving an accurate account in the sand. The aircraft next hit slightly nose low with the right skid breaking at the rear crosstube. At this point on the ground there was a 15 degree slope running right to left. The aircraft still had forward momentum and rotated around the nose about 170 degrees clockwise hitting the ground nose low and breaking the tail boom. As the aircraft settled a main rotor blade hit the uphill side at about the 10 o'clock position pulling the transmission right and forward and rolling

the aircraft over onto its right side. At what point the aircraft burst into flames is not clear. However it was between the initial impact and the time it finally came to rest. Witnesses stated that no attempt at escape by the crew was observed. The aircraft did not have a crash worthy fuel system. Initial autopsy reports indicate survivable to partially survivable accident without the fire.

Concerning C Troop's assignment of the Nigh Hawk missions around Cam Ranh, CW2 Ron McNutt recalls: My diary is a big help with details about this period of time. I was sent to Cam Ranh Bay from 24 February until 3 April – almost two months. We flew the support missions – first and last light visual reconnaissance around the air base. We also flew support for the 2/327th Infantry. The reason that is interesting to me is I ended up in 1983 making a tour to the Sinai in support of the 2/327th Infantry. We were not TDY to Cam Ranh Bay. We were permanently assigned there. They'd split up the Troop in the spring of 1972. We lived right on Cam Ranh Bay Air Base. I believe we lived in former Air Force billets. They were air conditioned and nice. There was just a Huey, no Cobras or LOHs. During that time period, they were starting to slow down the war. Even C Troop was supposed to stand-down. I was scheduled to leave about 14 April. I'm sitting in the ready room on the 3rd getting ready to go up because I had an 7 April 'pack-up date' back at Lane. However, because of the Spring Offensive at Kontum we were pulled out of Cam Ranh Bay about 10 a.m. By 1 p.m. we were clearing out of Lane and by 6 p.m. that evening we were in Pleiku. It was the next day before the Air Base Commander at Cam Ranh knew we were gone. I believe we had more than one Huey at Cam Ranh. I don't recall who the other pilot was during this period. I remember that we were supported to take over the Nighthawk mission. That was flown by a UH-1 with a big search light rig and a 50-cal mounted on one side and a minigun on the other side. The aircraft had not had a PE in 400 hours and the maintenance support unit there didn't have enough mechanics to do, so they allowed us to do it. On 25 Feb, something happened during a test flight. They crashed over near the ammo dump and caught fire. The Accident Investigation Report said that some clamps for the drive shaft came off causing a loss of rotor RPM. The area around the ammo dump was mined. They didn't know whether the crash or a mine caused the burning. It killed five people. Two of them were my Crew Chief and Door Gunner who had been switched to that aircraft when we got to Cam Ranh Bay, SP Hall (gunner) and SP Jones (CE). This aircraft was going to be a C Troop ship. The pilot and co-pilot had transferred from the unit that had the aircraft and mission prior to this. Because they were experienced with the mission, they were transferred to C Troop. I was one of the first to arrive at the crash site. I identified the bodies of the two men I knew. I took some pictures of the fire but the film was confiscated for the accident investigation. I was in the POL point refueling at the time of the crash. I heard the tower calling the radio call sign for the Nighthawk ship. I saw the smoke on the opposite side of the airfield. We terminated the refueling. I requested permission for a direct take-off from POL point across the runway to the crash site. I was the first aircraft to arrive. There was a road through the ammo dump and we landed on the road. We attempted to get down close to the aircraft and could not because of the flames. At that time I got my camera and started taking pictures for the accident investigation. I was able to identify Hall and Jones because of their positions on the aircraft and because they had been my crew even back at Lane. After that others arrived with fire fighting equipment but the flames were still intense. They just allowed the fire to burn itself out and the recovery happened a day or so later. I was not familiar with A Troop at that time. I didn't know where they were based. The only Troop we had a lot of contact with was B Troop at Holloway. Other than the Cam Ranh Bay support, we flew ash and trash missions for the 2/327th Infantry. They had outposts around Cam Ranh Bay. We carried out food and supplies plus swapped out troops. They were not doing any offensive operations. It was strictly defense stuff for the air base. I do remember one mission where we landed on one of their hilltop outposts. The commander there had not had his men secure their ponchos. I had one fly up into the main rotor. I got out and crewed that lieutenant out. He was very apologetic because he knew we were his lifeline. Fortunately we got the aircraft shut down before it

could do any damage. What usually happens is that the poncho gets sucked into the main rotor but gets tangled with the tail rotor where the real damage is done to the extent that you can't fly out. We were fortunate that that didn't happen.

SP5 Michael Barrett provides: I was at Cam Ranh when the helicopter went down. It was detailed from A Troop with a full crew. I was scheduled to fly in that helicopter the next day. We went out and picked them up. Not a pretty site. I was a CE, was new to A Troop at the time and hadn't been assigned a helicopter yet. From the time I got there till after this happened I flew on anybody's ship who was on R&R etc. We went to Cam Ranh without a helicopter. The Nighthawk missions did not have permanent crews at this time. It rotated between crews and units. I was in the 61st AHC at Lane and C Troop still had some element there when the records say they were in Pleiku. I remember that because I was on CQ one night sitting in front of the orderly room and a jeep came out of C Troop's area and went down to where the helicopters were parked. Their aircraft were parked next to ours. Next thing someone fired up a LOH and was flying up and down the revetments at about five feet off the ground. After about five minutes of joy riding, he hit a revetment and tore off one of the skids. Put it half in a ditch and half out. Shut it down got back in the jeep and drove off. Never got the story on that one. But you have to understand it was not odd to have a unit spread all over II Corp. My own experience in A Troop was in Phan Rang and we had two slicks and four cobras sent to An Khe. One slick and two cobras stayed at Lane and the crews bunked with C Troop. They rotated back and forth. There just weren't a lot of American helicopter units left.

March 1972

Some time during this month, MAJ James M. Gibbs assumed command of B Troop replacing MAJ Robert C. Cassity.

Also sometime during this month, CPT Sam Slaughter assume command of C Troop replacing MAJ Edward Brown.

B Troop was still operating out of Holloway. CPT Barry Gerischer recalls:

I got in country and was assigned to B Troop. The Scout Platoon Leader I replaced went home minus two fingers about three days before I got there. I think I arrived on 21 Jan 72, I do not recall his name. A young Signal Corps 1LT was in charge of the platoon. For the next couple of months it was quiet in the AOs we worked. CPT Melvin Wayne Finch came in early March and was two days senior to me. He was a Huey pilot but wanted to fly scouts. I took him under tow for several days and then made him my wingman. He was a great guy but would not listen. I had created the 10 golden rules of scouting primarily from my first tour with D Troop, 1/10th Cav at Camp Enari. I was a gun pilot at that time and spent a lot of hours with the scouts. Additionally, I was very familiar with the pilots at the east end of Camp Enari, namely the 7/17th Cav, and with the 4th Avn, Gambler Guns. Finch went by his middle name, Wayne. He was so loose as a wingman that no one would fly with him so I kept him on my wing. After a couple of days, I made him a Lead Scout and flew his wing. He put me in so many bad situations that I decided to turn him loose. He became the Scout Platoon Leader and I flew scouts and guns. Wayne commanded the Scouts for about two weeks before the event that would lead to his death.

C Troop had been told they would be standing down and since late in February they had really ceased operating as an ACT. On a daily basis, they had ships all over MR II in addition to having standing commitments. For example, WO Rick Sheppard says they had a Scout and two Guns stationed at An Khe for at least a month. They had LOHs flying as VIP ships and Lift ships flying Nighthawk missions around the larger airbases. All this changed near the very end of the month when C Troop was told they would be staying in Vietnam.

SP4 Tom Barry recalls: I enlisted in the Army and received my AIT at Fort Leonard Wood as a heavy equipment operators, 62E. I went to Vietnam in July 1971 and served with the 577th Engineer Battalion doing roadwork around Cam Ranh until Jan 1972 when I was transferred to C Troop at An Son. There was nothing for me to do in the motor pool but I was given the job of rations driver for the O club. This required me to drive to Qui Nhon on Tuesdays and Fridays in a civilian dodge truck painted baby blue. The club system was not part of the military, so this explains way I used this unusual vehicle. On each trip I'd drop off the list of items for the next trip. I'd pick up frozen and dry food. Beginning in April, I also worked in the motor pool. In May I started driving the 5-ton wrecker and a tractor. Once in a while I helped with the aircraft maintenance by hoisting out a component. We were turning in equipment at Qui Nhon. Some times it was just a day trip and sometimes I had to stay there over night. I remember once I was able to acquire three cases of frozen ground meat and one case of steaks. We were inventoried monthly and this was way over our authorized levels so we had to hide them in various other mess halls until we had a big BBQ. The road between An Son and Qui Nhon was not without its dangers. Once these guys jumped out from the side of the road. I saw that one had a grease gun and that he was shooting at the truck. One round hit the post behind me. I just floored it and got past that problem. The next week someone discovered a 45 slug in a head of lettuce and gave it to me.

On the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop AH-1G #68-17026 flown by 1LT E.L. Craig as maintenance officer and WO1 C.J. Nagy as co-pilot. The Accident Summary reads: LT Craig had taken off from Holloway 05 on a test flight. He had departed traffic and was heading 100 degrees at 80 knots climbing to 4000 feet MSL. At approximately 3100 feet a loud noise was heard from the engine and a vibration was felt in the aircraft. LT Craig lowered pitch and entered autorotation. He turned the aircraft right to 120 degrees, the reported winds given by the tower. He picked what appeared to be a clear forced landing area. He terminated the autorotation with zero ground run, but due to rough terrain, the aircraft swung approximately 45 degrees to the left after making contact with the ground, causing the main rotor to flex down and sever the tail boom. LT Craig shut off the main fuel and battery and he and WO1 Nagy exited the aircraft.

On the 30th, the general assault called the Easter Offensive officially began up in MR I. In MR II the situation had been getting worse and several ARVN FSBs along Rocket Ridge were already under siege. Neil Sheehan's "A Bright Shining Lie" provides a good overall summary of the Easter Offensive in MR II and often refers to aircraft and tactics that could only be ACTs. There is also a good map in the front of Sheehan's book that shows the line of ARVN FBs that ran in a line basically from Ben Het to the river junction west of Kontum. They were in order: FB 6, FB 5, FB Charlie, and FB Delta. Also the town of Tan Canh basically south of Dak To on QL14 would be the center of lots of activity in the weeks to come.

Also on the 30th, VHPA Helicopter database has a helicopter loss record for B Troop OH-6A #68-17200 at grid ZA045798 crewed by **CPT Melvin Wayne Finch** and SP4 Blackwood. Briefly, an ARVN soldier captured by the NVA was being moved north at the same time as Finch and reported that he died of dysentery on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. His remains were returned to America in 14 August 1985. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 6 Feb 1972 and his MOS as unknown. The following is an edited version of the Homecoming II Project synopsis" report dated 1 April 1991:

CPT Finch was onboard an OH-6A on a combat mission in South Vietnam on March 30, 1972. The mission was a recon of a bunker-hooch complex about 12 miles west-southwest of Kontum. During the mission, small arms fire from one of the hooches downed the helicopter. Finch and SP4 Blackwood, also on the aircraft, got out of the crashed helicopter alive. Finch was dazed and injured and had blood on his face and in his eyes. As he departed the aircraft he began running toward enemy fire. Blackwood was unable to get his attention to alert him to run the other way. Blackwood crawled 30 meters to a nearby road and was rescued. Melvin Finch was alive the last time he was

seen. In February 1974, after 591 Americans had been released from prison camps in Vietnam, released ARVN POWs reported and identified Finch and returnee Reeder as two U.S. Army captains they had been held with before the two Americans were moved north. Other unspecified information indicates that Finch died in captivity with other Americans in Quang Binh Province (just north of the DMZ) in September 1972.

