

1968

The primary source materials for this year are: For HHT, the 14 page initial AUH prepared by CPT Michael G. Law. For A Troop, the 18 page AUH prepared by 1LT Robert J. Gibson. For B Troop, the 31 page AUH prepared by 1LT Richard L. Montgomery. For the original C Troop, the same three documents mentioned for last year. The 1/1st Cav's history has a good map that shows the relative location of the various FBs and LZ base camps. For the replacement C Troop, a 14 page AUNS prepared by CPT Edward F. Johnson plus a Yearbook that covered MAJ Ledford's period of command provided by SP5 Larry J. Miller. For D Troop, the 18 page AUH prepared by LT Brack Jones, Jr. For the Squadron: a 37 page Recommendation for Presidential Unit Citation, a 20 page Operational Report - Lessons Learned (OR-LL) for the period 1 FEB through 30 APR, a 28 page OR-LL for the period 1 AUG through 31 OCT, and extracts from a 30 page OR-LL for 1 NOV through 31 DEC. Other Vietnam Era reference material include: Terry Bishop's Diary 1LT Bishop, who served with A Troop from April until late November 1968, kept a daily diary. Rick Schoeny's Diary WO1 Schoeny went over on the Walker and flew Lift and Scouts for B Troop. The 1968 book has one hand-written page for each day. Dan Schuette's Diary - 1LT Schuette joined C Troop in late August, flew Lift, was the Motor Officer, and transferred to the 48th AHC in early January 1969. His 1968 diary generally has one hand-written page for each day.

January 1968

The unit histories state that A and D Troops worked out of Kontum for the first ten days of the month. Together they killed 14 NVA and captured one. Both A and D Troops were based at Camp Enari. B Troop's unit history contains a single paragraph covering operations prior to TET which is why we had very little on this troop during the last two months 1967. Basically they considered those pre-TET operations as "on the job" training for the days that followed. Operating out of Camp Enari, B Troop used Plei Djereng, Polei Kleng, Kontum, Dak To, the Oasis, Ban Me Thuot, Ben Het and An Khe as staging areas for daily operations. They supported the 173rd Abn Bde, all three 4th Div Bdes, various SF units and LRRPs, plus units of the 101st Abn. They accounted for 37 VC and NVA killed, 26 captured, 4 weapons captured, 5 tons of rice recovered or destroyed plus over 100 documents captured. C Troop, located at Chu Lai, continued to support the Americal Division. The unit history states that D Troop provided vehicular reconnaissance and fire base security at Ban Me Thuot for most of the month.

B Troop's Tiger Skin

On the 1st, SSG Roger Philpott shot a very large Bengal tiger with one burst from an M16 during a recon mission.

WO1 Ron Raible wrote: The tiger was shot on New Year's day, 1968. We had a 'Holiday cease fire' and WO1 George Porter was designated to take his LOH out and fly a designated area with no other purpose other than to assure all is calm, quiet and no obvious NVA troop movement. Since there was no rule or policy yet in place to prohibit two pilots in the LOH, I went with George and his crew chief, SSG Roger Philpott. Everything was normal and quiet until we flew over a Montagnard Village and the village residents all ran and hid from view. We thought that was strange and went back for a second look. Just as we did, down in between their huts came this huge Bengal Tiger, which obviously was the cause and explanation for everyone running and not our presence. George came down to a hover (approx. 25' +/-) and turned his LOH sideways to afford the door gunner a view and easy target. After a few rounds the tiger was dead, we called back to base and explained the situation and within a short time the Blue's arrived, landed and secured the area put tiger into a net and hoisted him back to base. We already have the 'rest of the story,' so I won't go into that. I too would like to know the whereabouts and outcome of the skin.

CPT Dan Dantzler provides: Two lift ships secured the area and loaded the tiger onto a cargo net. The tiger was hung on the water tower at Camp Enari and skinned. The Vietnamese workers were clearly cautious of the tiger. Though they knew he was dead, they scurried to touch the tiger and quickly withdrew. They believed touching the ferocious wild animal would pass his courage on to them. I believe the Vietnamese had meat for dinner. CWO Rodney Orton had the skin tanned in Nha Trang. It then hung on the officers club wall. Later when B Troop was at Phan Thiet, the tiger skin still adored the wall of the underground officers club. There are several photos of the tiger being hung up on the water tower. One that I have shows WO Rick Schoeny watches while CWO Orton helps hang the tiger. Several years later, a tiger skin was reported hanging in the 1st Aviation Brigade villa in Saigon. Was it the Red Lion Inn? Does anybody know where that tiger skin is today?

On the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and injury record for C Troop UH-1C #66-00738 flown by an un-named crew. One of the crew was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 75 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 3rd, the VHPA database states that **SP4 Morris Blaine Jones** died while serving with B Troop but provides no other details. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 19 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 67N20. The Separations Section of B Troop's 3 Jan 1968 Morning Report lists SP4 Jones and reads as follows: From duty to dead from respiratory arrest and grandmal seizures, 71st Med Evac Hosp APO 96318 EDCSA 3 Jan 68. As mentioned earlier, WO Rick Schoeny kept a Diary. For this date it simply reads: "Worked near Dak To." Additionally, Major Al Iller, who served as the B Troop CO until mid-December, had a fond place in his heart for B Troop. He does not recall that B Troop lost a soldier in early January. Anyway who can provide details about SP4 Jones is asked to contact Mike Law.

On the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #65-12997 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 25 feet and 6 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #66-07829 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 50 feet and 50 knots of airspeed, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, forward main rotor system, bottom tail section, right tail section; they continued flying and aborted the mission.

Also on the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has two battle damage records for C Troop UH-1C #66-00741 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the first record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 50 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section, main rotor blade system and the armament; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The decoded details of the second record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 150 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the armament, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Finally on the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15067 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission and during the attack approach target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward cockpit; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with injury record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15067 flown by an un-named crew. One of the crew was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 80 feet and 75 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 4th, 1LT 'Wild Bill' Baker of D Troop was awarded a Purple Heart. Anyone who can provide details about event(s) to resulted in his wound(s) is encouraged to contact Mike Law.

SGT Edd Garrison provided a copy of a photo titled "Here, Cache" that was printed in a newspaper. All traces of the source publication and the date it was published were removed, but it most likely was the Pacific Stars & Stripes. The caption reads: SGT Jerry Kotas holds a case of communist B-40 rockets found among a large cache of munitions seized by men of the 17th Air Cav. Sq. of the 17th Aviation Group. The cache was discovered 16 miles south of Kontum hidden in 10 enemy "spider holes."

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop OH-6A #65-12997 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 85 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left bubble; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with injuries record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15041 flown by an un-named crew. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 300 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the canopy; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 7th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07806 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and they took one hit from an unknown source which hit the forward main rotor system; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15063 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was an armed recon mission and while in level flight at an altitude of 150 feet with an airspeed of 100 knots they took one hit from an exploding type weapon that caused fragmentation damage to the right fuselage specifically the oil system and the engine. They made a forced landing without injuries, the helicopter was recovered and repaired by the ARADMAC team on the USN Corpus Christie Bay and returned to flying combat in Vietnam with another unit.

On the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with one injury record for C Troop UH-1C #66-00745 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while attacking a target, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. This event must have happened earlier in the day because this helicopter would be destroyed in the afternoon.

9 Jan - First air crew member KIAs - WO1 James L. Phipps, WO1 Rainer S. Ramos, and their gunners SP4 Warren E. Newton and PFC Fred J. Secrist, all from C Troop, were in UH-1C #66-00745 that received intense enemy fire and crashed at map coordinates AT955308, Quang Tin Province. They are thought to be the first air crew members to be killed from the 7/17th. While the records do not indicate this, we suspect that SP4 Newton was the CE. The Wall database gives the following tour start dates and MOSs for these men: Newton, 21 Nov 1967, 67N20; Phipps, not stated but assumed to be 10 Oct 1967, 062B; Ramos, 10 Oct 1967, 062B; Secrist, 10 Oct 1967, 67N2F.

LT Don Williamson and MAJ Jack Burden provide some details: Jack says that it is important to remember that the battles associated with Tet of '68 started about one month earlier in this part of I Corps because the 2nd NVA had become very aggressive since right after Christmas and had been pushing towards the Coast. The Americal folks were still pretty new in-country and were giving up ground in "no man's land." Most of the time C Troop would stage out of Hawk Hill as it supported the 1/1st Cav based there. Hawk Hill was about a mile from the ocean, west of QL 1 and about halfway between Chu Lai and Da Nang. Most every day C Troop would send teams looking to see how far the NVA had advanced in a given sector. The Americal instructions were for C Troop not to fly into *NVA Country* because the Division was not in a position to provide the extensive support that even a downed bird could generate. C Troop had a different operational configuration than either A or B Troop. We would take our Lift with the Blues and several sets of Guns and Scouts to Hawk Hill. We didn't fly a C&C per se. We would send out one or two mixed teams (one LOH and one UH-1C Gun) to recon by themselves knowing that the rest of the troop was literally standing by for them. If a team made contact or wanted to put the Blues in, then we would try to pull the other mixed team into the same general area to minimize the risk of having two birds down in two different areas. It was really neat when one team would find something and ask for Gun support; because most times we would send four Charlie Models to answer the call. That was a real "heavy, heavy team" and usually did a bang up job on the bad guys! Billy Williamson and I were Majors and used to take turns directing the operations from Hawk Hill or in a C&C when we got into a fight. I was on the hill on the 9th.

Don continues. I was the ranking officer and the leader of the mixed team on the 9th. We had been briefed and given an AO on the west side of FB Ross and another little outpost just beyond it. They were the last friendly positions and most everything to their west was NVA Country. We called that a "no fly line" because of the Division support policy Jack just described. I remember spreading out the maps on some sand bags and we all talked about our route to the AO. Naturally, running a map and flying a LOH low level doesn't make much sense; so I gave my maps to Phipps and Ramos. I still believe we missed a turn and flew west too far. Anyway, I remember passing over a small pond and receiving fire. I broke and called the Gunship to warn them about the fire. I hadn't even made a complete circle yet when I heard them say that they were taking fire and had been hit. They continued flying on the same heading, so I finished the circle and climbed up behind them. I told them I was "right on them" so if they needed to land or whatever I was in a position to support them. Anyway, they kept flying straight and flew right into the side of this mountain doing at least 90 knots!! We had just refueled and rearm. Brother, what an explosion and a fire!! I made several passes hoping to see someone get out but they really didn't have a chance. On my second pass I was REALLY RECEIVING FIRE. I called for help and remember talking with everyone that evening. They all agreed it was the WORST FIRE they had ever received.

Jack finishes the story. When we received Don's call, we launched everything we had a Hawk Hill. I was calling back to Chu Lai and coordinating things; but was really desperate to get out there. One ACT of the 1/9th Cav was living at Hawk Hill at the time. They came over and looked at the crash point on the map. They agreed it was certainly bad guy country but said if our troop was going in (meaning putting the Blues on the ground); that they would go as well. At first I really felt good about this and was ready to commit both troops. Finally, I displaced some poor Gun pilot and flew out there in Greg Ross's gunship. They must have picked the base camp for a heavy weapons units of an NVA Regt; the fire was really bad!! It didn't take long to realize that we would doom both troops if we tried to go in there. Their ship was still burning like mad when I got there with ammo, especially WPs going off. I made a couple of passes at about 50 knots about 20 feet over the site but certainly saw nothing that was encouraging at all. We tried to go back the next day but it was still too hot. There was a small OP about 300 meters up the steep hill from the crash site. About a week and a half later, these friendlies called us to say that the area was secured. I took a special team in to

inspect the site. We found some human remains and the team was pretty positive they had identified four left legs. Even so they were officially carried as MIA for many years; but I have no doubt that they died.

An edited version of the official Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) material reads as follows: The crew consisting of WO1 James L. Phipps, AC; WO Rainier S. Ramos, pilot; SP4 Warren E. Newton, doorgunner; and PFC Fred J. Secrist, gunner, were on a gunship-cover mission about 20 miles west of the city of Tam Ky in Quang Tin Province. LT Williamson, the pilot of another helicopter, was flying as scout in front of WO Ramos' aircraft when he received a call from WO Phipps indicating that he had been hit, was on fire, and was going down. LT Williamson stated he would follow the aircraft down. He saw smoke trailing from Ramos' aircraft, but did not sight flames until the aircraft impacted on the ground. The helicopter hit and exploded (the estimated impact speed was between 65 and 80 knots). The senior officer of Troop C, 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry arrived and made several passes over the downed aircraft. Heavy automatic weapons fire from the north and east of the downed aircraft was received on the third pass, but it was noted that the downed aircraft was gutted by fire and explosions. At no time was any evidence seen that suggested that the crew had been thrown clear of the crash. During the first 45 minutes of the on-scene observation, the munitions, consisting of 2.75 rockets and 40 mm grenades were exploding every minute or two. The senior officer remained in the area for about one and one-half hours. On January 20, a recovery operation was initiated and the remainder of the aircraft was located in the bottom of a large trench. About three sets of remains were recovered, but only one set (that of PFC Secrist) was subsequently identified. Newton, Phipps and Ramos were not declared dead, but Missing In Action, indicating that there was still the possibility that they were thrown clear of the aircraft and captured by the enemy.