After reading an extract from this history, CPT Barry Gerischer wrote: On the 30th, CPT Wayne Finch was leading one team and I was leading the second. I had discovered a very heavily used road beneath the bamboo, southeast of Kontum. When I left the area Wayne's team took over. I went to Kontum to refuel. While I was refueling we got the call that we had a scout down. I remember when I got the call, my aircraft had a leaking gearbox so I took my wingman's aircraft. The AO was about 10 minutes from Kontum. I returned to the area and to my surprise the guns had not fired one round and were not sure where the aircraft went down. The Lead Gun was CPT Richard Delgado, the Platoon Leader. Wayne's wingman, WO1 Ricky Clayton had gone ballistic and could hardly talk. I got him on the other radio channel and he directed me down the valley into the general site. He flew behind me, but I knew he was short and did not want him to go back in there. Although Rick and I flew a few missions, he was too damn good to be flying my wing. I am almost positive that he started with Wayne and finished that day with me. Anyway, I got the crap shot out of me but I saw a small wisp of smoke. When I slowed I saw the crewchief/gunner waving at me. I chopped a lot of bamboo but got him picked up. I never did see Wayne. The crewchief's name was Blackwood. He told me that Finch was flying with his visor up (a no no in my book) when they got shot down. They met at the front of the aircraft. Wayne was cut across the forehead and blood was in his eyes. He complained he could not see. There was an explosion near them and Wayne went one way and Blackwood went the other. I learned later from a returning POW, Bill Reeder of the 361st Escort, who was shot down near Dak To on my first tour and again on my second with a different unit, that he was with Wayne on the march north. Wayne got sick, pneumonia, he thought, and died. I do not recall Ron Logan nor portions of his version. I do know there were absolutely no troops but on the ground the day Wayne Finch was shot down. Therefore the idea that Finch was attempting to secure the LZ is not correct.

Ron Logan describes this battle: That day we were working out of Dak To in an area between FB 5 and FB 6. My Scout team was in the staging area while this action was going on. Apparently Finch's team had discovered some bunkers and they decided to insert the ARVN Blues. The ARVN Blue platoon leader at that time was an American advisor, an E7 or E8, Ranger type. He was good and the ARVN performed rather well under his leadership. I understand they were using a single ship LZ. Unfortunately, the American Sergeant (The Wall database suggests this person is SFC Charles Jackson Britt) was shot in the head and killed almost as he stepped off the first Lift ship. The rest of the insertion was made in rapid order but the leaderless ARVN never got organized and couldn't hold the LZ. The ARVN panicked and Finch tried to secure the LZ with his LOH. By then the NVA had set up an even stronger position and shot Finch down. Later that afternoon we were able to get the Observer, a guy named Blackwood, I think, out. He was a very brave man!! He said that Finch received a pretty bad head wound before or during the crash. Both men were able to exit the LOH and for some reason Finch had it in his mind that they needed to get into the trees. Blackwood told him the NVA were in those trees and even tackled him as he starting running in that direction. Nothing, however, would stop him. When he was able to get free of Blackwood, he was last seen making his way into the trees. Blackwood went back to the LOH and grabbed a supply of grenades. The C&C was trying to get the ARVN out and get to the Scout crew as well. It was just too hot. We later learned that the LZ was almost on top of an NVA Battalion CP!! Anyway, Blackwood realized that no one could come and get him unless the NVA guns in the bunkers could be silenced. He started at one end and worked down the line of bunkers, dropping grenades into each. After a few minutes, he ran out into the open and a LOH snatched him out. A brave and cool headed man!! The

next day, we inserted a large ARVN force into a different LZ and they performed very well. We looked all day for Finch. We found lots of bad guys but we never found him. Years later I learned that he was indeed captured by the NVA, taken to Hanoi and died there. During that day CPT David Keating was flying a LOH with another ROL. They were shot down and one of their WPs blew which burned Dave pretty badly. They were both evacuated to the States. I can remember we used to do a lot of BDAs for B52s and airstrikes. The AF were dropping bombs that would spread gas over a wide area and even seep into bunkers, then an igniter would blow the whole thing. Very effective! I remember lots of discussion among the Scouts and worries that our engine exhaust might ignite some unexploded gas. I don't think it ever happened but we were worried about it. I can also remember a few times in late 71 when all three ACTs were operating at Holloway. There was no place to put all the people. People shared tents and bunks, etc. Some of my classmates were in the other troops, so whenever they would move in; we'd just make space for cots and hold small class reunions!

The Virtual Wall website site for SFC Charles Jackson Britt reads as follows: He served with the LRRP, 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (1966-1968). Material written by Mike Lapolla (an Infantry Officer) states - Charley was a Staff Sergeant in my platoon of C Company 2/8th Infantry of the 4th Division. When I formed the LRRP unit of the 2nd Brigade, 4th Division ... Charley was one of the first volunteers. The material goes on to say: "However, SFC Britt wasn't with the LRRP program any longer; he returned to Vietnam on 4 April 1971 as an Advisor with Advisor Team 22, MAC-V. There is a note on his mortuary record indicating he was on temporary duty with D Troop, 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry, at the time of his death. If so, he was killed in action in Quang Tri or Thua Thien Province - that's where D/7/17 was operating." [Editor's note: They are mistaken about where D/7/17th Cav was operating. Delta Troop was based at Camp Holloway and departed Vietnam in late April or early May 1972. However, if the Army was trying to "hide" a soldier with an 11B MOS; then Delta Troop would have been a good place for that!] The Wall database gives his tour start date as 4 Apr 1971 and MOS as 11B4H.

1LT Clarence 'Jay' Lott provides: I knew and flew missions with CPT Finch. He was a great scout pilot. I was flying a Cobra in the AO on this day. I was refueling when he was shot down, so the other team was covering his scout team.

On the 30th, 1LT Tom Goff recalls: I found an R&R order dated 15 February 1972 and from that I got the dates for the beginning of my tour. I arrived in country in August 1971 and was initially assigned to the 129nd AHC at Lane AAF, An Son. After a short stint as a slick jock I was 'hand picked' (actually pointed out by my enemies) to become a LOH driver for C Troop also at Lane. I went to Phu Cat Air Base for in-country OH-6A transition. Then back to the unit to learn the fine art of getting shot at. My callsign was Red 17. I was medevaced out of country approximately March 30 1972, due to an in-flight fire which did some damage to my lungs. I'm not sure what happened to the helicopter that day as I was a pretty sick puppy at that point in time. I know I didn't crash, just landed someplace and was picked up by our C& C. I have a painting at my home with the LOH I was flying when I was injured. Anyhow, that is my short and sweet account of my tour. I'd really like to speak with anyone who has details about this fire in my LOH and how I was medevaced. I think I went initially out through the 69th on the coast. There are other things I remember but I don't know if this will help the history effort but it may help me with whatever is still hidden in my brain. Daryl Kunzler was another LOH pilot. He was my roommate. He died just after I left. Also a Captain Smith who was wounded after going over to B Troop shortly before I left. I think I did the training for Bob Wilcoxson. Was he a black SGT? I remember him as Wilcox. If this is the guy I may have a tape of a mission we flew together late in my tour. Not very exciting except Bob vomiting on the minigun. I am curious if this was the same fellow? John Johnson, now a Major in the Michigan Guard, is another C Troop friend. We were buds and we both lived. Also I was the

turtle for another guy call sign Wimpy (after the hamburger guy) who I found out was a Guard IP in the Maine guard. One other name that jumps out early is CPT Dennis Bedard. I believe he was selling yachts somewhere on the NE coast. I also recall CPT Fred Suttle who was killed flying C&C. Strange as I knew his parents and that he was from Hampton Roads VA. Seems that his dad had a large car dealership. Wanted to go by and tell them about their son but never could gather up the courage to go through all that. I came off active duty in April of 1972.

On the 31st, VHPA Helicopter database has a helicopter loss record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12998 at grid ZA057798 flown by CPT Barry Gerischer, pilot, and CPT Dave Keating as gunner. CPT Barry Gerischer provides:

B-52 strikes went in all night in an attempt to keep the NVA contained. Early the next day B Troop led the insertion of a combined force into the area. This ground force was led by SFC Britt who had served with me during my first tour with D/1/10th Cav. At this time he was assigned as a MACV Advisor. The LZ was east of where Finch went down and on the east side of a blue line that was of concern because of the depth of the water. The ground troops had to walk in several hundred meters west of the blue line as they moved toward the crash site. They all crossed and several minutes later they got hit. SFC Britt was shot in the head at the start of the battle. The ARVN part of the unit ran away. The Kit Carson scouts from the scout platoon hide his body in the brush and we later recovered it. The next day they gave me his wallet. They moved all day to the crash site but never got there, in fact, in my estimation, based on flying over head and rotating with another scout team, I do not think they got within 2,000 meters of the crash site. It was a routine, quiet screen for the infantry until about 3:00 p.m. I was flying a LOH that day and Ricky Clayton was my wing. I trusted Rick, although he was short he was a solid pilot and a great young man. CPT Dave Keating was flying as my gunner. He and Finch were roommates and he wanted to do something. At that time he was the Operations Officer. Anyway, Dave and I got shot down and Dave was severely burned. The aircraft was destroyed. I distinctly remember looking up and my very nervous friend Ricky was pointing with his foot for us to go a certain direction. At least that is what it looked like to me. The grid coordinates in the VHPA records are incorrect. I saved the map because Ricky Clayton's address is on the back. I should be able to provide a better set of coordinates. Dave was evacuated. I stayed in country. Over the next few days we lost all the OH-6's except one. In the meantime I took over the Guns and the Lift Platoon. We were getting in 4-10 pilots a day and losing just as many. There was a core that stayed for that year. My roommate was CPT Ralph Artigliere who became the Operations Officer.

CPT Raymond Dell was the Operations Officer before CPT Ralph Artigliere. WO Larry B. Brassell recalls. CPT Dell was a West Pointer and was really a fine officer. I remember once when he was the Operations Officer that he went up in the Huey to do a weather check and he took an AK-47 round in the chicken plate.

NVA Easter Offensive begins in MR II

On the 31st, an 180th ASHC (Big Windy) CH-47 piloted by CW2 Walter Zutter was shot up and crash landed on the landing pad at FB Delta. The aircraft was consumed by fire. The crew would remain on Delta for several days before they were rescued. This event has become the unofficial starting point of the Easter Offensive in MR II. The battle in MR II is also known as the Battle of Kontum. As noted early the Squadron also fought at Kontum during Tet of '68. This document makes reference to the 1968 battle at Kontum under the name Tet of '68.

A Troop Departs Vietnam

Again we hear from CPT Billy Miller for A Troop:

Very early in March or maybe the end of Feb, A Troop received word that maybe we wouldn't be standing down after all. The increased enemy activity leading up to the Easter Offensive had some people worried. After a day or so, MAJ Turecek flew to Long Binh to "talk to the boss" (he and the CO of the 1st Avn Bde were very good friends). This didn't make the 17th CAG folks too happy. Basically, he wanted to make certain that if A Troop was going to stay, then someone with some serious authority had been see to it that we get our equipment and people back. As it turned out, went he talked to the staff at Long Binh they reasoned that we were already too far down the path toward standing down to reverse the process. He came back with a copy of the Letter Order sending us out of the country not later than 18 Mar. From that point on we really had to hustle. It was about this same time (end of Feb or very early in March) that a party from B Troop visited us. They had heard that we seemed to be pretty well organized for standing down and wanted to see if they could learn from us. As I recall, they stayed a day or so, took lots of notes and returned to Pleiku to start standing down themselves. I'd guess they were about 3 weeks behind us in the schedule and were just starting to turn in equipment. It is also my recollection that before the 10th of March, someone put a stop to B Troop standing down because of the enemy build up for the Easter Offensive. In short order, B Troop got all the equipment and people back. Anyway, by the 8th we were down to just a couple of ships to haul supplies around and these were being manned by crews from other units that would take them from us. We had turned in about four Cobras and just a few LOHs and Hueys, less than half our authorized TO&E for shipment back to the States. We knew we'd never see those aircraft again as the procedure called from them to be sent to Corpus Christi, TX to be rebuilt. A Troop's Colors, some equipment, and just a few people were sent to Fort Hood. About 50% of our TO&E equipment, mostly maintenance stuff, was sent to Fort Bragg. I believe 17 officers and 35 EM reported to Cam Ranh and we were out of there on the 15th heading for Bragg as well. The Army had plans to convert the 1/17th Cav into an ACS. This is a story and a half by itself. Many a former 7/17er (Dick Marshall, Bob Hefford, Lou Hennies, myself) would command this Squadron and many more served in it. When MAJ Turecek arrived at Bragg after his leave, there was a small detachment there with B Models armed with SS-11s, the old pre-TOW French-made anti-tank missile. He had an interview with the senior Aviation officer there and either volunteered or was volunteered to take this detachment back to Vietnam to serve as a SS-11 NETT. So he went back for 6 weeks TDY while the rest of us formed D Troop (Prov) 1/17th Cav. He was an Infantry officer and when he returned from TDY we had to get him to branch transfer to Armor so we could keep D Troop alive. Oh, the joys of the peace time Army!! As a final note concerning A Troop and to make certain the record is straight, I joined them on July 4, 1971. From that time until we stood down, no one was killed in the Troop. Now during this time we reassigned guys to other units and they died there, but no one died in A Troop during those nine months.

The following individuals are listed on HQ 1st Avn Bde, Letter Order Number 107 dated 26 Feb 1972 ordering a PCS for A Troop to Ft Bragg. The LO stated A Troop's authorized strength of 18 Officers, 31 Warrants, and 182 EM for a total of 231. The LO provides a movement strength of 13 Officers, 5 Warrants, and 38 EM for a total of 56. The special instructions read: "This is a group move. 30 days leave is authorized upon arrival in CONUS. Upon completion of normal leave, personnel report to CG, Ft Bragg for purposes of inventorying and securing the redeployable equipment and forming the cadre to reconstitute the unit. The unit commander, MAJ Turecek will hand carry unit morning report. SP4 Spentnagel, John R. will accompany unit aircraft by surface to CONUS and will be offered normal PCS leave upon being relieved of accountability of aircraft at POD." The roster lists officers first then enlisted men by rank for a total of 56 soldiers as follows:

Turecek, Jack L. MAJ
Harmer, Ronald T. CPT

Abell, James L. CPT
Harp, Royal V. CPT

Daly, Richard G. CPT
Miller, Billy J. CPT

Carpenter, Glenn E. SP4

CW2 Mike Ledbetter recalls:

April 1972

On the 1st, MAJ James 'Mike' Gibbs assumed command of B Troop replacing MAJ Robert C. Cassity. Mike has the 17th CAG and B Troop assumption of command orders.

Sometime during this month, MAJ Sidney Lyons assume command of C Troop replacing CPT Sam Slaughter. Sam returned to B Troop as the XO. Editor's Note: The H/10th Cav ORLL dated 1 Nov 1972 states that MAJ Lyons assumed command on 25 July from MAJ Brown. Therefore an April date for MAJ Lyons is suspect.

Early in the month, C Troop moved its operational base from Lane to the old medevac barracks at Camp Holloway and began working the area around Ben Het and Dak To because of the NVA build-up in the area. They knew the move was temporary, so they left their admin and maintenance support at Lane. All scheduled or heavy maintenance was done at Lane; but if they needed something in a hurry they worked with B Troop at Camp Holloway.

C Troop Moves to Camp Holloway

On the 3rd, C Troop helped defeat the NVA force that had overrun part of FB Delta, the southern most fire base on Rocket Ridge. The 361st AWC put six Cobras and the 57th AHC four slicks into the battle starting at first light. The VHPA Vietnam Helicopter History CD (2001 version) describes this battle. It is believed that C Troop helped out later in the day. Page 756 of Neil Sheehan's "A Bright Shining Lie" describes this battle. This was the first major NVA attack in the Battle of Kontum.

On the 14th, FB Charlie near the center of Rocket Ridge fell to the NVA.

On the 15th, B Troop was working in the Kontum area. **SP5 Dallas Lee Nihsen** died while serving as the gunner on the C&C Huey. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 9 Jan 1971 and MOS as 16N2F.

Dennis Watson wrote: MAJ James 'Mike' Gibbs, the Troop CO, I, and a second gunner, name forgotten, were en route from Pleiku to Kontum for our typical day's mission. We had the typical assortment of slicks, guns and LOHs. En route we continued to hear a conversation over Guard between a FAC and another player on the ground. After a while we learned that the other player was an American Major, advisor, who was on a firebase west of Kontum when it had been overrun the previous night. He and several Vietnamese had made their way through the jungle overnight and had finally managed to get a response from a FAC. The FAC remained overhead but with no resources to extract them. Once MAJ Gibbs understood what was going on he dispatched guns in rotating pairs to provide cover while we asked for a mission change. The change did not get back to us until after we landed at Kontum and Dallas was fighting mad because of the delay. We finally departed with four slicks, ours being C&C. But, once we got a count of the people to be extracted we took the number four slot so that no one would have to go back in the second time. Spacing was about two minutes. One got in and out OK as did two and three with only one of them taking fire. As we were clearing the tree line into the LZ we began taking small arms fire and at least one B40 made a visual pass from below just ahead of the nose. Both sides called taking fire so we made a go around to let the guns "fix" the issue, which they did. The American had remained on the ground, because he was just that, an American, until the last load. So we came back for the second pass. There were people in the LZ with no weapons which I did not take as a good sign, Dallas wound up being on the side opposite where we began taking fire from and the other side's 60 was jammed.

But, by that time the good guys had cleared the tree line headed to the aircraft so we held. We were struck numerous times, I counted seven, while we sat there. One of those rounds passed behind my head, right side, through the forward corner of the transmission well and into the back of the transmission well striking Dallas in the back. He called hit, we held another 5-10 seconds while everyone climbed on. One Vietnamese grunt was struck in the ankle when they broke from the tree line but made it to the aircraft and a second was hit in the head as he climbed onto the aircraft on my side. We made it back to the MACV pad at Kontum but Dallas was dead by the time we arrived. We lost a good man that day. I have since spoken with Dallas' parents and relayed the entire event to them. If we had Dallas on the other side I think things may have gone better. His 60 did not jam. I have that mission on audio from inside my helmet. I did not know we would get into all that.

Also on the 15th in the Bong Son area there were some developments.

MAJ A. Ross Russell provides: I tell people that I may have the shortest tour of duty with the 7/17th Cav – about three hours. Let me explain. I had known and worked for LTC Jack Anderson for some time because I commanded the 61st AHC at Lane AAF that reported to the 7/17th Cav. We were good friends. I called him Colonel Jack. The 61st AHC officially stood down on 20 March 1972. I remember being ‘one of the last guys out the door and turning out the lights’ and went on R&R on 1 April. Sometime in March Jack had asked me if I wanted to command the 48th AHC or become his S-3. I told him that I’d be the S-3 once I returned from R&R. On the 15th I remember putting my suitcase in my room then going to see Jack to catch up on what had happened while I was gone. I walked in just after a TAC E had been declared for the area on the Bon Song plain above LZ English. The NVA had launched a serious offense in this area. Within a few minutes we had requests and issued instructions for the launch of one, then a second, and finally a third set of fire teams. This might have been a mission for C Troop but they were at Holloway so we just had the assets from Lane to work with. Jack decided that we would go up in his C&C Huey to coordinate the teams and determine if more were needed. His C&C ship was well known because he had 50-cal door guns. I was flying in the left seat. When we were west of LZ English we started taking AA fire. One 30 cal round came through the instrument panel. It took out part of the ball and needle from an attitude indicator. Those flying parts cut Jack between his mouth and nose. However the defected round hit my right shoulder just above my chicken plate. Initially I didn’t realize that I had been hurt. I looked over at Jack and saw the blood on his face. He looked at me and saw the blood coming from my right shoulder. He kept saying “I’ve got it” and I was saying the same thing. Finally I let him have the controls and the CE, also named Russell, started trying to help me. I told him to pull the pins on my armored seat to lay me down. He also didn’t want to break the seals on the first aid kit! It is interesting what stress will do to an individual sometimes, but I didn’t think it was funny at that moment. Jack took me to the med station in Qui Nhon and then I was flown to the hospital at Pleiku. I stayed there for three days, then went to Wake Island and finally back to the states. It was six months before I returned to duty. During my recuperation I talked to Colonel Jack in Atlanta on the phone a few times. He helped me understand what had happened after I was evaced. Now, during the 2005 VHPA Reunion several of us were talking and I was asked the question – Did you know on the 15th that the Squadron was going to stand-down on the 18th? The answer is NO. It would seem odd that Colonel Jack asked me to be his S-3 when he knew that we would cease operations in April. Maybe Colonel Jack just hadn’t gotten around to telling me about it?

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop AH-1G #68-17043 flown by CW2 Richard M. Barron as AC and 1LT Clarence ‘Jay’ Lott as gunner. The Accident Summary reads: Aircraft was taking off from ARVN helipad. The aircraft settled slightly as it passed through translational lift and the left skid caught on a piece of broken PSP, tearing the skid off.

1LT Clarence ‘Jay’ Lott provides: //Insert his comments from Tape Recording//

The Squadron, HHT, and A Troop officially stand down

On the 18th, the Squadron Headquarters, HHT and A Troop officially stood down and departed Vietnam. A Troop, as mentioned earlier, actually left on the March 15th. There is evidence that while the Squadron may have officially stood down, some of their assets continued to fly for the Eagle Combat Aviation Battalion that was formed by the 17th CAG to manage the aviation resources at Lane AAF. For example, the Eagle Battalion S-3 logs for the month of May 1972 continue to name "C Troop" versus H/10th Cav and repeatedly mention the Ruthless radio call sign.

On the 19th, the ARVN abandoned Hoai An, a district headquarters on QL506 south of Bong Son, very hastily and left the American advisors to their own fate. Sheehan's book contains a glowing account of how LTC Jack Anderson, still flying the Ruthless 6 C&C with 50 cal doorguns, rescued the advisors as the doorgunners killed NVA on 25 yards from the ship. The CE on this ship was wounded in the leg. The problem began on the 9th when the NVA finally took LZ Pony (famous from the 1st Cav days) and the ARVN kept falling back to Hoai An. By the end of the month the whole of northern Binh Dinh Province, including LZ English, fell to the NVA.

Also on the 19th, C Troop was sent southwest of Pleiku to work around a FB that had been mortared pretty bad for the last few nights. The Scouts hadn't been on the VR longer than 30 seconds when the Scout Platoon Leader started yelling: "We've got people down here - taking fire." The LOH was shot down and started to burn. CW2 Mark Stuart was the wing and hovered over the wreck doing 360s to keep the flames down so the crew could get out. He hung in there and hung in there; but **CPT Thomas S. Powell** and **SP4 Paul John Pesce** died in the LOH. The VHPA copy of The Wall database lists CPT Powell's tour start date as 27 Sep 1971 and SP4 Pesce's as 13 Sep 1971 with the MOS of 67V2T. The VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16499 flown by these men.