Since the DIA states that only PFC Secrist's remains were recovered; the others (Newton, Phipps, and Ramos) were listed as MIA because their remains could not be identified. Officially everyone except Secrist was listed as MIA (later changed to BNR), so they were posthumously promoted. The Wall states the pilots' rank as CW3, Newton as SSG, and Secrist as SP4. Since Newton's MOS was 67N40 and Secrist's was 67N2F, it is unclear as to which was the CE for this ship and which was the gunner.

SP4 Tom Stillwell recalls: I was the Operations Clerk and PFC Secrist was a good friend of mine. I was manning the radios in Operations and updating the Operations Log when they were shot down. SSG James Taylor was the Operations Sergeant. He was a little older than most of us and he treated me like a son. I was a little hard headed in those days. I even hit him twice; but he still worked with me. For some reason or other MAJ Marett liked me. I was his driver and often flew as the door gunner on his gunship. I eventually earned two OLC on my AM because of MAJ Marett. I remember being glad to leave the Pleiku area – the mountains and the bad weather made me nervous. I enjoyed being on the ocean at Chu Lai. I extended after most everyone left in August 1968 so I could ETS. I left Vietnam on 19 Jan 1969. YEARBOOK

Also on the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1H #66-16024 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission and while at an altitude of 200 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 12.7mm type AW which hit the cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

From the 11th to the 21st, A Troop worked out of Dak To. On the 11th, the unit history states that an A Troop LOH took nine hits but was able to make it back to Dak To and the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07807 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission and while at an altitude of 15 feet and 10 knots of airspeed, they took nine hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, equipment section, tail section, skid, fuselage, cargo section; they continued flying and completed the mission, the

helicopter was repaired in theater. Their Blues and a D Troop platoon were inserted and made heavy contact with the NVA who withdrew leaving 15 dead.

On the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for HHT UH-1C #66-15037 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission and while at an altitude of 200 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp; they made a precautionary landing and aborted the mission, the helicopter was evacuated.

MAJ Al Iller provides: Jan 13 sounds like it might be in the ballpark of the event I will describe. I don't remember all the details exactly; however, MAJ Charlie Brown and I were flying the HHT C&C gun ship and returning for fuel after operating west of Dak To where we were providing air cav support to an outpost, maybe a SF or 4th Inf Div unit. We passed over an abandoned fire base while enroute to Dak To and our CE (I believe Mike Lill was the CE) and Gunner announced taking fire. I immediately reversed course and made a firing run on an area from which we believed the fire came. We made at least one run, possibly two, and I could smell the hot hydraulic fluid so we broke off and headed for Dak To just a few minutes away. We may have announced that we had been hit and were prepared, just in case, in the event we might lose all the hydraulic pressure and set up for a running landing. However, we still had sufficient pressure to make a normal landing and hover to a close-by parking area. Thank God! You know that the C model was a bear if you lost hydraulics completely and only had about one shot at landing with the accumulator system. I still think the damage was repaired at Dak To and that we flew the C Model back to Enari. I do remember Charlie saying to me, "...how in the hell did you get this thing turned around so quick when we realized we were taking fire?" My reactions were much quicker then as now!

On the 15th, A Troop went to the rescue of an armored column that had been ambushed. The Cav broke the ambush and killed 12. Also on the 15th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07802 flown by an un-named crew. We now know the crew consisted of WO1 Allan Parker and SGT Vic Macias. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission during a bank right they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the horizontal stabilizer, tail section, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

SGT Vic Macias recalls: WO1 Allan Parker and I were flying the wing LOH on this mission. Luckily it was mini-gun ship because that weapon actually kept me from getting crushed by the ship when we crashed. I believe CPT Charlie Rayl was flying the lead ship. I know SFC Billy Bright and a gunner were in the lead ship because I remember SFC Bright helping me get into a basket to load on the medavac ship. I remember we were returning to Camp Enari when we got the mission to go help the ambushed convoy. I remember seeing a burning fuel truck and hearing over the radio that the bad guys had moved west. So lead flew in that direction and we followed. Remember how the large engineer plows cleared the vegetation several yards on each side of the highway? There was the large pile of debris pushed up by the plows and then some trees and brush just past that. Lead broke right just over that area and as we turned to follow him all hell broke loose. I'm guessing they shot out the tail rotor because I remember us starting to spin. Then I blacked out. I was in and out for some time even after I got to the hospital at Pleiku. Apparently my flight helmet came off in the crash because I was bleeding out my nose and my face and head were really messed up. Like I said I remember Bright helping me but really the next thing I can remember is a Father Joe in the hospital saying, "Son, can you hear me? I'm Father Joe and I'm going to give you Last Rites." I could see and hear him just fine and I remember thinking that I'd just stand up to show him that I'm OK and don't need Last Rites. But I can't do any of that! I remember feeling the docs stitching on my face and head because it hurt some. I must have asked about WO Parker because I heard the docs say, "What a guy! He's worried about his pilot who is sitting out there waiting his turn and

will be just fine when he should be worried about himself!" I don't know how long I stayed in the hospital but I'm guessing it was two weeks or a month. I remember once looking in a mirror and hoping that my face wouldn't look like that for the rest of my life. One eye was nearly swollen shut and my face and hair were all black and blue with wounds still oozing stuff. But it all healed up and I started flying again when I got back to A Troop. Several guys came to visit me in the hospital. It was then that SFC Bright told me how I must have been thrown from the LOH and that the mini-gun wedged up the fuselage a few inches enough to keep me from being crushed. I still have the Purple Heart orders for this incident.

Finally on the 15th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00648" flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat close air support mission during the attack approach to the target area, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section and main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12989, at map coordinates YB782229 flown by WO Ronald K. Nelson as pilot, WO Walter J. Shields as observer, and an unknown EM. All three of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission during the hover they had more than 99 holes from an unknown source, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The code 99 holes in this record usually means that the aircraft was near some type of explosion like a command detonated mine, a claymore, a mortar or artillery round.

WO Walter J. Shields provides: It was Jan 15th 1968 just around the start of the Tet offensive. I usually flew slicks for B Troop but I was bored with my stick mate WO Harry Olson (he was also ahead in the hearts game we were playing). So I volunteered to be observer on the LOH with WO Ronald K. Nelson. We flew to Dak To and turned left. Somewhere on the border of those three Asian countries we all love so dearly, someone took a disliking to our tail rotor. So the trees came up and hugged us. Thanks to Dustoff and the gunships we were picked up. My memory is faded but I think the crew chief died. I have not heard or seen Ron since then. They packed me off to the local MASH and fixed me up with bandages, beer and Darvon. I was feeling good and pretty cocky because I knew I would have some BS stories to tell the guys after my R&R but Charlie wasn't finished. He blew the hospital to shreds with rockets. I was lucky because I was awake about midnight and waiting to make a stateside call using MARS. When I heard that first rocket land, I dove under my cot in a flash (where you can hide between the wooden boxes filled with sand)! The ten year old Montagnard boy next to me was not so lucky. The following evening all remaining patients were loaded on a C-130 and were flown to Vung Tau. Ended up in Tokyo and then Valley Forge Hospital PA. Eventually spent my next two years as a tactical instructor pilot at Tac-X Fort Stewart.

Concerning the events of the 16th, SSG Bill McLauchlin recalls: I remember MAJ Hefford came and got most of my squad of Blues – there were 5 or 6 of us at Enari. He told us to get an M-60 and a radio with our own frequency plus some explosives. We flew out to this LOH and put out a rope ladder from the Huey. I was scared out of my mind but I went down that ladder until it ended in a tall tree; then I shinnied down the tree for at least another 15 feet. I was the first one on the ground and I still remember that LONELY feeling until the others got down. I remember the M-60 also came down on a rope. SGT Edwin Lopez reached the end of the rope and fell from about tree top level. Luckily some smaller trees broke his fall! After we had finished our job on the ground, we had to return up the rope ladder but all of us were totally exhausted. It took forever for the guys to get up. I was the next to the last on the ladder and I remember either the CE or the gunner coming down to hold on to Lopez to pull him up. The M-60 got caught in the trees. The Huey was running low on fuel and still had this crewman and Lopez on the rope when they had to fly off. They hung

on for dear life until they found an open area near a friendly compound. When we were down on the ground, MAJ Hefford later told me that he saw two or three mortar rounds being walked toward us but for some reason they stopped. I believe SP4 Leo Distor and SP4 David Sablan were also on that mission.

SP4 Tom Garty recalls: I was the gunner on the Huey. I went down the rope ladder to help SGT Lopez. I was awarded an Air Medal for valor that my actions on this day. Let me give you a little background information. I enlisted in the Army. I completed AIT at Ft. Polk for the 11B MOS and went directly to Vietnam in February 1967. I was assigned to B/1/12th Infantry 4th Infantry Division. I served as an RTO, M-60 gunner, rifleman, and squad leader as a SP4 with them until I was medevaced on 13 July from wounds I received on 12 July when my unit was wiped out. I also ran many squad-sized night ambush patrols as a SP4 outside my company's NDPs. We took 35 KIAs and more than 31 WIA in that battle. I was one of only three guys left in my platoon when the 1st Sergeant landed the next day with one of our sister companies to help us. I had shrapnel wounds in my leg. I had also been injured when the radio I had on my back took a burst of machine-gun fire. The 1st Sergeant had me medevaced. Initially I was at the 71st Evac for a few days, then I went to the hospital at Cam Ranh. I was award the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal, and CIB in B Company. After about 3 or 4 weeks in the hospital, I returned to B Company. The 1st Sergeant sent me to the 4th Infantry Division's NCO school. That lasted about a week. When I returned, he asked me what I wanted to do – stay in the unit or what? I told him that I wanted to contribute in a different way – that I wanted to be a gunner on a helicopter. I guess he made some phone calls, because soon I was transferred to the 7/17th Cav. I'm guessing this was some time in August 1967. I remember the first day I was there I went for a ride in a Huey – sort of a check-out to see what I would do. Then I was assigned to B Troop as a gunner on an H model slick. I only flew as a gunner on a Charlie model gunship twice when the regular gunner, SP4 Najar, was sick and couldn't fly. I flew a lot with SP4 Bill Hahn. He was another gunner in B Troop. We were good companions. I still had friends in the 1/12th Infantry at Camp Enari. Whenever I had time off, I'd go run with those guys. I remember my platoon sergeant in B Troop was this big white guy – an E7. I don't think he liked me very much so I avoided him when at all possible. I really enjoyed flying and didn't want him to take that away from me. I was also an expert with the M-60 so the other flying crews always ask for me to fly with them. After I'd flown my 25 hours I received my gunner's wings – the patch has a 'G' in the center of the crest with wings. I DEROSed from B Troop about 28 February 1968 – just prior to my birthday. I flew almost every day. Other than my DD-214 and DD-215, the only paper I have from Vietnam is the orders for my AM with 'V' for 16 Jan. I'd really like to get copies of the others. Returning to the events of 16 Jan, I remember telling the pilots that the last guy wasn't going to make it up the rope ladder to the helicopter and that I was going down to get him. The pilot made me stop and said, "Before you go, I'm telling you that you don't have to do this." I said, "Yes I do because that guy won't make it by himself." We were already low on fuel – maybe 10 or 15 minutes was all we had and I'd guess it was about 30 minutes flying time to Dak To. SP4 Bill Hahn was the other gunner in this Huey. I went down, wrapped the guy with my legs to the rope, and motioned to Hahn for the helicopter to lift us out of there. I later learned the man's name was Lopez. He thanked me about a million times and said over and over again how I'd saved his life. I didn't know it at the time, but the guys on the ground had tied their M-60 to the end of the rope ladder with about a 30-foot rope. When we lifted out, the M-60 got caught in the trees. It was actually holding the helicopter down. That was a really scary! Then that rope broke and we were able to get away. We didn't go too far until they found a place to set down so both of us could get inside our ship and we could pull in the rope ladder. Now, I believe that someone in another helicopter took a movie of us on the rope. I remember seeing it once after the film was developed. I'd love to get a copy of that movie film if anyone can help me. Anyway, we took off again but landed on a hilltop soon because of fuel. I don't remember that it was anywhere near a friendly

compound because I couldn't see any prepared positions like that from the ground. I can also remember that someone was shooting mortars at us because the helicopter had taken some damage. I remember the pilots were glad to let me organize a defensive position in a tree line not far from the helicopter. I returned to get the guns and things from the helicopter. Another helicopter came in and took the guys we had rescued away but my crew stayed with our ship. For some reason or other it seemed to take forever for someone to bring us fuel in cans and then it took a long time to put the fuel in our ship's fuel tank. Finally we were able to fly to Dak To to get to a normal refuel point. B Troop spent a lot of time around Dak To during my time with them. I can even remember a few times, about four I'd guess, when we spent the night there rather than returning to Camp Enair. Funny, I remember looking for SGT Lopez a few times after that at Camp Enair but I was never able to meet up with him. I remember flying a lot during Tet. They were scary times but those days are sort of a blur to me.

Also on the 16th, CW3 Bill C Walton of B Troop's Circle Red X Ranch participated in a OH6 recovery attempt and wonders if this could possibly be the same downed OH6 WO Shields mentions above. The following is an extract from his Journal:

On 16 Jan 1968 I was called on to go out and pick up a OH6 that had an engine failure west of Dak To. It went down on top of a jungle covered hill about 3 kilometers from the Laotian border. It went down in bamboo about 35 feet high and only left a hole in the bamboo. One H model took 3 infantrymen and our Maintenance mechanic, Lindsay Williams, and let them down on a ladder to prepare the aircraft for recovery. Willie attached a lifting eye to the OH6 and when it was ready I hovered over the spot and let out a 40 foot sling. Willie attached the sling to lifting eye while I tried to keep the rotor blades out of the bamboo. I tried to lift the OH6, but did not have enough power, or perhaps it is better written that I reached the maximum power/torque available on my H model, and the OH6 was still on the ground. I told MAJ Hefford, B Troop's CO, who was flying C&C, that the only way I might be able to get the OH6 off the ground was to "pull the guts" out of the H model, and wondered if it was worth it. He told me to give it one more try and if it doesn't come out to cut it loose. I tried again with no luck and cut it loose. After this I went to Dak To to await further developments which were not long in coming. The other H model went back to the site to pick up the infantry and Williams. But one of the guys was too tired to climb the rope ladder so the helicopter departed with two guys hanging on the ladder. Then the pilot (WO Harry Olson) reported he was low on fuel and was landing at a Special Forces Outpost. I was selected to take some fuel in cans to the Outpost so the other aircraft could make it Dak To. My refueling and getting some JP4 in cans took over an hour due to some unforeseen problems. By this time it had gotten dark and the Special Forces Outpost was under attack. It was decided that if the Outpost was being mortared when I got there, I would pick up the crew and passengers from our aircraft and bring them back to Dak To. If no attack was going on I would land and we would transfer some fuel and bring back both aircraft. So off I went. I turned out all my aircraft lights to make it harder for "Charlie" to see me. Of course the Special Forces Outpost was dark and I had some trouble finding it. The crew on the ground told me they would guide me in by the sound of the helicopter. I said "That is fine and when I hit the ground I will know I have arrived. How about a light dear friends?" They turned on a couple of flashlights and I landed next to the other aircraft. The mortars had stopped momentarily so we transferred the fuel and both aircraft flew back to Dak To. Then the "refueling joke" started again and it took us almost an hour to get some JP4. As we flew back to Pleiku, with a nice moon showing the way, there was a certain amount of satisfaction among the group, despite not being able to recover the downed OH6." [End of Journal entry.] SP4 Bill Hahn was the crewchief of the H Model that had to land in the Special Forces Outpost. He and I had a mini-reunion in Mesa Arizona last year and we had a good time reliving this incident. He told my wife, "We were sure glad to see your husband show up and bring us that fuel!" It is nice to be able to share this with my friends some 33 years later.

On the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07826 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they took one hit from 40mm RPG type exploding weapon which hit the forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Also on the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07834 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 18th, while working the site of the armored column ambush on the 15th, the Scouts suddenly came under heavy AWs fire and one pilot was wounded. Airstrikes and artillery were used to silence the NVA who lost 7 killed and had two recoilless rifles destroyed. During the last part of the month A Troop worked around Pleiku.

On the 20th A Troop's Scouts found six NVA taking evasive action and killed four but then a LOH was shot down. The Blues were inserted to protect the crew. In the action that followed, the Blues killed five more and captured some medical supplies and a weapon.

Also on the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07805 flown by an un-named crew. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 20 feet and 10 knots of airspeed, they took eight hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the oil cooler, tail rotor system, fuel cell, bottom cockpit, and cockpit, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed.

Also on the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15064 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took seven hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom fuselage, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Finally on the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00732 flown by CE Hoyt Inman and un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 400 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine compartment, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

SP4 Hoyt L. Inman recalls: I was the crewchief of UH-1C 732 with B Troop at Pleiku. I went over with the outfit on the US Walker. The ship had a 40mm grenade launcher in the nose and rockets on the side. On this day we were flying back to Pleiku and we received ground fire. I think we were escorting a truck convoy. I really don't remember what we were doing. But after hearing the ground fire, our exhaust temp went up way over the safe operating range; something like 800 to 1,000 degrees. Our rotor RPM dropped to below 300. In fact, I believed it got down to 290 rpm but I know that is pretty much impossible. I was told that if that main rotor got below 300 to jump! So I always remember that if the main rotor got below 300 rpm it wouldn't produce enough lift to fly. Well I guess it did because we didn't crash. Thank God! When we landed we found a hole in the engine cowling big enough to stick my hand in. And the bullet went through the turbine section of the engine. No one was hurt on that day but my aircraft had to have a new engine put in it. And for a couple of weeks I had to fly in someone else aircraft while mine was down. And I think this was my aircraft 66-00732 but I can't be sure of that. And I don't remember who the pilots on this flight but you may ask around and see if someone else remembers this day. It would be hard to forget! There was a big laugh with all the CEs in the Gun Platoon - if you wanted a new aircraft just let Hoyt fly

in your old one and something was sure to happen to it - you would get a new engine or even a new ship. Well, it wasn't quite that bad but it did seem like every time I flew for someone else something would happen to the aircraft.

On the 22nd, MAJ Bob Inglett assumed command of A Troop replacing MAJ Dudley J. Carver.

MAJ Inglett recalls: I remember this day very clearly. LTC 'Pete' Johnson sat me down, told me he was making me the Troop Commander, taking CPT Bob Young to be his personal pilot and that he would give me a major from B Troop to be my XO. I picked MAJ Dan Dantzler. Since Bob was serving as the Scout Platoon Leader, I picked CPT Charlie Rayl to be the new Platoon Leader.

Also on the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07797 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 20 feet and 30 knots of airspeed, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, armament, fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

Also on the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07803 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 30 feet and 35 knots of airspeed, they took seven hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, cargo section, forward main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was recovered to the Ruthless maintenance area. The Army Goldbook database indicates this helicopter was given to 79th TC CO, was repaired by Hughes Aircraft in CONUS, and returned to Vietnam in April 1969 to serve with another unit.

Also on the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15062 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while at an altitude of 150 feet and 100 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Finally on the 22nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07832 flown by 1LT Dickie H. McCleney with SGT Jim Davenport as the observer. The crew chief, **SP4 Dale S. Puishis**, had fatal injuries. This incident took place at map coordinates ZA072512 in Pleiku Province. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while hovering over the target, they had more than 99 holes from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the fuselage, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 29 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 67N20. The A Troop unit history states that they found five NVA in a bunker and the Guns killed three. When the Scouts returned to check out the area, SP4 Puishis was killed when his LOH was shot down, crashed and burned. The other two crew members were wounded but were successfully extracted.

1LT Dickie McCleney provided: Like so many of my flight school classmates, I was assigned to Fort Knox to help form the two ACSs. I had been with A Troop's Scouts since the very beginning. I was flying the lead Scout LOH on this day with WO1 Jim Smith as my wingman. He had a minigun system on his LOH, but I had taken mine off some time back and started flying with an observer and the CE. Dale had the M-60 and was in the right-rear position. My first observer was SGT Blansett but he had recently ETSed and SGT Jim Davenport had replaced him. The other Scout team was 1LT Jim Sapp and WO1 Don Peters. If I remember the mission correctly, we were looking for an enemy unit that had rocketed the hospital in Pleiku. We had been working this valley just a few miles from Pleiku all day from north to south and we finally found them near the southern end. Needless to say, but they weren't too happy that we had found them and were shooting at us. We had called in the gunships and basically were making marking passes when our ship took several hits. I remember pulling in all the power but the engine was dying so I put it in a tail down

attitude as we crashed into the jungle. I woke up to a totally engulfed burning helicopter that had come to rest in an up-right position. I punched the quick released and rolled on the ground to put out the flames on my uniform. I hope Dale died from gunshot wounds rather than burn-up in that wreck. I didn't see SGT Davenport at that time but would later met up with him at the hospital in Pleiku. After I got the flames out, I noticed that I was being shot at so I started back to the helicopter for a weapon but there was really nothing there to help me. I was wearing a flight jacket because it was cold, so I took it off and kept waving the orange side at the aircraft but never got their attention. I knew I wasn't too far from Pleiku and could see from the sun the direction I needed to go, so I started walking. I'd guess I walked a couple of clicks. I remember once sitting down on the side of a hill and watching the airstrikes go in. I remember passing some fresh APC tracks on the ground and decided that I'd follow them for a while. I hadn't gone too far when I could hear their engines and realized they were coming in my direction. I stood out in the middle of this trail with my arms in the air displaying my flight jacket all the time praying that they wouldn't shoot me. Luckily they saw me and didn't shoot. It was a mech unit from the 4th Infantry Division. One of the APCs drove up to me and asked if I was McCleney. I said Yes and learned that I had been reported as KIA and that they were moving toward my burning LOH. They quickly knocked down some trees to make a PZ. Then Pleiku DUSTOFF came and took me to the hospital. I didn't have any gunshot wounds just lots of cuts and bruises but it was my burns that got me evaced. I spent a couple days at Pleiku, then a couple more at Qui Nhon, then a couple in the Philippines and Japan, etc. You know that standard Army medical evacuation route. By about mid-April I was back on duty and would return to Vietnam in 1970 to fly with the 101st. In the hospital I learned the SGT Davenport had used his strobe light to get enough attention to be rescued. His injuries would also get him evaced. I also learned that MAJ Dudley J. Carver had been shot in his right hand while flying the C&C ship low and slow over the area where we crashed. I heard that the H-model they were flying was shot-up so badly that they had to hook it back from the Pleiku hospital pad to Enari for repairs. I think a new Warrant named Murphy was flying with him that day and that they had some other WOs flying as gunners in the back end. MAJ Carver's injuries would get him evaced as well. You notice that A Troop had several LOHs shot up that day – CPT Charlie Rayl was flying many of them. As I understand it, finally MAJ Bob Inglett told Charlie to stay on the ground – that he'd done enough for one day. So MAJ Carver's tour was over and MAJ Inglett became A Troop's new CO.

On the 23rd, D Troop was inserted for an operation near Dak To.

SGT Edd Garrison recalls: The mission at Dak To was a patrol by D Troop just after Dak To was attacked in late January. Our 2nd Platoon with the infantry as the point element was followed, I believe, by the 1st Platoon. We were advancing down a trail towards a stream when our squad leader, SGT Joe Eberhardt, was shot by two gravediggers. They had been left behind to bury the NVA bodies. SGT Eberhardt was following SP4 Robert "Slim" Meredith, our point man. Slim then shot and killed to two NVA. We later guessed the NVA had allowed our point man to bypass them hoping for a more lucrative target. After searching the bodies and finding white powder believed to be heroin we called for a medivac for SGT Eberhardt. We then moved back up the hill and called for fixed wing aircraft to bomb the vicinity. D Troop then moved to an clearing where we were extracted. Meredith is a veritable well of knowledge on this mission. No Blue teams were involved to my knowledge. If my memory serves me correctly, this mission may have been intended to be a longer one. After we made contact the Intel people for the unit we were working for decided that they had underestimated the NVA troop strength in that area. We were pulled out as fast as possible. I remember the move to the PZ was one of the fastest we had ever made.

On the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12994 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, they

took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 25th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss with fatalities and injuries record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15001 in Pleiku Province. The AC, WO1 R.P. Raible, was injured, the pilot, **WO1 Milligan Johnson Marcus**, suffered fatal injuries, the crew chief, PFC D.R. Doss, was injured, and the gunner, PFC G.A. Winters, was also injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission. The Wall database gives Milligan's tour start date as 10 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 062B. The accident summary details are as follows:

On takeoff, aircraft began a descent. Suspect gross overweight. Tail stinger hit the ground and wire. Aircraft slid down into a gully until striking the other side of the gully. Aircraft started to burn. Fire was extinguished. Additional details: Possible engine failure while taking off from Camp Enari.