WO Steve Shepard recalls: Our normal mission configuration was one LOH, two Cobras, one C&C Huey and one Chase Huey. The AC of the lead Cobra was the AMC. I was surprised to read the statement about CW2 Mark Stuart flying a wing LOH because I have no recollection of the wing LOH ship. Possibly he was flying the LOH for the other team. As I remember the events of that day, while enroute to our AO we were given an 'en route mission' to look at two Montagnard relocation villages southeast of Pleiku that had been hit by the NVA. I remember a near-by water fall and a low rising hill. Powell started his VR at the top of this hill. I'd guess he made about one and a half orbits around the hill when he said over the radio, "OK, I think we got ... taking fire, taking fire!" He then flew off in a southwesterly track trailing smoke. He'd gone no more than a hundred yards when the LOH wobbled and crashed into the shrub-brush and small trees. There was an immediate explosion. CW2 Jeff Clink was the AC of the lead Cobra and I was his front seat. We starting firing at the hill and quickly expended. I don't remember who way flying the other Cobra or the C&C ship. I believe John Lucius may have been flying the Chase Huey. I remember listening to the C&C trying to get the RFPFs to move into the area. I know we rearmed and expended again. I'd guess about two and a half or three hours later the Troop returned with three Hueys containing a few RFPFs plus some American volunteers. After inserting these men, the RFPFs 'secured the LZ' while the others made it to the crash site. I listened on the radio - they said the bodies were still hot as they put them in the body bags. Others that might have been involved that day; the other Cobra pilots might have been LT Jerry T. Paul and LT Dave Wallace.

CW2 Kevin Clarke provides: I flew OH-6As for D/2/1st Cav in 1969 and 1970 on my first tour. By the time I started my second tour I was an OH-6A IP. I flew Hueys with the 192nd AHC as Polecat 23 at Dong Be Thin from June 1971 until they stood down in December 1971. A friend of mine, CPT Roy Sudeck was the Lift Platoon leader in C Troop. I had orders to join another AHC and was waiting at Cam Ranh for transportation when Roy "kidnapped me" by taking me to C Troop. He said I'd like it better in C Troop flying OH-6As again. Once we got to Lane he called back to the replacement unit and told them that C Troop had me so just correct the orders on their end. This was

in January 1972. I replaced a “new OH-6A IP kid” from the States when he left. For a while I was the only OH-6A IP in the troop. I was also the Safety Officer since I’d been to Safety School in 1971. Some things we never forget. I gave CPT Powell his OH-6A check ride a few weeks prior to his death. He was a great guy – a real professional. I liked the way he conducted himself. I was deeply saddened by his death. I flew with the Scouts for 2 ½ months and then with the Lift for my last month in Vietnam. My callsign was Yellowcraft 17. I DEROSed from C Troop in May 1972.

CPT Chuck Scribner provides: I recall sometime during the Easter Offensive, we were lined up like a column of ducks on Kontum when these 122s started coming in. We are all trying to crank and get out of there. I vividly remember the helicopter in front of me got hit. I don’t recall their names. Fire was coming out of it and the rotors were still turning but these guys were running away from it. I finally got enough RPM to lift off. I don’t know if it was that day or another but a C-130 tried to take off with the ramp still down. He crashed and there were only a few survivors. When we were there you could look out at the mountains around Kontum. There would be an airstrike going in this place. An Arclite going in at another place. Some Cobras worked out in another place. The bad guys paid for moving out into the open especially with their tanks. It was amazing! It was a fun time for us because there were so many targets.

On the 21st, FB Delta, the southern most fire base on Rocket Ridge, was overrun.

On the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07916 flown by an unknown crew at grid ZA184662 but provides no other details. This aircraft previously served with A Troop. Anyone with details about this event is encouraged to contact Mike Law.

On the 23rd, NVA T-54 tanks attacked Tan Canh. The 22nd ARVN Division had a forward CP at Tan Canh. This action was an important event in the Battle of Kontum.

On the 24th, there was an evacuation of the American advisors in the Dak To and Tan Canh area. UH-1H #69-1575 from the 57th AHC was shot down trying to rescue the advisors at Dak To II. SP4 Rick Vogel, the CE, and SP4 Charles Lea, the gunner, survived with three other Americans for 13 days on the ground near the crash site at grid ZB00152195.

Also on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop AH-1G #68-17020 flown by an unknown crew at grid ZB095175 but provides no other details. Anyone with details about this event is encouraged to contact Mike Law.

Also on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop UH-1H #68-16498 but provides no details. The Battle of Kontum website also shows this loss. 1LT Frank Shipton, Pallbearer 38, was the AC and 1LT George Lawrence was in the right seat on this day. This aircraft took hits during the Tan Canh evacuation. The crew knew they had no transmission oil pressure but continued to fly south to get as far away from the NVA as possible. CPT Steven James has a photo of this aircraft after it was lifted back to Kontum. The main blade is frozen at a 90 degree angle to the fuselage and the tail boom is clearly broken. Because the wreck remained at Kontum for some time, this aircraft continues to appear in the Goldbook database until Sep 1972 (with zero time each month after April). It was shown as a H/17th Cav asset in July, then turned into the 604th TC in August. In reality it was lost to inventory on the 24th and finally deleted in Oct 1972.

1LT Frank Shipton, Pallbearer 38, recalls: I was a 1LT during the entire tour from Aug 1971 to Aug 1972. The Army froze the automatic promotions to Captain just a month or so prior to when I would be promoted. I joined B Troop in August 1971 and flew with the Pallbearers the entire time. I became Pallbearer 38 when I made AC after about three months in country and soon I was flying as flight lead. On 24 Apr 1972 I did something I told my father I’d never do – I volunteered for a mission. Two Cobras had been shot down on the way from Tan Canh to Kontum. They went down in something of an open area. The commanders wanted a Huey to take the maintenance folks in to

rig them for extraction. I volunteered and we inserted the team without a problem. On the way out we were taking evasive actions as we climbed to altitude. Suddenly we were taking hits. It was like a monster was trying to tear the Huey apart. The door guns returned fire. Initially the status of the aircraft wasn't that bad other than we had a bad vibration. One of the rounds had come up through the floor near my feet. One of the guys in back had part of his thumb shot off. SGT Larry Morrow was the door gun on this mission. The oil pressure went to zero. I immediately started looking for a place to put the aircraft down. As good fortune would have it, we were already lined up on the road and were a few miles farther toward Kontum than this huge column of refugees. My co-pilot that day was 1LT George Lawrence. He put out the May Day call. We were about 100 feet off the deck when the Huey went sideways twice. I'm talking 90 degrees! It was clear that the transmission was starting to seize. About this time we experienced a low-side governor failure. I flared to slow down prior to putting it on the ground. I knew I couldn't risk an autorotation. Just then the Vietnamese version of the Vespa motor scooter came into view after passing beneath us and kept running down the road at a high rate of speed. We hit the ground hard and bounced back up into the air. I believe this is when the tail boom broke. We hit hard again. That one spread the skids. We came to a stop and everyone got out except me. My lap belt buckle was jammed under my chicken plate. My adrenaline was off the charts, so I couldn't figure this out. Gratefully the crew chief returned to help me. Just as he arrived at my door the main rotor system froze solid. It was almost 90 degrees from the fuselage! As something of a post-script for this day, after this mission SGT Morrow told me that he had lost a brother earlier in the war and was in Vietnam now to get even. He wanted to fly Scouts so he could kill the enemy. I tried to talk him out of it but he went to the Scouts. I flew the Huey in when we picked up SGT Morrow's body.

On the 25th, WO Larry B. Brassell and SP4 Bart Burns were shot down in a B Troop LOH but the aircraft was not destroyed for several days. The VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for OH-6A #67-16607 near this date at grid ZA175995 that matches Larry's description nicely.

WO Larry Brassell provides: I was assigned to B Troop in January 1972 and left in July because of a one-month drop. Prior to B Troop, I was an Assistant S-3 in the 52nd CAB. I was told I could have the assignment of my choice upon completion of six months in the S-3 shop. I choose B troop because I wanted to fly Scouts. I was sent to Vung Tau for the OH-6A transition. I was shot down on 25 Apr 72 about 20 miles WNW of Kontum. We had gone by a large number of NVA troops and my observer spotted them. I called Scout Lead (Jim Stein) and told him what SP4 Bart Burns had seen. Bart's nickname was 'Black Bart' even though he was a white guy. Jim wanted to go back and look at what we had seen to confirm. That is exactly what we did. When we got back in the area, the NVA opened up on us. We exited the area as the guns rolled in and climbed to about 2000-feet. I was at least two to three miles away when I felt a round hit the aircraft. I only remember feeling one round hit. I called Jim and told him I had taken a hit. He asked if everything was OK. I responded that all instruments were in the green and as I said that - the engine quit. We had turned 180 degrees to go back to Kontum and I ended up going down back in the area we had just left under fire. I did an autorotation to the large field we had flown by when we saw the NVA. It was not a successful autorotation. I tried to flare but the aircraft did not respond. I tried to pull initial pitch but I believe my observer had his leg over the collective. I had pedal control so at least we hit straight. The aircraft rolled six or seven times and was completely destroyed except the cockpit. Thank God for the OH-6A! When both Bart and I got out of the aircraft, Jim was there to pick us up. We both ran back to his aircraft under heavy fire, got in and left the area. During the day the team requested to destroy the remains of the aircraft but for whatever reason II Corps would not let them. During the day the NVA would get on the radio and taunt us. We knew they were at the aircraft and no one understood why we could not shoot the wreckage. Most of my time in the Scouts, I flew as wing for Jim. He is the bravest man I have ever known. I would not be alive today if it were not for Jim. To this day I don't know how we got out of there alive. There are numerous other people that have

similar accounts where Jim pulled them out. I don't intend for this to be a 'Boy, Jim was good!' letter but the facts are what they are. The fact that I couldn't perform the autorotation bothered me and others in the Troop so the next day I had a check ride with this IP named Smith who had been one of the instructors at Vung Tau for the OH-6A Transition. I shot autorotations successfully until I was blue in the face, so I've never figured out what went wrong on the 25th other than I really have no knowledge of what all was damaged on the aircraft.

SP4 Bart Burns recalls: I was a 67N20 when I got the Vietnam in September 1971 right out of AIT. Initially I was assigned as a Huey CE with A/227th AHC at Camp Hollaway. I think I stayed with them only a couple of months. I had this friend I'd made on the flight over from the States who was serving with B Troop. We'd meet up in the evenings and share stories. He kept encouraging me to come over to the Cav. I don't recall if I started the process on my side or if he did on B Troop's side; but after I'd been in Vietnam less than two months I got orders to B Troop and specifically the Scout Platoon. I reported into the orderly room and remember the 1st SGT was delighted someone wanted to be a Scout Observer. He directed me to the Scout's barracks. The guys there told me I just couldn't walk in even if I had volunteered - that I had to see the Platoon Leader, CPT Melvin Finch. He and I got along fine and I joined the Scouts. My on-the-job training took a couple of weeks. Most of the time I was in a LOH assigned to the first or last light mission around Holloway. Then I moved to being the Observer on the wing ship. I soon learned that it was better being in the lead ship. Even though I was a trained mechanic, I didn't work as a mechanic in B Troop - only as an Scout Observer. I believe I went down at least three times in LOHs. The one Larry Bassell describes on 25 April 1972 is still very clear in my memory! About July I was shot down again and that troubled me enough to tell the leadership that I'd had enough of that. They were kind to me and I just did odd jobs until I DEROSed in September 1972. I remember an airliner crashed and I went in with a team to recover the bodies. One of my friends told me that the area was quite so I wouldn't even need a weapon. HA! We got shot down going on that mission! Let me tell you, when I got back to camp I went looking for that guy!

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop UH-1H #66-16469 at grid ZB087270 but no more details are provided. This is the last B Troop record in the database.

CPT Steven James provides: //Insert his material here//

17 Ship Extractions south of Tan Canh. Gladiator ships from the 57th AHC made up the front of waves.

On the 28th, the 52nd Combat Aviation Battalion officially departed Vietnam after serving at Pleiku since 19 March 1963. Its functions were replaced by the 17th CAG headquartered that relocated to Camp Holloway from Nha Trang/not true/. LTC Jack Anderson, the last commander of the 7/17th Cav, is believed to have been part of this detachment.