WO Ron "Walley" Raible provides: Tomorrow will mark the 33rd anniversary of this ill fated, late afternoon flight. The day started much like those before it. Being a 'morning person,' I was up early before most of the other pilots and down to the mess area for breakfast, early pickings over the C rations to assure no 'ham & lima beans' and seeking the preferred 'beanie weenies.' Last, but not least, the cook would provide me ice to take down to our then 'officers club tent' - to ice down the beer for that evening. The cook was rewarded with cans of Ballentine (as rusty as they were). Since B Troop became operational, I'd say we spent 70%+ of our time working in the areas west of Pleiku, Plei Morung, Kontum and especially Dak To. Our designated AO that day was working an area north of Pleiku and south of Kontum in the areas east and west of highway. We were working/staging in and out of Kontum. There was little activity, simply doing recon and supporting the scouts below. As was our custom when it was late in the afternoon and we were relieved from station, we returned to Camp Enari to refuel and reload weapons. Somewhere during our flight in we got a transmission warning that we 'may get a call' to return, so we still kept the aircraft out of the revetments and parked on our dirt runway along the east perimeter. To our surprise, we got the call to return and relieve the guns in the OA. Instead of the typical two aircraft gun team, we took off with three. Our 001 was the second aircraft of three. I was WHITE 26. 001 lifted to a hover without difficulty, suggesting weight, etc. was not a factor. We turned to the south and moved forward for translational lift which occurred without incident or difficulties. In fact, it was much easier than other takeoffs where weight and power were an issue and where several attempts had to be made for successful translational lift. Shortly after takeoff, we turned left to achieve our desired northerly heading. At this time we were at approximately 100 +/- feet, with plenty of power, located outside the east perimeter and our revetment area when the RPM and rotor needles split and the engine quit. Being in the infamous 'dead man's curve,' downwind and no meaningful altitude to allow a 180 degree turn back to the south and into the wind; our routine flight school autorotation was everything it shouldn't have been. Even with the pitch down, we had difficulty in keeping rotor RPM and were falling like a rock. It was obvious we were going to crash, I tried to land at a spot at the top of the drainage ditch and almost succeeded, (based upon what I was later told).

Simultaneously, we tried to lock our shoulder harnesses. Johnson's did lock but mine would not. Low rotor RPM warning horn was in our ears and --- I don't remember anything until the medevac arrival at Pleiku hospital landing pad. The rest is history. My injuries included a fractured back, shattered bone below right eye (on impact, when my shoulder harness failed to lock, I went forward and hit the lowered gun sight), double vision in the right eye, broken nose, numerous leg, head and facial cuts, bruises and abrasions. My flying career ended that day because of my inability to pass flight physical due to residual double vision in the right eye. I had three surgeries prior to discharge in attempt to correct and relieve the constant headaches, but they were not successful. I believe Doss had a broken leg and Winters was paralyzed on one side. After returning to duty, I attempted to locate both but was not successful. Though Johnson and I were in the same flight school class, Ft

Knox, SS Walker, etc. we ran with a different set of close friends and seldom, if ever, found ourselves in the same social settings. Since Uncle Sam housed and did most everything alphabetically, this probably led to our not knowing each other better more than any other reason. My memory recalls Johnson as a quite person, from Alabama, divorced before flight school, no children; I also faintly remember and believe that he flew mostly with the commissioned AC's though I may be mistaken. I only flew with him a very few times.

Dating as far back as 1968; I've tried to dispel the story and someone's 'suspected cause as gross overweight and possible engine failure' which is also reflected in 7/17th history narrative published in the VHPA Directory. Thirty three years of living with the nightmare of 'gross overweight' has caused me a lot of lost sleep, anxiety, doubt and guilt. To this day, other than Mike Law, no one formally asked me what happened. I know nothing of 001 condition beyond the pictures provided me by fellow pilots shortly afterward. They paint an ugly ending. The most telling and graphic picture captures the remains of the entire aircraft, in three sections at the bottom of the drainage ditch. It was taken from the top. It's obvious from the pictures that there was a fire. To the best of my knowledge, there was no formal investigation beyond minimal at best. I suspect this happened because this was within a day or so of the very eve of the Tet offensive when all hell broke loose. I wrote to Bill Walton in VN, after hearing this 'gross overweight' theory. He tried to see what was learned from the engine test and/or exam; only to find that it went over to Camp Holloway and was trashed without any exam. Needless to say, I KNOW what happened. It was like slow motion and I've re-lived this flight each and every day since. While asking myself what would I have done differently, I always arrive back to the same and unfortunate NOTHING. My FIRM belief is that the engine failure occurred as a result of a 'overspeed' just a few days earlier when MAJ Doty and WO1 Jim Reeder used the aircraft. Bill Walton again remembered the incident and recalls the required dye check of the turbine wheel had not been performed when it was sent over to Camp Holloway, as customary and required. A simple inspection of the engine, at Holloway, following the crash could have easily confirmed if the turbine wheel came apart or not, plus it sure could have saved me many years of doubt, frustration and guilt. I think I was a good safe pilot, respected the aircraft limitations and knew my aircraft 001 and its assigned crew better than most. I say this because at Fort Knox, I and WO1 Larry Shelton (aka "Skinny 8") worked closely with and assisted CW3 Bill Walton in Maintenance. In Vietnam, for obvious reasons, we worked less with Bill but for some unknown reason CPT Earwood (then the gun platoon leader) designated me to oversee and schedule crew chiefs and door gunners for the B/7/17th gun platoon. It must have been my winning personality that got me this job. Because of this, along with the Fort Knox experiences I always favored and flew 001 with its crew of Doss and Winters, probably 95% of the time.

After reviewing Ron Raible's comments, CW3 Bill C. Walton wrote: Ron visited me in the early 1970s and we talked about this for a long time. As I remember, the accident review board concluded that 001 had an engine failure, put a "junk" tag on the engine and that was it. I have a personal opinion on what caused this accident, although it can't be proven. 001 suffered an engine 'overspeed' during starting. The pilot shut it down, came to Maintenance and we turned it over to the 40th TC for an overspeed inspection. Thus the overspeed engine inspection was performed by the 40th TC Det on the flight line at Enari, not at Camp Holloway as Ron mentions. The way I read the inspection requirements a dye check of the turbine wheel was a part of this inspection. When the aircraft was returned to us this dye check had not been performed and we were told that it had been eliminated from the inspection checklist. Two days later 001 went down and I have always wondered if the turbine wheel didn't come apart and cause the engine to fail. Both Ron and Skinny 8 were good hard working troops that gave me a lot of help in Maintenance.

SP4 Homer Gwyn Huie recalls: I went over on the boat with the Squadron. Once we got settled into wooden buildings at Camp Enari, the HHT Supply and Weapons room was in the same building

with the Orderly Room. The CO, 1st Sgt, and clerk bulked in that building as well. The Supply and Weapons room was in the rear. MAJ Brown told me I could build a small room in the corner where I bunked. This worked out well for me because most of the time I worked at night when people returned from the field with their weapons. I'd also help with the aircraft weapons. Additionally I was trained to help out with the crypto communications equipment that they kept in the same building. Like many people I remember the events of 25 Jan very clearly. It was late in the afternoon and I had just left the Mess Hall when I heard the crash. I immediately went to the Supply Room for some wire cutters so we could get through the perimeter concertina wire and ran out to help the rescue effort. I was one of the guys who helped move the injured to the ambulances. Later MAJ Brown told me that he was putting me in for a Bronze Star then a few days later he mentioned to me that it would most likely be downgraded to an Army Accommodation Medal. Twice I told him that the medal wasn't important to me and that I'd do it all again in second to help someone. I don't recall that it was ever awarded.

On the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07826 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 30 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15065 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, while at an altitude of 300 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 29th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15040 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right armament, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

PFC Jerry Orłowski of D Troop recalls: I deployed from Ft. Knox with D Troop, came over on the boat, and was a jeep driver when we went out with vehicles. Four or five of us were shot on the same day just before Tet. Helicopters had brought us in for a search mission. I think it was near An Khe. We found a cave or two and since I was small, I did a little tunnel ratting. We were clearing around this open area to have the helicopters come and get us when we started taking fire. I don't remember much after that. They put me in a helicopter and I believe I was in a hospital in Qui Nhon for a short while; but basically the next thing I remember was waking up in a hospital in Japan. I started there a couple of weeks and then moved to the States.

Tet of '68

The 30th was the beginning period for the Valorous Unit Award (VUA) for the Blues of A and B Troops plus all of D Troop. In 1970 via DA General Order #43, these three units were awarded the VUA the period 30 Jan to 12 Feb 1968.

On the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12993 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while taking off at an altitude of 3 feet and 10 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from mortar type exploding weapon which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. WO1 Rick Schoeny was the pilot. His description of what happened during this mortar round incident are printed several paragraphs later in this document.

Also on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with injuries record for C Troop OH-6A #65-12998 flown by an un-named crew. Two of the crew were injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the level flight operations area, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom cockpit, bottom cockpit, cargo section, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

Also on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has two battle damage records for B Troop OH-6A #66-07835 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the first record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 25 feet and 60 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the bottom cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. WO1 Rick Schoeny was the pilot of this aircraft making it the second LOH he had shot up on this day.

Also on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00732 flown by an un-named crew. One of the crew was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission, during the attack approach to the target area, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right cockpit, main rotor blade system, cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Major Al Iller was flying this aircraft.

Finally on the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with a fatality record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07835 flown WO1 George Porter as pilot, WO Gerry 'Rabbit' Raver as co-pilot/observer, and **SGT Steven Charles Powers** as gunner. The decoded details of this record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 45 knots of airspeed, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left bottom cockpit, cargo section, right cockpit, bottom fuselage, right fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was evacuated and repaired in theater. The Wall database gives Powers' tour start date as 9 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 11B40.

WO1 George Porter recalls: Here are the unpleasant thoughts I have carried with me since that day. I didn't know anybody else would want to know. The dead man's name was SGT Steve Powers or Allen. I am not even sure of his name because we never got time to talk much that morning. I think he was from California, maybe Anaheim, but I can't be sure. The reason I am not completely sure is because he was from the infantry platoon of B Troop. He was very short, only a week or so left in country, and he had asked one of the crew chiefs named "Crow" if he could go out for a ride in a LOH. Crow (his last name) hooked him up with me for the first day of TET. It was supposed to be a light duty day. It seemed OK on the day before. When the sirens went off the next morning he was the only one standing there on the flightline, so we had to go. First stop was Dak To - in the middle of a firefight. We could only get half a load of fuel because the mortars were walking toward the fuel bladder we were using. They hit the refuel area at Dak To as we were dragging the skids down the runway. We didn't have enough RRM but we had to go. The SGT was very cool through the whole thing and did what ever I asked. Good man! I only wish I had known him better. The big guns located at the end of the runway were shooting across the end of the strip and I remember thinking if one went off when we went past it would be over. We stayed low all the way to Kontum where we hoped to get more fuel. Along the way we ran through more artillery that was hidden in the trees. One muzzle blast actually flipped the LOH some and popped our ears. When we got to Kontum and there were jets strafing everything and fires all over the place. We got organized and did a low scout, high guns search and found enemy everywhere. Our grunts were inserted and were pushing the NVA ahead of them in some very low (about 10 feet high) cover. Our job was to locate the enemy somewhere ahead of the troops and put the guns on them. If you went high every gook with an AK-47 would shoot at you; so we were right down on the deck, about 2 feet above the scrub. Suddenly there were three NVA right in front of us so we minigunned them, called guns and

broke to the left - only to fly directly over three more with their round magazine AKs pointed at us at a range of 15 feet. They got us pretty badly. I was hit in the leg and hand. Raver was hit by spaulding from the console all over the leg. Steve was not answering when we asked how he was doing. We could not see him very well. Between the seats was a "C" ration box full of M79 ammo and there were four WP grenades laying on a chicken plate on the floor of the back. It seemed like a good idea that morning, but, as it was, we could have been a fireball. The engine was shot up and going bad fast. We managed to get about 100 yards away with some trees between us and the NVA. We hit hard. The tail boom clipped off and the skids spread around the belly. We were not hurt by the crash at all. The OH-6A is the best crashing plane ever built. The door gunner Steve was slumped over in his straps with no visible wounds but no positive signs at all. I could help Raver, but Steve was much too big for me to carry. The door gunners from Major Iller's plane came out to get him. Major Iller's copilot was WO1 Denny Reed on that day. They laid Steve on the deck of the gunship. We tried to help him but we couldn't. When we located the wounds, they were not even bleeding just red holes. He must have been hit right in a vital area like the heart because it appeared that he died instantly. I believe he had four entrance wounds and two exit wounds. He never said a word during the whole flight that day, he acted like he was scared (he certainly had every right to be) but very much in control and then our luck ran out. Poor guy should have stayed away from scouts that day. I think about Steve pretty often no matter what his real name is. Raver and I went to an airfield where we transferred to another ship and went to Pleiku Hospital. I never saw or heard about him again. Crew chief Crow, SP4 I think, from Georgia, would absolutely know his name. Can you imagine how he must have felt, helping this fellow get on a scout ship? One week left in country, what a waste.