D Troop Departs Vietnam

1LT Dennis Brookover of Delta Troop recalls: All of a sudden in 1972, the beginning of 1972, we started hearing rumors of stand downs and we were going to be part of the stand down. Before we could blink an eye, virtually, we got the orders we were standing down the entire unit and moving it out. We got various assignments to accomplish this. Moving some of the equipment over to Qui Nhon in convoy fashion was handled by 1LT Roger Ogren. He was in charge of that. Our mortar unit was going to stay put after we moved but 1LT Ken Kendricks and I at first we volunteered to go up on a fire base after the stand down and do some forward air control up there but they didn't want to have any more Americans up there because of the notoriety that was taking place of pulling troops out of Vietnam. So Ken got the property book and he became the property book officer. He and I together did the duties of turning in the property and then we were in charge of taking the property book and turning it in down at Saigon. Well we got to Saigon but we couldn't get out of Saigon because all of the flights that were heading out were full of equipment and ammunition and the like and they were not

taking bodies back up to any of the areas of operation and we had a heck of a time. We were virtually thumbing a ride North to get back up to Pleiku to get our stuff and for us to get ready to leave country. We didn't know until we got back up to Pleiku that the whole unit had pulled out and we were the only two left. The 1st Cav had moved a unit in and they were now handling the security of Camp Holloway. But we were the only two from the 7/17th. We got a ride up there on a guy from Air America that we hooked up with that threw us in the back and said keep our heads down and played like a couple of cowboys and rode back up to Pleiku. Hitched a ride on a jeep or a 3/4 ton back over to Camp Holloway to find that our unit had pulled out. Had no idea where our equipment was. There was a note that was left by Ray Okeefe that basically said, "Sorry boys but we had to go and we will see you when you get State side." But we did some searching around. We found that our 52nd Aviation Battalion had a storage room somewhere - I forget where it was. We found our gear and our weapons in there. We gathered that up and then tried to make arrangements for us to get down to Saigon to get out of country. That was a pretty scary time. Because when we got back out to the airport it was full of Vietnamese civilians knowing that there were major NVA units poised to pounce upon that whole area once the American presence was no longer there. And they were trying to get on any aircraft that they could possible get on to. So we were having a heck of a time fighting our way through that crowd. We did again find an Air America guy that came in. He told us to load up our equipment and off we took to Saigon. This is in fixed wing aircraft. I forget the type that they had. They were pretty good size fix wing aircraft that had four seats I think that were in it - two in the front, two in the back. So we had enough to get our equipment on top of his equipment and made it back to Saigon and then to Long Binh. Funny story here is Ken and I are getting ready to leave country and you got to take the pee test. Ken couldn't pee with somebody watching him. So I went right in and peed and cleared everything and we were there for three days waiting for Ken to take a pee. Now he won't admit it, he'll say it was a couple of hours but I waited and waited and waited. We were doing everything possibly could do to get liquids into Ken, to hypnotize him, where ever we could possible do to get him to pass urine and get his pee test out of the way. That was the funny thing. It was kind of upsetting at the time because I wouldn't leave unless he was right there beside me on the aircraft going home. But then we I don't know at 3 o'clock in the morning or so they came and mustarded us out and we took a jeep over and got out of country. Ken and I and Ray Okeefe, the three of us, and a couple of sergeants, ended up assigned to the 1/4th Cav with the Big Red 1 in Ft Riley, Kansas. We served together there after our tour of Vietnam. The Delta Troop colors were folded up and I'm not sure what happened to them. I have the original guidon for Delta Troop 7/17th Cav that we had at the time that I've had mounted in a shadow box and protected that I proudly display on one of my walls in my home. It brings back a lot of memories. But as far as the colors and how they were stood down and everything I don't think Ken and I were there.

1LT Ken Kendricks recalls: I am certain that no one had left Delta Troop before 1LT Dennis Brookover and I left for Tan Son Nhut with the Troop's Property Book in hand. That was in late April 1972. Now everyone knew we were leaving Vietnam but we didn't know the exact date. We got orders to turn in our vehicles and equipment to a Maintenance Company at Pleiku Air Base. So we'd drive our stuff across town. They had a 5-ton with a Conex Container welded in the back. They sent this truck to pickup all the weapons; the M-16s, the 50s from the jeeps, etc. Naturally everything was recorded in the Property Book. Remember I was the Supply Officer. The Property Book had to be turned into a Logistics Command at Tan Son Nhut. They signed everything off, retained the Book and released us. We talked to CPT Ray O'Keefe on the phone and learned the day Delta Troop was flying out of Pleiku. Well, that day came and went. Dennis and I could not get back to Pleiku because the authorities wouldn't let personnel ride on any aircraft - only ammo. All the C-130s going north were loaded up with ammo. So Dennis and I sat at the airport for three and a half days. I'd guess we were in Saigon about a week. Then we saw these two guys in civilian clothes get off a C-130 and walk over near us. We figured they were Air America guys. We asked if they were heading north and they said

yes to Pleiku. We asked if we could ride with them because our unit was there. They said sure. So we rode back to Pleiku in an Air America C-130. A unit from the old 1st Cav Div took over from us. I remember when we got back to our hooches, these guys had packed all our stuff up and had it sitting in the middle of the big room we used as a club. They had taken over our rooms and everything because we had made it back late. There was a note from O'Keefe saying they couldn't wait for us. Dennis and I stayed over night at Pleiku then caught a ride to Cam Ranh Bay. I left Vietnam on May 3rd or 4th. I believe this was four or five days after everyone else in Delta Troop had departed. Based on this I'd say Delta Troop departed Vietnam on 28 April.

On the 29th, two UH-1Bs from the 1st Combat Aerial TOW Team flew to Pleiku having arrived in Saigon on the 24th. Refer to the VHPA Vietnam Helicopter History CD (2001 version) for more details including the tactical deployment of the ARVN units around Kontum. The TOW Team used the radio callsign 'Hawk's Claw.'

B Troop Redesignated H Troop, 17th Cavalry

On the 30th, B Troop was redesignated H Troop, 17th Cav. Need input from Troop Commander, etc.

C Troop Redesignated H Troop, 10th Cavalry

On the 30th, C Troop was officially redesignated H Troop, 10th Cav. Major Sidney Lyons, the last C Troop Commander and the only CO H/10th Cav would know in Vietnam, recalls:

For a time during the month, C Troop had been known as Air Cav Troop II (Prov), MR II but we were finally named H/10th Cav. To many guys, however, it was still Charlie Troop. Even though we were one of the last aviation units to leave Vietnam, we continued to function as an ACT until the very end. We "lost" our ARP due to a moratorium about putting the Blues on the ground. Basically, they could only be inserted to help rescue a downed crew. They were bored out of their minds and were sadly misused by our higher. When we did need them and used them I was lucky to get two squads assembled. Sometimes we would use them to protect an LZ while we inserted a larger ARVN force just to keep them trained. Basically we supported two organizations; the 9th ARVN Div from north of An Son all the way to LZ English and the American Consulate in Qui Nhon which was basically the CIA. They had a number of mercenary forces that use to operate all over MR II and across the fence. At first we only inserted them and let them walk out. They were oriental, mostly Chinese, dressed like VC and NVA and carried their weapons. It took us a long time to work up the courage to land in a PZ and let those sort of folk come running at you and climb in your ship!! We had a good relationship with the CIA folk - they really liked us and did us lots of favors.

May 1972

A good reference for background information for this month is Neil Sheehan's "A Bright Shining Lie" starting on page 778. The H/10th Cav ORLL for the period 2 May – 31 Oct provides another overview. Several members of both H Troops remember working with Brigadier General John Hill during these difficult days as he directed all the aviation assets of MR II including the TOW missile helicopters.

On the 2nd, the 1st Combat Aerial TOW Team flew its first combat missions. They destroyed four M-41 tanks, a 2 ½ ton truck, and a 105-mm howitzer – all captured by the NVA when FSB Lima was abandoned on the 1st. WO Rick Sheppard remembers:

I can remember flying Gun cover for the B Model TOW ships. They had six missiles on a side and had to fly a pretty steady line toward the target. We took a lot of hits while covering those guys; they were so slow. They shot a lot of tanks. Some were US made that the ARVN had abandoned, some were NVA that were not fully functional, and some were very operational and did everything they could to avoid these ships. At one point the NVA had set up a 51 cal in a tower and nothing

could take it out. A TOW ship came in on almost a flat approach and blew it away. That was a thing of beauty!!.

Also on the 2nd, the H/10th Cav ORLL for the period 2 May – 31 Oct records its first item as follows: H Troop was stationed at Pleiku conducting VR for the Pleiku sector command and Kontum Province. During this period, significant enemy activity was noted in the Kontum area in conjunction with the 1972 Spring Offensive.

Carl Nagy was the Maintenance Officer for B and later H Troop. //Need to get his input.//

For the 3rd and 4th according to the Eagle Bn S3 log, “C Troop has no LOHs for the last light VR.”

On the 6th, H/17th Cav helped rescue the survivors, including SP4 Rick Vogel, from the 57th AHC UH-1H crash on April 24th. Rick Vogel recalls:

Two B/7/17th Cav Hueys landed. The first inserted some ranger to secure the LZ and the second extracted him with MAJ Warmath and SSG Ward; both with serious wounds and both from Advisor Team 22. Being a CE himself, Rick remembers that the Huey had a minigun mounted as one door gun and an M-2 50-cal. mounted in front of the CE, SP4 Steve Mayton. During the flight to the 71st Evac, Rick gave Steve his Swedish K, a favorite SOG weapon. The 57th supported the Special Forces SOG activities into Laos and had a very close relationship with them. Some time later Rick met up with Steve at Fort Carson. At one time Rick had a copy of the citation awarding Steve an Air Medal for this extraction. Rick also believes one of the escorting Cobras was shot down and had to be destroyed during this mission.

Also on the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for AH-1G #67-15747 at grid ZB053186, which is on the Dak Poko river south and east of Dak To II. The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 09/1968, served in Vietnam with the 334th AWC logging 1047 hours until 12/1969 when it entered the Vietnam and CONUS repair channels, then it returned to Vietnam in 02/1971 for service with A Troop. From the comments about A Troop standing down presented earlier, it is certainly possible this aircraft was given to B Troop and hence H/17th Cav.

H/10th Cav operates dual missions from Camp Holloway and Lane AHP

Also on the 6th, the H/10th Cav ORLL states: Due to a large enemy buildup in Binh Dinh Province, one half of H Troop’s combat assets were ordered to Lane Army Heliport, An Son in support of the 22nd ARVN Division.

On the 7th according to the Eagle Bn S3 log, C Troop’s Operation reported early in the morning that they didn’t think they would have a LOH for the chaplain’s mission but at 0710 they reported they would have a LOH and pilot on the VIP pad at 0830 to the mission.

On the 9th according to the Eagle Bn S3 log, one C Troop aircraft received fire but was not hit. Additionally, C Troop reported they destroyed one sandpan.

On the 10th, the H/10th Cav ORLL states: On 10 May all assets were returned to Camp Holloway to combat a major VC/NVA attack launched against Kontum City. The last two weeks of May were devoted to VR and ARA missions in the vicinity of Kontum City and Kontum Pass to relieve the city from heavy enemy pressure and to reopen supply access routes.

Also for the 10th according to the Eagle Bn S3 log, at 0920 C Troop was informed that all aircraft above 2/2/2 will go directly to Pleiku. We assume the ‘2/2/2’ abbreviation means 2 LOHs, 2 Cobras, and 2 Hueys.

On the 11th according to the Eagle Bn S3 log, at 1710 hours C Troop reported they needed a high bird for the last flight of the day. The log also states at 2400 C Troop reported 4 KIAs and one 51-cal position destroyed.

On the 16th according to the Eagle Bn S3 log, early in the morning the C Troop Duty Officer was called to apprehend a man, reportedly from the Cav, that had fired a pistol in other unit's area. About one hour later the man was taken into custody.