MAJ Al Iller recalls: I read over your recent account of the Tet NVA Offensive 1968 and some question regarding a KIA from B Troop Scouts on Jan 30, 1968. To refresh my memory I contacted Rick Schoeny, who was in a Scout at that time, and we essentially came up with the same story. I happened to be flying a HHT UH-1C C&C gunship as Sqdn XO that day. One B Troop OH6 was shot down just north of the city in the vicinity of the A/B and D Troop infantry (am not sure if all were there as some were in the city) sweeping that area. The OH6 made a successful landing near our Blues. We were flying cover and immediately landed behind the OH6 whose rotor blades were still turning as we set down. Our gunner and CE immediately went to the aircraft and helped the crew to our aircraft for evacuation. Both pilots were wounded and the scout/gunner was unconscious as I recall. All were placed in our aircraft with our crew and we immediately departed to Kontum airfield where they were medevaced out, possibly by one of the troop's aircraft. I remembered one of the scout pilots was WO Gerald E. Raver, Rick Schoeny confirmed this and added that the other pilot was WO George N. Porter. Neither Rick nor myself remembers the name of the gunner/scout who was in fact KIA. I am not positive whether the gunner/scout was already dead when we picked him up, died enroute to Pleiku hospital or later. As I recall both pilots were either wounded in the legs, arms or hands, and I believe the gunner/scout was wounded in his groin area. The pilots did a terrific job of setting the OH6 down without further damage in view of the seriousness of the crew's wounds. This whole activity spanned something like 15 minutes or less before their evaced to Pleiku. We immediately returned to provide additional cover to the Blues north of the city as things were getting pretty warm in that area. The other wounding of a B trooper was probably MAJ Bob Hefford who was then commanding B Troop. His aircraft was hit in the windshield area and he took fragments in the face and eye as I recall. There may have been others in his aircraft wounded also. Bob may have taken himself and crew to Pleiku as their helicopter was still flyable. My copilot was CPT Larry Kenyon, the CE could very well have been Mike Lill, do not remember the door gunners name. This is the same day that the ARVN HQ in Kontum was rocketed by the NVA and the ARVN cut loose their FPF (final protective fires) into the area where our Blues were conducting their sweep. Larry & I were still in the area and why we were not hit by

friendly fire I will never know. When we realized what had happened, we were finally able to make contact with the US folks with the ARVN CP and get the fires turned off. Fortunately, none of our Blues were hit, but am sure they must remember the intensity of the ARVN fire directed into their area. I believe MAJ Florian "Sparks" Thiring and a recovery crew from HHT evaced the OH6 later that same day.

WO1 Rick Schoeny kept a day by day diary and the following is what we read for 30 Jan. "This has been the worst day I've ever lived through and at times, I wonder. I flew with the Scouts today and we went to Dak To and shut down. 20 minutes later we were mortared and as we were starting our aircraft in order to takeoff, they walked them to within 20 feet of our ship. Nothing has ever scared me as much in my life. We spent two hours looking for the mortar but never could find it. Then we went to Kontum because they were under attack. We covered all of the area around the airfield but mainly to the north. Charlie was all over the area with automatic weapons, mortars and rockets. We took too many hits in the first ship we had so we returned to base camp and picked up another. By the time the day was complete, we had one aircraft shot down with one fatality, 320 troops inserted and seven air strikes in the area plus dozens of gun runs by the weapons. They had memorial services for the scout observer and Porter was wounded in the hand and Rabbit in the hand. This was the hottest area I've ever been in and Charlie hit every place around here today (the cease fire was dropped). Pleiku was on fire and mortared; Holloway, Dak To, Kontum, and all the surrounding area was mortared and rocketed. The strange thing is that Enari was not touched - yet!" During the 2001 7/17th Cav Reunion, Rick provided some more details as follows: "At this time I was still officially a pilot with the Lift Platoon. While I'd flown a couple of time with the Scouts, I had not yet started to transition into the O-6A or Scout Platoon. As we left Dak To, one of the mortar round exploded right behind us. We knew the ship had taken some damage but it seemed OK so we worked our first turn in the AO. We saw a few things but didn't think it was significant. When we landed at a POL point someplace, we could see that the mortar damage was worse than we thought, so we went back to Enari for another ship. I'd guess we were in #65-12993. When we returned we noticed there were teams of four aircraft working mostly in two areas. I don't recall who was flying the C&C, who was the lead Scout, or who the gun crews were when we started working the Kontum area. I remember working with another set of gunships from another unit. During the VR we started finding people everywhere. We'd call 'Smokes out, breaking right!' and a set of gunships would acknowledge the smoke and start working that area over. We'd move just a short distance and start looking again. 'Smokes out, breaking right!' - another set of guns. We kept this up until we put out a smoke and no one acknowledged. We decided that this wasn't such a good idea so we returned to the first contact area and unloaded our minigun there before going to refuel and rearm. By the end of the day I logged 10.7 hours. My legs were numb. I remember riding back from the flight line with my legs hanging out so I could get the blood flowing to them again."

SP5 Ron Sellew recalls: I was a Commo Chief in A Troop. SGT Steven Powers was from Compton, CA. He was a friend of mine.

SP4 Dave Harris recalls: I joined A Troop's Blues in July at Ft. Knox and arrived in Vietnam on the Walker. I was part of the 1st Squad of A Troop's Blues. SGT Cousby, who was 45 years old at this time, was our Squad Leader. On the first day of Tet we were inserted way west of Kontum. As I remember it, we didn't move much that day but spent the night between some Amrican and ARVN units that were shooting at eachother. We didn't make contact and I don't think we fired. We had our rucks with about three or four days worth of supplies.

The 31st was the starting date for the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) for C Troop. In 1969 via DA General Order #69, C Troop was awarded the PUC the period 31 Jan to 31 Mar 1968.

On the 31st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15038, location Kontum. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat

support command and control mission, while on ground, they took one hit from mortar type exploding weapon which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. CPT Bob Young provides some additional details: During this period of time, 038 was often flown by "Ruthless 6" the squadron commander, LTC 'Pete' Johnson. I often flew as the other pilot. The crew chief was SP5 Michael Lill with SP4 Mike Manger as door gunner. Other senior officers in the squadron also flew this aircraft. Mike Manger states that Pete Johnson used the radio call sign of "Shaggy 6."

Don Oliver provides: "One of the funniest incident of my tour involved another B Troop Huey crewchief named Sandoval. Sandy was a little moody but was a meticulous and careful technician. One day MAJ Hefford was flying C&C in Sandy's ship during an operation near Polei Kleng. While out in the AO, the main rotor tach generator failed which generated a few choice words from the Major. While Sandy took offense to the comments about his aircraft, Hefford's attention quickly returned to the war. He flew back to the staging area and set down to discuss something face to face with another officer, and Sandy thought he was going to be on the ground for awhile. As soon as they landed, Sandy got out, opened the engine and transmission cowls, and got up on the engine deck to start removing the tach generator (with the engine still running). Maybe Sandy should have thought through this one better? Meanwhile, Hefford finishes his conversation and *takes off* with Sandy still on the engine deck. Ever a resourceful fellow, Sandy crawls forward by hanging on to antennas and ventilator cups until he is above the pilot's windshield. He then leans forward with his head down in front of the Major and starts *banging on the windshield*. Meanwhile the rest of the Lift had been trying frantically to raise the CO, but he was on another freq. Hefford always looked at Sandy a little funny after that!"

SP4 Dave Harris recalls: On the second day of Tet, A Troop's Blue were picked up from where we'd spent the night west of Kontum. In the afternoon we were inserted near the town of Kontum in a graveyard. We moved toward the town but I don't remember any contact. It wasn't too bad yet.

During this period of time, the following article titled "Cavalry Destroys Red Rocket Nest" appeared in an unknown publication. The clipping was provided by Joe Caputo. [Editor's note: The publishing style and layout suggests this article may have come from The Army Reporter, the USARV publication. Until an exact date can be determined, we will use Jan 31st.]

Camp Enari – Minutes before dawn, cavalrymen from Troop B, 7/17th Cav led by CPT Barry Oxford of Abilene TX spotted campfires smouldering in the distance as the men pushed through the jungle about 10 miles west of Pleiku. Air strikes were called in on the already black, burnt terrain, affording little cover; twenty-one more men were airlifted to Troop B. Scooting from well-covered and heavily protected bunkers and spider holes, the NVA soldiers scattered along the slightly rolling hillside, forced against a well-positioned Troop B. Five enemy were downed – the others fled. On alert Troop D's 56 men under 1LT Jack Daniel of Russellville, KY were airlifted into the action, the LZ 500 meters from the firefight; they linked up quickly with Troop B. "From our initial observation, it looked as if there was a company or a company plus in the area," said 1LT Daniel. Separating into three groups, SGT Thaddeus Lewis of Miami, walking point, converged on the deeply entrenched bunker, collecting B40 rockets, AK47 ammo still crated, 81mm mortar rounds and base plates, 27 packs, new protective masks, one 22mm round and a large supply of documents – a recently well-supplied unit. Grenades were lobbed into the major complexes – secondary explosions splintered the few remaining low-hung trees.

February 1968

The HHT unit history sums it all up "During Tet the entire Squadron's activities and energies were devoted to the Kontum area which was nearly occupied by the NVA." During the first week, Squadron elements killed 24 NVA/VC in operations near Kontum, Dak To, and northwest of Pleiku. These

operations were either to clear the NVA/VC from the cities and immediate areas around military base camps or to escort critical convoys since portions of the road between Pleiku and Kontum were in enemy hands. For the rest of the month, with D Troop still based out of the Kontum airfield, the Squadron supported TF 1/22 which consisted of the augmented 1/22nd Inf Bn. The ACTs found numerous trails and bunker complexes near Plei Mrong (about seven kms west of QL14 and about half way between Pleiku and Kontum). This proved to be 'home' for the large enemy force that had cut QL14 at the start of Tet and had sent units against both cities. For the period 8 - 29 Feb, the Squadron killed 51 NVA/VC, captured 7 POWs, 4,250 rounds of small arms ammo, 215 rounds of crew served ammo, 5 individual and 6 crew weapons, and 41 packs which contained documents and over 100 lbs of medical supplies. The Squadron did its Cavalry job of "finding and fixing the enemy" well because the 4th Inf moved the 173rd Abn Bde to Kontum to work the Plei Mrong area and returned the 7/17th to work its traditional AOs from Ban Me Thuot to Dak Pek. The unit histories record specific days and events in a little more detail. C Troop, located at Chu Lai, continued to support the Americal Division.

On the 1st, B Troop was sent to Dak To but diverted to Kontum because Dak To was under a heavy mortar attack. NVA gun positions inside the city greeted them as they approached the Kontum airstrip. The Guns started surgically working on the NVA guns and the Lift started carrying friendly wounded to the 71st Evac at Pleiku. About the time the Lift section returned, the C&C learned that Dak To was 'clear' and 'needed the Cav.' The first priority at Dak To was to find the NVA mortar teams and the Scouts did this quickly. First the Guns were used then several airstrikes. During the post-strike screen, the Scouts found an extensive complex of tunnels and bunkers. They marked the area so accurately that the next series of airstrikes were accompanied by numerous secondary explosions. Back over the area, the Scouts found some NVA trying to leave and the Guns killed four but received intense 50 cal fire. One UH-1C took several hits. The co-pilot received facial wounds from the shattered windows so they flew back to Pleiku Air Force Base. The Kontum situation was so bad that the Brigade at Dak To used B Troop to lift and CA C/1/22nd Inf from Dak To to Kontum which required 20 sorties. The troop killed four move NVA during the CA. Just after the CA, B Troop received a change of mission to support A Troop in a critical convoy escort. Both Troops finally departed the AO at 2045 to return to Enari.

On the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop Aircraft UH-1C #66-15033 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 300 feet and 90 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the right cockpit, main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission.