On the 17th according to The Battle of Kontum website: Kontum airfield received sporadic rocket and artillery fire on May 17th. One of the rockets impacted in close proximity to two Cobra AH-1G gunships wounding one crewmember and damaging both aircraft. Later in the day, an exploding rocket set off a stack of ammunition just as an Air Force C-130 was unloading another ammunition pallet nearby. The pilot of the C-130 immediately applied full power in an attempt to make a take-off. Unfortunately, the aircraft rear ramp was still in the down position and when the pilot tried to rotate for take-off the ramp would drag on the runway slowing down the aircraft. As the aircraft ran off the end of the runway, the right wing struck a brick building sheering the wing and rupturing the fuel tanks. The fuel immediately ignited engulfing the aircraft in flames as it cart-wheeled for several hundred yards. Only two survivors were pulled from the wreckage. The ammunition continued to explode on the airfield for the rest of the day hurling 105mm artillery rounds all over the area. Eventually, the entire ammunition dump was destroyed. One of the shells landed near a POL blivet and set the JP-4 ablaze. The exploding ammunition dump eventually cost the allies over 3,000 105mm artillery rounds, 25,000 gallons of POL, one C-130, and seven Air Force personnel who were the crew for the C-130.

Also for the 17th, 1LT Clarence 'Jay' Lott of H/17th Cav provides:

On the 18th, CPT Stephen James of H/17th Cav

During the 25th, 26th, and 27th, the Battle for Kontum reached its peak from an NVA point of view. All during May, as many as 21 B-52 strikes a day were going into NVA positions. The two H Troops must have contributed substantially to the target selection.

On the 25th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss with fatalities record for H/10th Cav OH-6A #66-07935 flown by pilot **1LT Daryl R. Kunzler** and observer **1LT Robert F. Wilcoxson** at grid AR764866 on a mission south of Kontum. The VHPA copy of The Wall database lists 1LT Kunzler's tour start date as 16 August 1971 and 1LT Wilcoxson's as 4 August 1971. They reported NVA troops and volunteered to make a second pass. They were shot down and both died. The H/10th Cav ORLL states their LOH was destroyed by a B-40 rocket while conducting a VR near the Kontum airstrip. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 02/1968, served two long State side tours in 1968, 1969, and 1970 plus a short Vietnam in 1969 with an Artillery unit. In 10/1971 it returned to Vietnam and served with D/3/5th Cav. It had about 349 hours and had only been with H Troop a short time before it was destroyed. The following information was collected from an unnamed source at the 1997 VHPA Reunion:

Daryl and Bob were checking out "moving bushes" south of Kontum and caught a B-40 rocket, exploding in mid-air, and exploding again on the ground. It took two days of fighting to recover the bodies. The "moving bushes" were sighted by CPT Bob Botnen on dawn patrol and an air strike was denied. The first regular mission of the day was to then check out the situation.

WO Steve Shepard remembers: I was the front seat in the lead snake during a recon mission on the south side of Kontum. Earlier that day, another unit heading north of the city reported sighting "moving bushes" in the area south of the cemetery. We had been waiting for the weather to clear enough to start our work. We were informed of this sighting hours after the initial report and were asked to check it out. As we approached Kontum, the little bird dropped to the deck and flew low level as we vectored him toward the area. The LOH pilot, LT Darrel Kunzler crossed the open fields

and entered the village in a sweeping left turn and immediately exited the area while shouting that there were uniformed NVA troops lounging around just looking up at him. For some reason, it was decided he should go back for another look to determine their numbers and how large an area they occupied. He headed back toward the area but further to the east. As he approached across the fields, he crossed a line of bushes between two fields in a fast, low left turn. They were waiting for him. His last words were: "Taking fire, taking fire." I will never forget the tone in his voice - a mix of fear, distress, excitement, and dismay. It's hard to describe. But I can hear it so clearly, as if it were yesterday. The LOH crashed and exploded in flames immediately. He was maybe thirty feet in front of the guns that killed him. We recovered his charred bones two days later. His left seat (we only used one observer) was LT Wilcoxson. His body was identified by the 'son' on his name tag. He was lying face down with his right side burned away. There is more to this story, but this part I have told is the part that plays over and over in my head. It is one of the things in my experience that has formed my opinion of scouts. Scout crews were the reason for my mission. They will always have my 'highest' respect over all other warrior aviators.

WO Rick Sheppard remembers: Let me tell you a little about these two guys. Daryl was an Infantry type and for 30 to 60 days had been on one of the FBs on Rocket Ridge because they were that short of American advisors. He had returned to the Troop, gotten checked out again and was flying as a Scout again. Wilcoxson had previously flown in the Lift for about eight months and had volunteered for the Scouts because he felt 'he was not contributing enough.'

Also on the 25th according to the Eagle Bn S3 log, at 2125 hours "Received call from MAJ Brown that 1 LOH shot down crew missing. AH-1G shot down - A/C not recovered. LOH 6 exploded in air and on impact and Y.S. [assumed to be Yellow Scarf] 5 will be there tomorrow."

The following article titled "Born LOHser Ups and Downs of Flying" by SP4 Jim Smith appeared in the Friday May 26 issue of the Pacific Stars & Stripes:

Pleiku - "If you get shot down, you just go back and get another 'bird' and finish the mission," said CPT Jim Stein. Stein, 25, B Troop, 7th Sq., 17th Air Cav., has been shot down three times in the last six weeks. And yet, he continues to fly the same missions in the same areas everyday - mostly north and west of Kontum City. He has rescued 14 men, mostly American advisors, and most of the time had dodged intense ground fire. He has always emerged unscathed. Last week, he was given a Silver Star for braving heavy small arms and mortar fire to rescue American forward air controllers from a besieged border Ranger camp west of Kontum. "I do it because there are men on the ground that need help," Stein insists. "I hope I never hear a pilot refuse to help somebody, saying 'It's too hot down there.' If somebody is in trouble you go down and help." On his first Vietnam tour which lasted 19 months and ended in November 1970, Stein flew "Huey" and "Bravo" gunships in the Delta. He began his second tour last March. As a LOH pilot Stein zips along at treetop level assessing bomb damage, marking strike positions and sometimes fighting the enemy at point-blank range. He shrugs off the obvious danger of skimming treetops. "At 6,000 feet you can draw .51 caliber that is just as deadly as AK at 100 feet." On his first tour Stein was shot down five times. On two other occasions he brought badly shot-up choppers back to base. Last month, on a mission near Kontum City, small arms fire knocked Stein's bird out of the sky. "We crashed near QL14. When we hit, the chopper rolled three times. Fortunately we landed in a safe area and another bird picked us up." On another mission last month Stein buzzed within 25 meters of a Communist-infested bunker. His observer tossed a grenade into the position and sprayed machine gun fire into the area. The Communists returned fire, wounded the observer and crippled the chopper. After the crash Stein and his partner were again rescued by a sister ship. Earlier this month, Stein sniffed out some tank tracks and, suspecting that tanks were hidden in large bunkers, he marked the area for air strikes. After the bomb runs he dropped in to assess the damage and was greeted by .51 caliber fire from about 30 feet. Stein and his ship smashed into the earth again and, as before, a sister ship rescued the downed aviators. Stein says that the LOH pilots

have "kind of a code" to save one another at all cost. He rescued one LOH crew recently. WO Jack Rogers has rescued Stein twice. Stein's rescue missions also include snatching two Americans from Dak To and dodging anti-aircraft barrages to save two downed AH1 Cobra pilots. During the mission that won him his Silver Star, Stein slipped under other choppers that were drawing heavy enemy fire. "The men on the ground had run out of flares and I had to go in without lights. I just hovered around until they realized I was there. The Communists must have never seen me," he says. "Everybody is scared when they are flying," says Stein coolly. "But you don't think about it. If you do it possesses you and you can't do your job." There were periods recently, Stein says, that his ship was taking hits almost daily. "But it has been quiet lately."

On the 29th, **WO1 Gerald Douglas Spradlin** was the pilot of H/17th Cav OH-6A #66-17771 with **SGT Larry Kane Morrow** as gunner/observer at grid AS198598. The Wall database gives the following tour start date and MOS data: Morrow, 31 Jan 1972, 11B20; Spradlin, 10 Mar 1972, 100B. The following is an edited version of the Homecoming II Project synopsis" report:

SP4 Larry K. Morrow was the gunner/observer on an OH-6A helicopter conducting a visual reconnaissance in Kontum Province. Enemy ground fire hit his aircraft causing it to crash and burn. On June 29, 1972, South Vietnamese Army forces searched the crash site and recovered Specialist Morrow's flight helmet and the skeletal remains of other crewmen who perished in the incident. The crash site area was later struck by a B-52 airstrike. Specialist Morrow was initially declared missing in action. Returning U.S. POWs had no information on his precise fate. In November 1973, he was declared killed in action/body not recovered based on a presumptive finding of death. On December 21, 1973, a Vietnam People's Army defector reported having seen an American POW in June 1972 at a location approximately 55 kilometers from the crash site. This report was placed in Specialist Morrow's file. In August 1974, the crash site was searched again, but no further human remains were recovered. In August 1983, U.S. intelligence received information concerning the downing of a U.S. aircraft in the general area of Specialist Morrow's loss incident. One airman was reportedly killed and one captured. This report was also placed in Specialist Morrow's file. In December 1990, U.S. investigators in Vietnam visited the area of this loss incident. They interviewed a former Vietnam People's Army officer with knowledge of the area and some responsibility for U.S. POWs held in the area. Although they had information on some U.S. POWs, they had no information about Specialist Morrow, including an indication as to whether or not he had been captured alive.

On the 30th, Vietnam President Thieu visited Kontum as a morale-raising effort for the defenders.

June 1972

On the 2nd, H/10th Cav was working at the Rockpile by QL14 south of Kontum.

WO Rick Sheppard remembers: An 57th AHC Huey went down and was burning. One of the main blades had cut into the pilot's compartment and was trapping the pilot. [Editor's note: this aircraft was UH-1H #67-17446 flown by CPT Joe Eubanks, who died in this aircraft, and CW2 Bruce Delan who was burned and evaced because the CE and gunner got him out of the wreck.] CPT Suttle, H Troop's XO at the time, was flying C&C and was on short final to land and help rescue the Gladiator crew. The ship started taking 51-cal fire and **CPT Frederick N. Suttle, Jr.** was hit and died of these wounds. The VHPA copy of The Wall database lists CPT Suttle's tour start date as 28 November 1971. The H/10th Cav ORLL states that he was conducting a rescue mission south of Kontum.

WO Steve Shepard remembers: This was a bad day for me. I had spent the entire morning with Fred and then he left to do a weather check at Kontum. I heard the whole thing on the radios. Just devastating!

Also on the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database contains a lost record for H/10th Cav UH-1H #67-19489 at grid BR877651. We believe this Huey was flown by CPT Suttle and CW2 John E. Lucius. H Troopers state that Lucius flew it back to 71st Evac so it was not destroyed in the field. The VHPA KIA database states that CPT Suttle died at grid ZA201695 and CPT Eubanks, the 57th AHC pilot, at grid ZA184680. Therefore the records could be telling us there were two events at different locations.

CW2 John E. Lucius recalls: I flew with the 134th AHC until they stood-down in Dec 1971. Then I joined C Troop and was with them when they became H/10th Cav. I flew in the Lift Platoon as Yellowscraf 34 until my tour was up in Sep 1972.