CPT Charlie Rayl describes these times as follows: Some time before TET actually started, A Troop had killed an NVA LT, his SGT, and a body guard who were carrying a courier packet containing the Tet Offensive NVA battle plans for the Central Highlands. I firmly believe the military intelligence community chose to discount these documents, disbelieving that the NVA had the capability to carry out such a large scale attack. For two weeks prior to Tet, we repeatedly reported NVA construction of new roads, battle positions, fortifications and even new unused graves as we flew the Pleiku, Kontum, Dak To area. We were very concerned about not only the number of sightings but also the fact that we were not getting shot at during our VRs. We were criticized for not getting the kills we had in the past; but the vital information we were providing was either not believed or ignored. For me, the Tet Offensive began while on an early morning VR out towards the Ia Drang Valley. I spotted some Montagnards with larger than normal baskets on their backs traveling down a trail. They didn't wave, smile, or look up at us as we hovered by. Unusual. The Montagnards were always friendly to the Scouts and would voluntarily open their baskets to show us what was in them, indicating they meant no harm. I decided to herd them down the path to a flat, open area where we could bring the Blues in and called for the Blues. About that time Opns called

and requested that I return to base. I argued that I had just made a significance find. MAJ Inglett, Tornado 6, got on the radio and with language I clearly understood, ordered me back to camp. When I got there, he briefed us that a MAJOR attack was under way at Kontum and that the airfield and SF camp were in danger of being overrun. As we flew by Pleiku, we noticed some of it was ablaze. A major fire fight was in progress about 12 Ks north of Camp Holloway. We arrived at Kontum with only one team of Scouts and Guns plus the C&C. We orbited east of Kontum while the CO sorted things out in Kontum. We could see a few little fire fights going on; but nothing like the fires and destruction going on at Pleiku! My observer, Dennis Carlin, and I always liked the Dak Bla River that ran east to west, south of Kontum. The river valley had always been a friendly place as opposed to the mountains and jungle nearby. We were snooping along low level over the "friendly river" when we over-flew a squad of ARVN engaged in a fire fight. They were obviously in a heap of trouble. They were caught out in the open on a sand bar on the east bank of the river. The NVA were pumping a heavy volume of rifle fire at them. One ARVN frantically waved and pointed to the tree line to his west as I flew by. I rolled in hot with the mini, spraying the bursts as close as 15 feet from the ARVN into the tree line. Instantly, the ARVN stood up, started firing and attacked the NVA position! Gutsy little rascals, or, with my shooting that close to them, dumb? I made one more pass but they were already in the tree line, so I couldn't shoot. On my third pass, some of the ARVN were back out on the sand bar waving and smiling as friendly as I had ever seen them towards an American. A few days later I flew by the same location and several NVA bodies had been drug out on the sand and left to rot. A dog was chewing on them. I was offended, so we shot the dog. Anyway, by this time MAJ Inglett had things figured out. The SF camp was under siege by mortar fire they believed was coming from the rifle range located to the northeast of Kontum; so we sent two Scouts and two Guns up there. We made a high speed, low level pass near the rifle range. There they were - first valid intelligence we had been given all day. The NVA had a bunch of mortars set up, so our Guns opened up. It was a turkey shoot! As we did not have another Gun team on station yet, we decided to refuel at Kontum.

When we got to the refuel point, we noticed there was no one to operate the pump. We always refueled "hot" (with the engine running and the rotors turning), so Dennis got out to go start the pump. I called the tower and asked where the refueler was. He responded that he didn't know. I asked why he didn't know. He answered that the tower was closed, that he was in a bunker with a PRC 25 and that the field was under attack! News to me!! Dennis was struggling to crank up the gas powered fuel pump when I happened to glance toward the 57th AHC's compound and saw a flight school classmate of mine, CPT C.D. Rogers, crouched behind a revet. He was frantically waving at me to get the hell out of there. C.D. was a big guy, had been a football player in college and I knew he had more than his share of courage. His acting scared and crouched behind a revet definitely got my attention! I looked over my right shoulder and saw dust being kicked up to my right rear by AW fire. Dennis was still at the fuel pump about 20 meters away. He had it running but was not facing towards me. With the noise of the LOH and the fuel pump, he could not hear the incoming fire. I couldn't leave him and I couldn't leave the aircraft. After what seemed like two eternities, he turned around and saw the dust flying from the bullet strikes and me frantically signaling him to get back to the ship. Dennis won the 20 meter dash. I pulled pitch while he was still strapping in. I wasn't helping much by flying in what I called "making it dance" so as not to give the NVA a steady target. My wing was steadily firing into an area south of the fueling pits. Still no fuel and not enough in the tank to make it back to base. But ole lady luck was with us as we spotted a 5,000 gal tanker parked inside the 57th's compound. We landed next to the tanker and a soldier came running over while trying to make himself a small target. He gets the fuel pump started and we start refueling. Soon a pilot appears and tells me that all of the 57th's helicopters have been hit and that they had been receiving enemy fire in the compound most of the day. I waved goodbye to C.D. with a thumbs up.

He was a hell of a guy. He later extended so that his younger brother wouldn't have to serve in Vietnam and was killed during the extension.

We got married up with our second Gun team and started working the northern perimeter of the 57th's area. The Scouts searched and marked enemy positions and the Guns shot them up. The minigun and rocket fire dampened the spirits of the NVA attackers! Apparently the situation at the SF camp deteriorated, because our CO called for the Blues to be inserted in or near the camp. Our Guns were dispatched to cover the insertion. Since they didn't need Scouts for that, my team kept working the 57th's northern perimeter. I recall finding an ARVN position just north of the perimeter. He was surrounded and had his hands full but was making a menace of himself in the NVA rear. We made a couple of firing passes at the NVA along a tree line and I called for some Guns. The response: "kill them yourself, Red; we've got to get the Blues in!" As luck would have it, another Gun team showed up and I got them to shoot up the area around this lone ARVN. After that, the NVA activity on the northern side quieted down and my team went back to base camp to rearm. The fires and fire fights were still going on at Pleiku. The airfield was a beehive of activity. When we returned to Kontum, we set up an aerial screen to watch for NVA reinforcements into this battle. Shortly a 122mm rocket fired from a distant mountain to the northeast, scored a direct hit on the 5,000 gal tanker we had used earlier that day. An instantaneous explosion ensued with a towering black fuel fire of smoke billowing skyward in sharp contrast to the other brown smoke in the battle area. As a result, we were sent to look for the rocket launch positions. We found the remains of where it had been launched but searched the deep mountain side jungle in vain for any unfired rockets. It is a tough job to hover a helicopter right on top of the trees trying to blow the branches aside in the hopes of getting a glimpse of the camouflaged rocket site. Mountain flying at that altitude is a challenge as the ship reacts to every little up and down draft and the wind currents are always tricky. It finally got too dark to work anymore, so we went home. For the next six days, the Scouts were grounded because our Blues were embroiled in a fight at the SF camp. Without the quick reaction force provided by our Blues, the CO wouldn't risk using the Scouts. Besides the NVA were easy to find all around Kontum. I felt sorry for the Blues. They had not been exposed to fighting from a fixed position and we were unable to extract them for several days.

In early 2009, VHPA member Steve Sullivan happened to mention to the author that he served with the 57th AHC at Kontum during Tet. Since Steve's stories not only validated what CPT Charlie Rayl just provided but add more detail, an edited version of Steve's remarks are included in this history.

1LT Steve Sullivan recalls: The 57th deployed directly to Kontum in October 1967 as part of the Army's efforts to expand MACV-SOG's cross-border operations. Those of us who went over with the unit are of the opinion that the 57th was essentially dumped in Kontum and left to fend for ourselves with no infantry or any other nearby support. Luckily a nearby ARVN unit felt sorry for us and gave us some of the M-14's, BAR's and other weapons because they had received newer models. Since other than our M-60 door-guns, all we had was 38 or 45 caliber pistols, these ARVN donations were very much appreciated. Even though we were supposed to have some time in country to get combat ready, the 57th was almost immediately thrown into the battle of Dak To for some OJT. My gun team supported the 173rd Abn Bde on Hill 875 where they suffered terrible losses. On 10 January 1968 NVA sappers infiltrated our compound. By morning the 57th had six KIA, many wounded, at least seven helicopters were destroyed, plus most of the vehicles, workshops, shop vans, maintenance tents, etc. It was a very difficult time for a small isolated assault helicopter company. Those losses were very personal for all of us. About three weeks later came the Tet Offensive. I believe the 57th had still not recovered from the sapper attack. We did not have our full complement of personnel, gunships or slicks. However the sapper attack probably helped us to be more combat ready and prepared for the Tet Offensive although we really did not grasp that we were going to be in very tough fight. By morning of the first day of Tet, I believe that we only had

one or two flyable gun ships. I had left one badly shot up gunship at Pleiku AFB and we had at least one or two badly shot up UH-1Cs at Dak To or nearby Tan Canh. The first morning after the initial attack I talked with our Platoon Leader, CPT John Dalton, who had numerous shrapnel wounds and impaired hearing, but remained with the unit and fighting for most of the day before he chose, or was ordered, to take a helicopter to the hospital in Pleiku. After that conversation I helped organize the defense of the gun platoon's portion of the perimeter on the southwest corner that included the corner bunker, plus half of the south and west perimeter lines. Our portion of the perimeter was closest to the 57th refueling area that was outside the perimeter and unsecured. The refueling point was on a taxiway near the northwest corner of the airport. At one point while receiving quite a bit of incoming fire, we were shocked to see a UH-1C land at the refueling area, and I think, it may have even gone to ground idle. There may have been a pair of Charlie Models but I only recall one aircraft. We were dumbfounded that the pilot would land in an area that was essentially in the middle of a firefight. We had a "gate" in the perimeter fence near our position so I ran to the helicopter and recognized Charlie Rayl in the left seat. I believe there was a Major in the right seat. The Major was wearing a red bandana around his neck, which I suppose had some connection with the Cav. I advised him that we were taking a lot of fire and he probably should depart the area immediately. The Major listened to me and may have asked me something about the situation. My recollection is that he took on some fuel and departed, much to our relief and amazement. During my conversation with this 7/17th Cav crew, I also recall that I was shocked to see our POL Sergeant, Jim Seltzer in the middle of the fuel bladders running a pump. Seltzer was wearing his steel helmet, a flak vest, and I think he was carrying a rifle. I have never forgotten the sight of Seltzer, calmly moving among the fuel bladders presumably helping the 7/17th crew get some fuel while there was considerable incoming and outgoing fire, not to mention close air support from USAF jets, and at some point low-level resupply drops from C130s. The other event involving the 7/17th may have been the same day, or a day or two later, I think it was the same day. Two 7/17th UH-1Cs landed in our revetments to rearm and probably refuel. I recognized one pilot as a flight school classmate, 1LT Bill Fugitt. As I recall Fugitt was in the lead gunship; however I think he may have been in the left seat. We briefly exchanged greetings as we helped them rearm. The 7/17th gun team then launched and was hit by a hail of fire just outside our perimeter. Fugitt's helicopter made a very quick tight approach back into the revetment where we saw that Fugitt had been shot in the upper leg, probably through the femoral artery and was bleeding badly. His jungle pant leg was filled with blood. Nevertheless he put on a tourniquet, and he used his pistol to tighten the tourniquet, then he was helped by his crew into a just landed 7/17th slick that departed presumably for the hospital in Pleiku. The badly shot up C model was left in our revetment and I think the other crew members departed in a slick. Not long after Fugitt and his crew departed, LT Bill Quinn, another 57th gun pilot, asked me to help him remove the rocket pods from the shot up 7/17th helicopter. We needed at least one of the pods to get a gunship back up for flight. There was an American unit who had probably come into Kontum that morning. They were fighting a pretty large NVA unit just northwest of our position. I know that they had several casualties because they were using our medical tent located next to my tent and I was shocked to see so many dead GIs. Although the 57th did not lose a man during Tet, the records indicate twenty-six members of the 57th were wounded. I suspect that number is understated as several has minor shrapnel wounds, damaged ear drums, burns, and the usual injuries associated with combat. Many of my flight school (class 67-4) classmates were assigned to the 3/17th and 7/17th as they were forming at Fort Knox. During my year in RVN, I visited with my classmates many times as we met at various airfields in the Central Highlands. The 7/17th scouts took a lot of losses. CPT Archie Hayman and I had visited at Kontum not long before he was killed. Another classmate, CPT Dickie McCleney was badly burned in an OH-6 crash. The most amazing thing to me was the intelligence gathered by the 7/17th. My classmates would tell me what they were finding and seeing and I would share it with the 57th. The 57th commander during our last six months was MAJ Bill Gess. MAJ Gess always asked me what I

had learned from the 7/17th because we received little useful or timely intelligence from our battalion.

Kontum was desperate for Infantry even though the entire 1/22nd Inf Bn and everything that the Special Forces B-24 command could scrape together were totally committed. D Troop quickly returned from Ban Me Thuot and consolidated with A and B Troop's Blues. These combined forces flushed any known or suspected VC or NVA from buildings within the city. Intense sniper and automatic weapons fire was received as they moved from house to house. D Troop was directly responsible for the successful defense of the SF camp and portions for the city during the Tet Offensive and was officially commended on several occasions by the B-24 commander. In 1970 via DA General Order #43, the Rifle Platoons of A and B Troops plus all of D Troop were awarded a Valorous Unit Award (VUA) for the period 30 Jan to 12 Feb 1968. Al Iller provided a copy of the *Recommendation for Presidential Unit Citation* for the period 30 Jan - 5 Feb prepared by MAJ Bruce Wilder. This document describes these events in considerable detail but has not yet been included in this history. (Mike Law needs to fix this!) Finally, pages 157 and 158 in *Winged Sabers* contains several photos of these Infantry units during this period.

SFC Vernon Rose recalls: I was A Troop's Blue Platoon Sergeant during this battle. We were initially inserted into the town and worked with an armored unit for a while. There were NVA on the roofs and the top floors of buildings. We were doing house to house fighting and making slow progress. Later in the day, the armored unit moved to another location and left us. We were in danger of being over-run. We were notified that the Special Forces B-24 commander had requested help and we were directed to pull back to that position. For the next several days we manned the trenches on the B-24 compound's perimeter. I have lots of pictures of our bunkers and strong points on those trenches. Once a tank pulled up and I put him on the line. He only had 'bee hive' rounds and started firing into the NVA. When they finished firing, there were just body parts where the NVA had been. A year or so after this battle, I met CPT Tony Hoyer, the D Troop CO during this period, while he was at the Armor Career Course. He asked me, 'What did you receive for your actions during Tet?' meaning what award did I receive. When I said NOTHING, he said now that isn't right. He wrote me up for a Silver Star, submitted it, and I did receive this award.

SP4 Bill Jarrell recalls: I joined the 7/17th at Fort Knox and went to Vietnam as part of HHT. I believe I was a member of a liaison team from the squadron to the Special Forces B-24 command, because a Captain (who's name I don't remember) and I arrived in Kontum two days before TET. We stayed in their compound and bunked in a masonry building. The night the offensive started in our area we were asleep. I woke up to what I thought was the sounds of a thunderstorm. I remember getting off the bunk to go look outside when the Captain pull me down and told me that the noise was incoming mortar explosions. I got dressed and headed for a bunker right across from us. He took off for the CP. When I got in the bunker there were three civilians from a construction company already in it. I thought I was scared until I saw them! I could see NVA on top of the building I had been sleeping in. All I had was a 45 pistol. We exchanged fire then they disappeared. I didn't see any more NVA that night. The Captain came back and told me that Kansas City (our name for the Kontum air strip) had been over run and that the 1/10th Cav had been killed in their tracks. I later learned that sometime during all this, and I don't know to this day how it happened, my fatigues were torn and covered in blood. A Special Forces LT gave me a tiger set, which I wore the rest of the time I was there. Since my only weapon was the pistol, the LT also gave me a 30 cal. carbine. I used that weapon whenever I needed one for the next few days and later took it back with me to Enari. The next night we were hit again and I spent the night in the same bunker. Next day the Captain told me to move into the CP. On the way over I passed some D Troop guys and got the needle from them. They told me to join them at 'The Front.' I ask the Captain if I could and he said No. In the CP I worked several shifts as a radio operator. I remember a radio transmission about a

church that I could see from the bunker. There was an enemy FO up there who was adjusting their mortar fire and doing lots of damage. COL Johnson could not get permission for the higher ups to blow up the steeple. I am not 100% sure that what I about to say is the truth, but I'm pretty sure it is. COL Johnson offered an R&R in Bangkok if anyone could shoot a rocket through that steeple without hitting it. As for D Troop, they continued to slug it out. At some point in time they took the church and had casualties. That's about all I remember of TET. Not long after TET we returned to Enari and I transferred to D Troop. I was an M-60 machine gunner with the Scout section, 3rd platoon.

SP4 Dave Harris recalls: On the third day of Tet, A Troop's Blue were still in the graveyard on the edge of Kontum. We started moving toward the town and linked up with an American tank. As I remember we just patrolled and returned to the graveyard. We didn't make contact.

SGT Edd Garrison who served in the 2nd Platoon of D Troop recalls: Prior to the battle that we would later call Tet of '68, we were out in the field. I believe we were extracted and returned to Camp Enari with orders to load up on ammo, Cs and water then get back on the helicopters. We flew to Kontum airfield and when we arrived I recall we split into two units. A small force with members from our HQ, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Platoons plus guys from the A and B Troops' Blues stayed at the airfield. I was part of about a 70-man force that was supposed to fly directly to Kontum City. I know others from D Troop who say we were inserted someplace north of Kontum and were involved in what proved to be a cross-fire exchange between an ARNV and an America infantry units, but I don't remember that part at all. After what has been described to me as a sleepless and scary night we were sent towards Kontum by foot. As D Troop's 2nd platoon exited the jungle area near the clear area between the SF camp and Kontum City we came under intense fire from many sides. The 2nd platoon managed to maneuver to the dirt road leading from Kontum City to the SF camp and assumed positions in the roadside gullies that were very shallow and did not offer much protection at all. The automatic weapons fire continued. One of the members of the group radioed to our HQ and permission was obtained from the SF Camp for us to enter. The 1st platoon and 3rd platoon elements were still in the surrounding jungle and were forced to stay out overnight. We quickly occupied the trench line just inside the perimeter defensive wire around the compound. I remember LT 'Wild Bill' Baker (2nd platoon) and LT Daniel (3rd platoon) being there plus SSG Tylor (2nd platoon senior NCO) but SFC Young was not there. We manned two-man positions about 6 to 7 feet apart in our section of the line. That first night we received NVA mortar, SA, and AW fire all night long but there was no assault. I don't believe we took any casualties but we also didn't receive any supporting fires or illumination. The next morning a few of us stayed at the compound to make repairs/improvements to the trench line system. Anything that could be useful for overhead cover was used plus all the sand bags we could find. I went on a patrol into the town. It was amazing! We didn't even take sniper fire! We covered the 2 to 300 yards between the compound and the city and then went house to house for a few streets. The NVA was nowhere to be seen. Indeed Vietnamese were standing outside their houses, giving us cokes, letting us come into their buildings – everything was normal. I think we started patrolling about 8 a.m. and returned to the compound about 4:30 p.m. We were not resupplied that day and after getting back on the trench line we ate the last of our Cs. We redistributed ammo and prepared for a repeat of last night.

SGT Edd Garrison continues: The NVA mortars started landing after dark supported by SA and at least two 30-cal machineguns firing into our sector. I remember the mortar fire was fairly accurate. They hit a truck plus some of the bunkers. Again we had no illumination, supporting artillery or gunship but there was also no NVA ground assault. SP4 Sam Cutter and I manned one position and to our right was SGT Brooks plus another man about six feet down the trench line. The trench was about 3 feet deep in our area. We would take turns popping up, observing, firing, whatever. About 3 a.m. three mortar rounds landed BANG, BANG, BANG in quick succession as they walked toward

the trench line. We were at the bottom of the trench when the last one landed between our positions. The round hit right on the edge of the trench. I was nearest it in our position and Brooks in his. Initially I felt a little burning in my right elbow and was aware that I had been hit near both my eyes, but I could still see and didn't think I was hurt all that badly. However, I heard Brooks yell that he was hurt and a felt some of his flesh hit me. Sam said he was OK so I moved over the check on Brooks. His left arm was messed up but the other guy with him wasn't hurt. SSG Willis was in a command bunker (they had a radio) two positions to our left, so I went there to get a medic for Brooks. Willis told me that the medic was on the way. One of our 7/17th Cav medics came to me and after looking at me said, 'You look fine – can YOU come with me to the 1st Aid Tent?' I said sure and walked/ran with him to the tent. Another medic went to work on Brooks. When I arrived at the 1st Aid Tent, they looked at me and said I would be evaced so I should stay there. They didn't bandage me. They didn't give me a shot. The only reason I can think of is that the injury near my right eye must have caused them to believe I had to be evaced. However, they never told me what they were thinking. They did tell me that I would be on a stretcher when loaded on the medivac ship. I didn't understand this because I could walk and see! They called for a medivac helicopter. I remember when it arrived. It made 3 or 4 attempts to land but was chased off by the enemy fire. I remember the guys from my unit who were carrying my stretcher kept running towards the landing pad and kept getting pushed back by the fire. I was more worried for their safety than my own at this point. I knew I could get on the ship if they would let me off that stretcher. About 5:30 a.m. a Huey from our Squadron landed with supplies for us. This was the first resupply ship to make it in. SGT Izell from our HQ platoon was on the ship that offloaded Cs, ammo and water. Somehow my stretcher got put on after all the supplies were dropped off. This area was still taking a lot of incoming. I remember Izell let out a sharp yell and hit the floor. He took a mortar round fragment in his kidney. The mortar rounds were now landing very close to the Huey and the automatic weapons fire was deafening. Several documents written during this period of time mention a Huey that had 77 holes in it. This was the Huey I was on. We lifted off and flew straight to the 71st Evac at Pleiku. I later learned that LT Baker was wounded during this mortar attack about the time our Huey lifted off as well as more of our troops. He was awarded his second Purple Heart for his wounds. I was placed on a gurney and wheeled into a waiting area with all the other wounded. I never saw Izell again. There were plenty of others in much worse shape than me and they were treated first. I'd guess I'd been there at least 4 or 5 hours but still had not see a doctor. I remember taking a couple of naps but really wasn't all that uncomfortable. This friendly staff guy came up to me. I guess he knew that I wasn't going to be treated any time soon with all the other priority WIAs they had. He said he was going to the PX to get some things and asked if I wanted to join him? I said sure and we were gone about an hour or so. I was glad to get a beer at the PX. When I returned to the waiting room the Orderly came over and asked if I was Edd Garrison. He told me that someone was asking for me. It turned out to be LT Baker. I found him and we talked a little. He had lung injuries I believe and was in a lot of pain when I saw him. He said he was glad that I had made it out safely. I asked him how many D Troopers had been wounded. He said he thought it was at least five maybe seven at that point. That was the last time I saw him. He died of cancer in the 1990s. He and several others around him were also waiting to see the doctors. I did see Joe Eberhardt at the 71st Evac. He had taken several rounds in the belly and chest on 23 January near Dak To. He had come close to dying a few times since then and the medical staff just didn't want to take the chance of evacing him. He did survive the war and is still alive today though he is still dealing with lots of issues from his tour and injuries. I also saw Brooks. He was hurting when we talked. He said he was going home and was happy about that idea. Finally, I was told to go into this office and sit down. The medical person there did not exam me up close but told me that I'd be evaced as soon as they could get me on a flight. Again he provided few details about what was wrong with me. To this day I can only assume that these people could just look at my eye injury and know that it was serious and that they couldn't take care of me. My Purple Heart orders from the 71st Evac state I was wounded on 2

Feb. About 24 to 36 hours after I arrived at the 71st Evac, I was on a C-130 for Cam Ranh. I stayed in the hospital there a couple of days. They ran some tests and started me on antibiotics. Next stop was Okinawa. I stayed there until 3 March. I had surgery to remove a piece of mortar fragment in my left eye. From there I was finally flown to the USA and arrived at Walter Reed Medical Center. I was there about a week and then offered a 30-day leave. After I returned from leave an examination revealed that the trauma to my left eye had caused a detached retina. This was repaired 3 times before the laser weld would hold. I have blurred vision in that eye today correctable to about 20/400.

CPT Tony Hoyer provided the following about D Troop during this period of time: 1LT Baker was wounded when he was helping to evacuate the previously wounded (believe from his 2d platoon). Everyone and everything was exposed in the dirt field within the SF Compound when the UH1s were coming in from east to west. I know because I crossed that dusty field with my RTO at least once and we were taken under fire by long range AK-47 (rounds were hitting dirt nearby). Later on, D Troop (me, by getting up on top of tank behind turret so I could talk directly with the Tank Commander) used direct tank fire to silence a concrete building with a wooden door facing to the south west (towards field) about 200-250 meters off the north compound fence which was being used by NVA Forward Observers and/or NVA 60mm mortar squad. It was so close in, the compound mortars could not hit it and M-40 grenade launchers were ineffective. Don't recall if we had any more LAWs. After two 90 mm tank rounds were fired into building (from the same open dirt field), the mortar fire and local small arms fire stopped. Whatever NVA was in the building was neutralized. Can't recall who wrote 1LT Baker up for his Silver Star. I usually wrote the awards since I initiated them and was there in field to observe the events and later get the witness statements from platoon members after battle ended. My recollection was between 6-7 total wounded- more from the mortar than originally before the evac was attempted.

B Troop's Lift Platoon was heavily involved in the initial inserts, the resupply, and extraction of the infantry. The following section details some of their thoughts:

WO1 Doug Sparks recalls: I was flying with CPT Denny Vaughan during the initial inserts into Kontum. He became our platoon leader after CPT Dan Dantzler left for A Troop.

WO1 Mike E. Smith recalls:

On the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15034 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, during the attack, they took four hits from 12.7mm and 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with injuries record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00730 flown by an un-named crew that suffered two wounded. The decoded details of the record state that this was a close air support mission, while withdrawing from the target area, they took four hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the elevator, flight controls, they made a precautionary landing, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

About the time of the 2001 Reunion, there was some discussion on the net about the fact that for several months before and after Tet B Troop's C&C ship flew with four M-60s versus the normal two. One can only assume this was to provide more fire power when supporting infantry units.

SP4 Bob Jones recalls: I often flew on B Troop H-models especially with the senior officers in the command ship. I remember flying with four M-60s, two on bunji cords and two on the normal mounts. I remember MAJ Iller, MAJ Hefford, MAJ Longhoefer, CPT Doty, CPT Vaughan, CPT Oxford, WO Harp, WO Harry Olson (his godfather was the super-intendent of my high school), and

LT Rucker. Sandy and Bill Hahn were a couple of the crew chiefs I knew. I remember the Marines north of the Bong Song, Chu Lai and that area plus the Camp Enari area, also Dak Pek and Dak To down to Ban Me Thuot and, of course, Phan Thiet. I DEROSed in August 1968.