H/10th Cav Moved to Lane AHP from Camp Holloway

On the 3rd, the H/10th Cav ORLL states: H Troop was ordered to report to Lane Army Heliport, An Son, under operational control of the Senior Advisor to the 22nd ARVN Division. This was in counteraction to a strong NVA trust into northern Binh Dinh Province. In the battle to retake LZ Crystal, H Troop lost an OH-6A and a UH-1H to intense enemy ground to air fire. However, all crewmembers were successfully rescued.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database contains two lost records for H/10th Cav UH-1H #68-15485 at grid BR914669 flown by AC CPT Zane Brown, pilot WO1 Theodore Clymer, CE SP4 Mark W. Ely, and gunner SP4 Denver M. Richards and for H/10th OH-6A #69-16049 at grid BR920672 flown by pilot 1LT Frank M. Beall and observer SP4 Douglas R. Hansen. 1LT Frank Beall provided extensive details, including an article titled *Close Call: Airpower to the Rescue* that he wrote, plus copies of the USAF aerial photos and copies of photos from the awards ceremony. An edited version of this material follows:

LZ Crystal, 30 miles NNW of Qui Nhon, had been under siege since June 1, 1972 when the 41st ARVN Regiment and its U.S. Advisory Team, led by LTC Don Stovall, was surrounded by elements of the 3rd NVA Division reinforced by several VC battalions. Four days of artillery barrages, naval gunfire, and air strikes had broken the siege. Daybreak, 5 June, a 'pink team,' consisting of a UH-1H C&C, an AH-1G, and an OH-6A, from H/10th Air Cav was dispatched to the Phu My-LZ Crystal area in an effort to locate retreating enemy forces and antiaircraft positions. The LOH with Aero Scout Pilot, 1LT Frank Beall and Aerial Observer, SP4 Doug Hansen, descended to treetop level and began performing the VR mission. The term VR was a misnomer because these were actually 'hunter-killer' missions where the enemy was sought out and destroyed. Overhead, he C&C, with AC, CPT Zane Brown, and Pilot, WO1 Ted Clymer, directed the Scout toward Phu My. The Cobra, with AC, CPT Dean Priddy, and Pilot, 1LT Jerry T. Paul, provided cover. Approaching the Trung Thuan hamlet east of Phu My, on Route 504, Beall and Hansen observed enemy forces and began receiving small arms fire. Beall called, "Taking fire, 12 o'clock, breaking right." As Hansen returned fire with an M-60 from his left front seat position, the Snake rolled-in firing HE and flechette rockets and spraying the tree lines with minigun, covering the evasively maneuvering LOH. C&C called: "Red one-five, backblast!" signaling that a crew had launched a rocket or missile. During the spring of 1972, the Communist had introduced the shoulder fired SA-7 "Strela" heat-seeking missile to South Vietnam. Primary targets for this missile were helicopter gunships and low flying fighters. A number of Cobras had been hit during this time period. As a countermeasure, IR exhaust deflectors were being installed on most of the helicopter fleet, however, the OH-6 didn't have this modification. More modern IR countermeasures had not made it to the field yet. Tactically, pilots were briefed to turn back toward a heat-seeking missile in order to trick the infrared sensor causing premature missile detonation before it could hit its target. Too late for a 180-degree turn, the LOH was hit by a suspected missile severing the tail boom aft of the exhaust outlet. Beall radioed, "Shit! Going down!" Tail boom gone, the drastic CG change caused the LOH to tuck nose down, nearly inverted, and roll and spin to the right. Loss of a tail boom was not

mentioned in the training manual, so Beall's reaction was to close the throttle and pull pitch before crashing inside the enemy infested area.

Overhead, the Cobra and C&C were providing covering fire for the downed LOH crew. Thanks to renowned crashworthiness of the LOH, Hansen unbuckled to exit and noticed Beall slumped over, hanging in his shoulder harness. Thinking Beall was history, Hansen grabbed about a hundred rounds of linked-ammo for his M-60 and took cover in the tree line. The LOH continued being riddled by small arms fire and fumes from the smoldering turbine began filling the cockpit. Beall groggily awakened, having only been knocked unconscious by a 'chicken plate' uppercut on impact. He unbuckled his seat belt-shoulder harness and fell through the broken plexiglass bubble into the paddy. Hansen saw his movement and came to his aid. Both moved back into the tree line for cover. Beall's M-16 and sidearm were ejected in the crash, but his survival vest still contained its AN PRC-90 survival radio. He made contact with C&C on guard. An orange rescue marker panel from the pants pocket of his flight suit was waved momentarily so the the air cover could verify their position. C&C radioed for reinforcement aircraft and advised the downed airmen a rescue attempt would be made north of their position in another rice paddy. Cautiously making their way along a trail to the pick-up-point, the airmen encountered a VC, but a burst from Hansen's M-60 ruined his day. After silencing the wounded and screaming VC, Beall souvenired his AK-47 for more firepower. Enemy forces were surrounding the downed crew. Beall and Hansen watched a Snake salvoed nails disintegrating three NVA moving to attach into a pink mist. C&C made his approach to the LZ. One door gunner had a jamming problem with his gun so Zane made pedal turns always keeping a working M-60 firing toward the men on the ground. With an exchange of friendly and hostile fire ricocheting off the water, the two newly initiated ground pounders slogged through knee-deep rice paddy water and jumped on board. Priddy's snake covered the rescue with rockets and miniguns blazing. As the Huey departed, the tree line lit up again with enemy automatic weapons fire. Zane called, "Take hits. We're going down!" We could hear the turbine engine spooling down and feel the rapid descent before impact.

Another period of unconsciousness was interrupted by the thunderous noise of helicopter gunships and fast movers overhead. The earlier radio call by YELLOWSCARF 16, along with the help of a FAC code name WOLFMAN, brought several helicopter gunships plus Air Force and Navy fighters on the scene. One of those cover Cobras, flown by CPT Lynn Stephens and CPT Don Hanning (KIA 9/3/72) from the 60th AVN out of Ninh Hoa, reported seeing an orange flight jacket liner or rescue marker. Among others providing cover were Army pilots: CPT James Salmon, 1LT Tom Firsbee, 1LT John Hancock, 1LT Joe LeBlanc, 1LT Mike Stewart, 1LT Jimmie VonGotten, WO1 Harold Wood, WO1 Tim McKenna, WO1 Glenn Nowakowski (KIA 7/22/72), and WO1 Dwain Hartwick. Deafening sounds of a complete inventory of air ordnance was raining down on the enemy positions. Looking to his right, Beall saw Hansen lying face down on a rice paddy dike with a screwdriver handle protruding from his back. Crew chiefs on Hueys sometimes place a screwdriver in the framework of the pilot's armored seats for quick fixes. Somehow this tool became airborne when the C&C crashed and lodged in Hansen's back near his right shoulder blade. He was ailing badly, but still breathing. Ted Clymer was to the left with his M-14 poised for action. Most of his usually exotic survival gear was lost in the crash except for a bandoleer containing two full magazines of 7.62mm ammo. Crew Chief, SP4 Mark Ely was armed with a .38 caliber revolver. Gunner, SP4 Denver Richards, ailing from a right foot injury, had blood oozing from his boot. Zane had made multiple trips back to the crash site to retrieve armament and muster the crew into a hasty defensive position. Now monitoring his survival radio, Zane eyeballed Beall and pointed towards his chest. Two rounds had splattered his armored vest, without it he'd no doubt be dead. Beall's fragment wounded right leg rendered it useless, but luckily everyone was still alive. Amazing! The threat of enemy attack remained constant and wounded enemy soldiers could be heard moaning in

pain nearby. Fast movers continued striking targets in the distance and strafed our perimeter along with the helicopter gunships.

High overhead, a 129th AHC UH-1H with MAJ Alan Jones, AC, and CPT Bruce Palmer, were flying “Air Boss” for operations in the area. Jones witnessed the shoot downs and realized he was the only ship available to go in for the rescue. Two attempts were thwarted by an uprising of hostile fire. With all the ordnance expended, it was incredible how so many bad guys were still fighting and able to fend off the air rescue effort. Thinking they were doomed, the downed airmen wondered if there would ever be anymore wine, women, and song; a humbling and frightening thought though everyone was relying on faith and the guys on top. With no U.S. ground combat troops available for insertion, this was strictly airpower to the rescue.

Finally, on the third attempt, with his 20-minute low-fuel caution light on, Jones landed his rescue Huey about 25 meters from the downed crew’s position. Gunships and fighters strafed the perimeter. Two Cobras made slow, almost hovering gun runs above the Slick firing rockets, chunker, and minigun into the tree line while the rescue was accomplished. The downed airmen scrambled to the rescue helicopter while Jones made a quick count to make sure all six were on-board and flew to the Evac Hospital in Qui Nhon.

[Alan Jones in an email to Frank wrote – when you guys piled aboard, I could only count five people, turned out there was a sixth almost under my seat that I couldn’t see. This took an extra second or two to find him – I sure didn’t want to leave someone and have to go back! I can still see that screwdriver in Hansen’s back. Almost as clear as yesterday. He was real active at the time, so I kinda thought he didn’t realize it was there.]

[Frank in an email to Alan Jones wrote – I distinctly remember Zane Brown saying the rescue ship is low on fuel after you made two attempts. He was using his survival radio. Then when you touched down in the paddy, my right leg wouldn’t work. I literally crawled at gator speed to the helicopter and was the last on-board. Besides your low-fuel status, enemy rounds were ‘popping’ at the gray insulation in the cargo compartment on departure. Not until we were a couple minutes out of the pick-up zone did I think we’d made it!]

After-mission reconnaissance photos [taken by the USAF and obtained by Frank] clearly show the wreckage of the LOH and Huey within 100 meters of each other. A sweep by ARVN forces confirmed over 150 enemy KIA and numerous weapons captured, including an expended SA-7 launcher. Truly an example of coordinated airpower among Army, Navy, and Air Force pilots, remarkably precise close air support resulted in this successful rescue with no friendlies KIA. Many brave Americans were involved, some names, others still unknown. Thanks to the heroic airmen who risked their lives to save fellow comrades in dire straits, this was just another Close Call!

The notes on the photos of the awards ceremony state that LTC Giese from the Eagle Battalion and H Troop CO MAJ Brown presented CPT Zane Brown a Silver Star, 1LT Frank Beall a DFC and Purple Heart [he is using crutches to help him walk], WO1 Ted Clymer a DFC, and SP4 Mark Ely a Brozen Star. Since SP4 Denver Richards and SP4 Doug Hansen were not present that the ceremony, we can only assume they had been evacuated. Frank later wrote: I remember Doug Hansen on a stainless steel gurney next to me in the ER at Qui Nhon. We both had eye to eye contact and smiles on our faces even though we were hurting like hell. The doc made an incision in his right rib cage to insert a tube to drain his lung. Then they pulled the screwdriver out. Ted Clymer later had it made into a plaque and sent to Doug’s home in Minesota. The last time I had contact, Doug was working in his parent’s family grocery store.

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database contains an accident record for H/17th Cav UH-1H #66-011088 flown by WO1 Gary N. Taylor in the Pleiku area. An edited version of the accident summary follows: At 3700 feet MSL, the aircraft shuddered several times accompanied by loud bangs. An

approach was made to a staging area and at a two-foot hover, a momentary power loss was encountered and a hard landing was made, spreading the skids. A maintenance team arrived to inspect the aircraft and the maintenance officer flew the aircraft back to base with no further difficulties.

H/10th Cav operates dual missions from Camp Holloway and Lane AHP

On the 9th, the H/10th Cav ORLL states: From the 9th through 21 June H Troop assets were again divided, with one element being sent back to Pleiku Sector Command. Despite the added stress put on crews and aircraft in this dual-based concept, all missions were successfully completed.

Also on the evening of the 9th, Mr. John Paul Vann, the Senior U.S. Army Advisor in II Corps/Military Region II, died in an OH-58 on the way from Pleiku to Kontum.

WO1 Larry Richards recalls: The next day after John Paul Vann died, they sent a slick that Bob Botnen flew up to just north of the Rock Pile and just south of Kontum City in that little valley to get his body out. They sent me and someone else as cover for them. Bob called Taking Fire on the way in. That was just east of the road and north of the Rock Pile. That road had been cleared by those big plows. As he got there he called that he was taking fire. Now I don't know if he was actually taking fire or if he heard someone shooting at him from the ground. Anyway, I fired up the tree line under him. There were multitudinous smokes coming up all of a sudden. Apparently the good guys thought someone was shooting at them. I've read several accounts of his crash but none on the recovery. Part of the excitement that morning was to find out or not if someone had his briefcase. They had the bodies but the question was did anyone get his briefcase? Now I know we had to have killed some friendlies because I had fired right where those smokes later came up. But I never heard anything more about that incident. I have heard other pilots talk about receiving fire from ARVN units, but I don't remember any 'not so friendly fire' save for some accidental incidents in the Bong Son area.

On the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database contains an accident record for H/10th Cav Cobra #68-17076 flown by WO1 L.W. Richards as AC and 1LT Jerry T. Paul as pilot at Pleiku. An edited version of the accident summary follows: At 1100 hours local, the Cobra was hovering to the revetment area after returning from a 1 1/2 hour mission in the AO. The aircraft had a full load of armament and had just refueled with 1200 LBS of JP-4. The pilot states that the aircraft was hovering at 1/2% below the Go-No Go Chart in the aircraft. The pilot experienced a rapid yaw to the right condition causing the tail of the aircraft to swing around to the left and strike the revetment wall. The pilot believes the cause was some form of a tail rotor failure and not a yaw channel SCAS hardover because he had experienced a yaw channel hardover before, though never at a hover.

On the 17th, the following is an edited extract from the 17th CAG Pleiku Operations Center journal – At 0910 hour Yellow Scarf 3 launched for 19A area to do a weather check. At 0928 hours 361st AWC reported that C Troop keeps parking their snake in 361st revetment (C-4). We have asked him not to but he persists – recommend command level action, not staff. At 1040 hours Yellow Scarf reported they were working the AO. At 1045 hours B Troop launched again. At 1150 H/17 Cav spot report for ZB097280 - 20 new bunkers with overhead cover and 6 persons in the open wearing black PJ with AK's. At 1223 hours Yellow Scarf 3 reports that he has finished working 19A, neg reports, gone to refuel and report to II Corps TAC CP. At 1235 hours Eagle 5 reports that troops are all on the ground at Tan Canh; that Embalmer is working for the operations and is using a FAC at the time. At 1300 hours H/17 Cav spot report for YB998256 – tank crossing, took fire, small arms negative tally on source of fire. At 1310 at YB982254 – tank tail; at YB992242 – foot bridge across river; entire area built up with defensive positions. At 1315 at YB999262 – Scalphunter 13 took fire, target was engaged by Undertakers with negative results. At 1320 at ZB059300 – empty trailer, empty crates (possibly rockets) 6'x12'x15'x4' high and 3 people on trail. At 1340 at ZB025272 – Scalphunter 13 found 20 to 25 three to four man bunkers with 8' overhead cover and 2' wide hard packed trails going in all

directions that shows current usage. At 1600 hours, C Troop reported they have no targets worthy of air strikes; some fresh fighting positions, working area ZA1772 to ZA0769. B Troop reported nothing significant; working now east of Vo Dinh ZB2007. At 1645 Gen Toan wants B Troop to check out the areas where the tanks were sighted yesterday. Staff action – passed to Dell.

On the 18th, the following is an edited extract from the Eagle Battalion Daily Operations Log from Lane – Early in the morning BANJO 10 requested gunships for TABACCO 10 for BR931674. [Believe these are American advisors with the 22nd ARVN.] Ghost Rider and Pink Panther gun teams launch and expend several times. At 1440 hours a 60th AHC AH-1G, Ghost Rider 258, flown by WO Walters as AC and WO Clary as pilot, is shot down at BR877585. H/10th Cav, Yellowcraft White 7, flown by CPT Tom Butz and WO Rick Sheppard pick up the downed crew in their AH-1G and move them to a secure fire base. Soon other Ghost Rider report that #258 is totally destroyed and there are 12 bodies seen near a village about 400 meters west of the destroyed Cobra. By the end of the day 4 different FACs put in 31 fighter sorties that produced 17 sustained fires, 40 structures and 2 bunkers destroyed, one 82-mm mortar position destroyed and 44 enemy KBA. After reading the above, CPT Tom Butz provides:

I don't know who was BANJO 10. Wow – I never knew these guys' names. Walters and Clary. I think they were Bluestars from the 48th AHC but the journal is what it is. I remember they got down to us so fast it would make your head spin! The Troop as normal was split between Pleiku and An Son. So we were one Cobra short at An Son to form a team. They had four Cobras up at Pleiku and we had four at An Son. Because of maintenance, two were out. So they mated us up with a Bluestar gun. We were out doing rocket boxes and VRing in different places that they gave us to check. So this Bluestar gun was flying my wing on a Cav mission that day. We were up the coast just north of the Bong Son. We are completing a period – low on fuel but still had full armament. It was so windy that day that we couldn't put the Scout down along the coast. They were kind of hanging around but not doing much. Every now and then we'd put them down, but it was pretty much a 'high – low snake' mission. We were only flying with one OH-6A as a Scout at that time. In early 1972 we'd fly two and two but by this time it was one and two. So the C&C and the Scout had already left to go get fuel. We received a call saying that they wanted us to BDA this little village. There had been a number of strikes put in on it. I can remember an F-4 strike being put on it. And, you know, you could see that they'd put a lot of heavy stuff in there. This kid had been bugging me all day about being low snake. I said – it's just a BDA and we are going in for fuel; what the heck. I said if you want to, you can go low. He took that on quickly and went down low. Now this AC was one heck of a good pilot. As soon as he gets down low, the whole world lights up on him! He calls a May Day – engine's out, the transmission light's on. He was shot up bad. However, he maneuvered the thing – he got it over around – now remember he was low so he didn't have much reaction time – and put it into a U shaped field just as pretty as you please. It was, I mean, absolutely perfect. I had called him on the way down and say, 'By the way, you're on fire.' So he was in deep trouble at the time but did a beautiful job of putting it down on the ground. Rick and I tried to get in. Now, it was pretty severe fire. I didn't want to jettison the pods so we expended the ammo. We fired all around them and all the places where the fire was coming from. We made about four attempts to get in and on the fifth one we finally did get in to them. They are coming over and doing the ammo bay doors thing. We are lifting out of this place. The turrets in C Troop never worked anyway, so we carried ammo but it was just dead weight. All the rockets were gone. This was silly because I thought I could get out with my pods still on and, indeed, I made it. We were so poor for armament and stuff, that I didn't want to jettison the pods just to save four lives! You know, those pods are valuable! So the AC gets on my side and the front-seater gets on the other side. Rick opens his canopy so he can put his hand in. Well, that turned out to not be the brightest thing he ever did either. The guy is standing up on the ammo door and he feels safer having one hand inside the cockpit. Well the canopy door slams shut on his arm; so he starts beating on the canopy. I tell Rick

that we are taking B40s. There was a split second when I couldn't tell it was him pounding on the canopy. Anyway, we got out of there and slowly made it over to a little ARVN firebase on the top of a hill. There was an American Advisor there. When we touched down, he had two beers and handed them to those guys. And zip it was gone! By this time the Huey had launched. He picked them up and took them over to Qui Nhon, I think. Until this day, I didn't know their names. I received a Silver Star and Rick got a DFC for that. That was an interesting day because we were low on fuel as well. And if we hadn't gotten them out then, I don't know what we'd have done. I have a picture of the Cobra down in that field. I think the other team came out and fired up the place.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database contains a lost record for H/17th Cav OH-6A #67-16622 at grid ZB088177. We believe this LOH was flown by CPT Jim Stein and an unknown SP4 black man northeast of the Kontum on the 19th. Both men were seriously wounded. CPT Jim Stein recalls:

These were exciting and dangerous times. For example, I can remember flying John Vann (the famous civilian commander of American forces in MR II) about 10 times. His normal group of pilots flew OH-58s from the MR II Compound such was separate from Camp Holloway. His HQ would call over and ask for a volunteer to flew him on his mission. I was also involved in discovering the survivors from the 57th AHC UH-1H was shot down trying to rescue the advisors at Dak To II in late April. On the 19th, we were doing a VR east of the highway between Kontum and Dak To. We weren't trying to find the NVA; we knew they were there in force. All we were trying to determine is how far down the valley they had moved. I believe I had a wing LOH that day but I don't recall the names. My Observer saw the NVA, opened fire and was hit in the foot. I immediately swung the aircraft to the right so the engine compartment would take the fire. I must have turned too far, because my side of the aircraft started receiving hits. My left leg was hit. I looked down and the pedal area was just covered with blood. I called up to the Cobras with the news that both of us were wounded and they needed to direct us to a place to land. They guided me to a clearing where I did a hovering autorotation. The chase ship picked us up. I was taken to the hospital at Pleiku for awhile and then moved to Saigon where they removed my leg. I was so juiced up during that period that I don't remember much. I don't believe I ever saw the black man who was my Observer that day.

Also on the 20th, via USARPAC and other orders the name and composition of H/10th Cav was finally put to rest. 1LT Frank M. Beall provided a copy of 518th AG Personnel Service Company Special Orders 172 dated 20 June. Section 35 reassigns 21 officers from Air Cav Troop II (Prov), MR II to H/10th Cav. The authority for this action is listed at USARPAC General Order 261 dated 3 May 1972. //Editor's note: it is safe to assume there are other orders reassigning the warrant officers and enlisted personnel. If anyone has a copy, please contact Mike Law.// The officers listed in this order are:

Brown, Edward M., MAJ	Botnen, Robert H. CPT	Brown, Zane CPT
Tom Butz, Thomas R. CPT	Klenner, Martin S. CPT	Middendorf, Richard J. CPT
Mitchell, George H. CPT	Petropulos, Timothy D. CPT	Priddy, Willie D. CPT
Scribner, Charles R. CPT	Sudeck, Roy CPT	Waugh, Frank A. CPT
Austin, John G. 1LT	Beall, Frank M. III 1LT	Blazek, Patrich W. 1LT
Coolidge, Douglas E. 1LT	Evanitsky, Alex Jr 1LT	Krabec, Warren G. 1LT
Paul, Jerry 1LT	Starnes, Bill R. 1LT	

The reader should be aware there are some obvious problems with this list of officers. For example, even though MAJ Edward M. Brown. is listed first; he had left the unit some time prior to the effective date of 3 May. CPT Klenner's last name should be spelled Kleiner.

H/10th Cav consolidated operations at Lane AHP

On the 22nd, the H/10th Cav ORLL states: The last week of June H Troop consolidated once again at Lane, conducting VR's in northern Binh Dinh Province.

Also on the 22nd, the Eagle Battalion Operations Journal mentions SGT Goldsborough in H/10th Operations section. It also states that LT Denny Lyons, H Troop's maintenance reported that aircraft 588 (the Cav's C&C ship) would be at least 90 minutes late for its planned launch that morning.

WO1 LD 'Al' Varner recalls: I was in C Troop from September 1971 through September 1972. I went from Cobra Hall in the States to Vietnam and flew guns for my entire 12-month tour. I didn't do anything brave or noteworthy. I just flew around and covered people. I wasn't shot down. I witnessed a lot of events that are written in the C Troop/H Troop history. My friend, WO1 Larry Richards, calls me 'the wise man' because I just distributed ammo where ever it was needed! I will tell you that I think I covered the only on-line armored assault in Vietnam. We were going through the An Khe Pass going toward the twin bridges near English. The NVA had taken English. I was on the left flank of this ARVN armored column going thru the pass. I don't recall who the other gun was on the right flank. It was a textbook screw up really. You see the armor going this way. They are in the flats. Behind the armor the ARVN infantry hunkered down behind the tanks. The bad guys are already on the other side of the bridges. So we see the armor come online and then there is a plume of white smoke. Then there was a second plume of white smoke and you knew where the next one was going to be. The armor stops. Then they put those tanks in reverse and ran over their own infantry to get away. They left and the bad guys stayed. That was all there was to it. Well two years later I was telling this story at a club in Fort Lewis. There was this Major sitting at the lunch table. He just lowered his head as I finished the story. I asked him if he knew about that incident. He said, 'Yes, I was the advisor for that online assault with tanks. I just couldn't stop them and they did run over their own infantry.'