SP4 Dave Harris recalls: On the fourth day of Tet, A Troop's Blue moved out of the graveyard about 4 p.m. to the B-24 compound. We were sad to part company with the tank. I believe A Troop's Blue were the first into the compound which was under mortar and rocket fire. I remember the major feature of their perimeter was a trench that ringed the compound. The trench had been there for a long time. There were sandbagged bunkers every 20 yards or so. Some of these bunkers had metal roofing sheets that provided some overhead cover. We were assigned a section of the trench near the main front gate and along most of one side of the compound. We were hit and received fire every day for the next several days. On the fifth day of Tet, we needed resupply but for some reason our helicopters couldn't get in so the supplies came in by parachute. We needed both water and food. On the sixth day of Tet, during the night, SP4 Harrston was wounded in the head by a mortar round. Initially he was reported as KIA because he had lost a big part of his skull. He was treated and evaced the next morning. It would be about six months before he returned to our unit. On the seventh day, we received more fire and ground pressure but to our great joy the American tank joined us at the compound. We had long since figured out that the NVA had a forward team with snipers and a forward observer for their mortars and rockets. Try as we could with what weapons we had, including D Troop's mortars, we could not knock out that NVA team. Well the tanks started firing and it quickly became our BEST FRIEND. From that point on, the NVA snipping and mortar fire were much less effective. On the eighth day we began our daily patrols from the compound to the town – returning to the compound each night. We did this day after day for weeks. It would be March before we'd see Camp Enari again!

MAJ Bob Inglett recalls: This was the first time A Troop had to conduct aerial missions without having our infantry in their normal support roles. I have several strong impressions about those days. First, we were very concerned for their safety and well-being. Everyone that I knew had great confidence in CPT Tony Hoyer and in having our infantry serving with D Troop, but they also knew this was a very dangerous situation for that force on the ground. Second, it really felt strange returning to Enari each evening without them. It was almost like you were leaving part of the family in harmsway and you had a guilty feeling for doing this. Third, we didn't want to operate very far from them just in case they'd call and need our help. Fourth, we didn't want to go work someplace else without having infantry support in the event of a downed aircraft. The Squadron quickly established a liaison team at the 1/22nd Infantry's CP. I remember landed there every morning for a briefing as to where all the friendly infantry units were, what their missions were for the day, and how we were to support them. That's basically what we did all day every day for about a week – support the infantry guys by screening around them, shooting up the targets they gave us or that we found, and transporting supplies and people as needed. Once our Blues were extracted, I remember we stood-down for a day or so to let everyone clean up and rest a bit.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12973, location An Khe. The crew of CPT R.S. Young and SP5 J.R. Ehrhardt had minor injuries. The Goldbook database suggests this aircraft may have been recovered and possibly returned to CONUS. However, it was removed from the Army's inventory in April or May 1968. It is safe to assume that this aircraft was lost to the Army as a result of this crash. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary states: At a 15-20 foot hover. aircraft experienced tail rotor failure and crashed. Suspect flex coupling failure.

On the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00730 at Camp Enari. The crew of CW3 B.C. Walton had minor injuries and SP4 Gerald Getzfried. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident

summary states: Pilot attempted to land aircraft in revetment. Wind caught aircraft causing the tail rotor to hit the revetment. The aircraft spun to the right and hit the ground. The VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for this aircraft on the 8th.

Bill Walton and the B Troop website provide the following: This happened on my 37th birthday. The aircraft was shot up at Kontum during Tet '68. It was repaired by the 40th TC Det including a new tail rotor. They were short test pilots and asked me to test flight it. Since we needed all the aircraft we could muster, I agreed. The other guy in the 730 was SP4 Gerald Getzfried, CE of #66-15066. SP6 Harold Randall was 730's crewchief but he asked if he could do something else while I test flew the aircraft. Getzfried's aircraft was down for parts and he wanted to get some fresh air and asked if he could come along. After a short test flight, I parked it in one of those high narrow revetments but the aircraft was crooked and I decided to straighten it out because the next time she would be fully loaded. I lifted off, lost control and hit the revetment causing the tail rotor and gearbox to separate. We spun three times and crashed. There were no serious injuries resulting directly from the crash. I was bruised from my knees to my crotch from the cyclic stick trying to beat me to death, but was flying again two days later. SP4 Behrend was in the revetment next to the crashed aircraft. He ran over and helped us get out. He suffered some sort of a knee injury in this 'sprint' and was medevaced to CONUS. The second guy to the aircraft was SP6 Randall and the first thing he said was, "Mr. Walton, I am glad that you are not dead!" I replied "I'll drink to that!" I policed up the parts and sent them to ARADMAC in Texas for analysis. That investigation determined that two bearings in the tail rotor control system had been improperly installed and had welded themselves together causing me to lose control. The accident investigation board decided that it was pilot error. The good news was that we got lower and wider revetments. One of the rotor blades is visible in the pictures on B Troop's web site under Circle Red X Ranch and the other landed 400 feet away from the wreck. I have half of its stabilizer bar buried in cement in my back yard and call it 'Walton's Vietnam Monument.'

On the 8th, a damaged B Troop LOH made a forced landing on a road near Kontum during a fire fight at night. Fred Wilson and CW3 Bill C. Walton flew a UH-1H with recovery specialist Lindsay Williams to pick up the downed aircraft.

CW3 Walton provides: Williams prepared the LOH for pickup, then Fred and I departed with it. Williams went to a second UH-1H to get a ride back to Enari. For some reason or other, the CE of this Huey, SP5 Jonathan White, who was the oldest man in the 7/17th Cav, went outside to check on something. The pilots (names unknown) departed without White. It took him two days to make his way back to Enari. I remember when he arrived back at Enari he threatened to do bodily harm to those two pilots. I think Bill Hahn knows the name one of the pilots.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12987 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took five hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cyclic, cargo section, fuselage, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated.

On the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00733 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack approach target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15004 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while with 90 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for C Troop UH-1C #66-00741 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while attack at an altitude of 1000 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Also on the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record with injuries for C Troop UH-1C #66-15039 flown by an un-named crew. One crew member was injured. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, during the attack approach to the target area, they took three hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the main rotor blade system, tail rotor system, bottom fuselage, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

Finally on the 9th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15034, location An Khe. The crew included the AC, CPT D.W. Halcomb, had minor injuries and the pilot was CW2 R.C. Wise. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was repaired by ARADMAC and by October 1968 was flying in Vietnam again with another unit. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary states that the aircraft engine failed in flight. Pilot did not detect failure in time to make a successful autorotation. Autorotation at low altitude and RPM. Aircraft hit the ground tail low.

On the 11th, the following article titled "Colorful Unit Blackens Foe's Eye" appeared in February 11th issue the Ivy Leaf with three photos by SP4 Alan Oliver. [The first photo shows the right side of an OH-6A with an observer and his M-60 looking down into the jungle. The caption reads: "Ruthless Riders scan the jungle below for an elusive enemy." The second photo was taken from behind an OH-6A firing a minigun. The caption reads: "OH6A rips off quick machine gun burst." The third photo shows the right side of a UH-1H hovering in tall grass as a soldier jumps off the skid. The caption reads: "Infantry "Blues" scramble from a UH1H during a combat assault in support of the Ivy Division north of Kontum."

Camp Enari – Troop A, 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry (Airmobile) is divided into three elements – Red, White, and Blue. Its mission makes the enemy black and blue. The unit has been doing just that ever since last October when the troop first started flying in support of Ivy Division between Vung Dat Am and Dak To. Each of A Troop's elements is known by the distinctive colored neck scarves its members wear. The scouts wear red scarves and fly the miniature light observation helicopters – the OH6As or Cayuses. The tiny helicopters carry two-men crews for their job of reconnaissance. Some of the speedy choppers also carry mini-guns to reconnoiter by fire. The second element of Troop A is the air fire-support platoon – the gunships. Their pilots and crews are known as "the Whites." They've got the job of bringing overwhelming firepower to bear after the scouts have located enemy positions. These flying arsenals pack mini-guns, M60s, rapid-fire grenade launchers, and rockets. The gunship element also participates in air support of "the Blues," or the infantry element. Ferried into combat by UH1Hs, the infantry makes combat assaults to secure downed aircraft and to destroy enemy units located by the scout ships. The combined elements of Troop A make a formidable team when used to locate and defeat the enemy. The speed, mobility and fire-power of the Ruthless Riders have accounted for a high kill ratio during the unit's few months in the Central Highlands.

On the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00647 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort other aircraft mission, during the attack approach target area, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left bottom cockpit, cargo section, engine comp, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also the 12th was the ending period for the Valorous Unit Award (VUA) for the Blues of A and B Troops plus all of D Troop. In 1970 via DA General Order #43 these three units were awarded the VUA the period 30 Jan to 12 Feb 1968.

On the 14th, **SP4 Wayman E. Paskins**, known as Spanky, of B Troop's Blues was killed in a tragic accident. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 29 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 11B20.

MAJ Dan Dantzler provides the following: I had been the Aerorifle Platoon Commander until I made major and transferred on 28 Jan 68 to A Troop to be the XO. CPT Barry Oxford was the non-rated platoon leader. The entire platoon was in a single file slowly making their way through heavy undergrowth, perhaps cutting a path with machetes. Without realizing it, the head of the column turned or looped back, until they were on the flank. The platoon sergeant, SFC Curtis Crites, was where he was supposed to be, between the second and third squads. He heard a movement off to his flank and fired a burst toward it with his M-16. He hit the RTO, SP4 Wayman Paskins, and he died instantly. SFC Crites was completely broken up about this incident and stayed back in the troop billet area until he could get his emotions under control. If I remember correctly, he never returned to combat duty, but became an assistant to the first sergeant. SFC Crites retired from the Army later and lived in Elizabethtown, KY until he passed away several years ago.

Editor's note: During late 2000 there was discussion about an SP4 Boulware being the person that was killed. Dan Dantzler was the first to put forward his name associated with this event. After further conversations with other former members of B Troop and with Barry Oxford, we learned the name of the actual person was Paskins. To the best of our knowledge, SP4 Boulware was not a member of the 7/17th Cav.

CPT Barry Oxford wrote: The last name of the soldier shot by SFC Crites was SP4 Paskins. I'm sorry I do not recall his first name at the moment but I'm sure about his last. The rest of the events are fairly accurate except I was not standing in the same line of fire. Paskins was to my left and rear. We all got used to recognizing the sounds of different weapons, so I knew that a M-16 had been fired. I did not know at first the SP4 Paskins had been shot because he fell backwards which was many times the easiest way to hit the dirt with a radio on your back. When I did realize he was hit we called for medevac but he was dead shortly after he went down. Also the turn that we made in our march was directed from the air and that information was passed down the platoon line. I do not know where the breakdown occurred, if it did, that prevented Curtis from knowing of the change in direction. SFC Crites did go back out once more some time later, but was more of a liability than a help; he did not return to the field again. I hope this helps rather than just confuses.

After finishing its mission on the 15th, A Troop was directed to help a LRRP in contact that had one prisoner. They inserted the Blues and with the screen of aircraft quickly brought the situation under control. The Lift section then extracted all the ground elements.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1H #66-16019 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, during the attack approach to the target area, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the right fuselage, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12993, location An Khe. The crew consisting of pilot WO1 R.M. Paulk and the CP WO1 J.F. Frechett both had minor injuries. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was turned in to the 79th TC CO but was removed from the Army's inventory in June or July 1968. Hence this aircraft was lost due to this crash. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary states that the aircraft was on a recon mission 15 feet above trees in low airspeed when aircraft began

to spin to the right. Pilot tried to stop the spin with left pedal but the aircraft did not respond. Pilot pulled collective at the same time and the aircraft settled through trees damaging the tail boom.

On the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15003 flown by an un-named crew, location Laos. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support command and control mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the canopy, tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07861, location the tri-border area northwest of Kontum. The crew were all killed. They were pilots **WO1 Stephen Cohan** and **WO1 Thomas Jon Moore** plus observer **SSG David Harry Lewis**. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 35 knots of airspeed, they had more than 99 holes from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The Wall database gives the following tour start dates and MOS information: Cohan, 17 Feb 1968, 062B; Lewis, 29 Oct 1967, 11B40; Moore, 29 Oct 1967, 062B. This would indicate the WO1 Moore was the more experienced pilot and that he and SSG Lewis were training WO1 Cohan. There is only one record for this aircraft in the Goldbook database. It simply states that it was with B Troop in Vietnam in February 1968 but contains no flight hours or other useful information. Additional Details: During a VHPA Reunion someone wrote on the KIA records of the three soldiers 'LOH dipped and blew up about 30 feet off the trees.' Anyone with additional information about this incident is requested to contact Mike Law.

WO1 Doug Sparks recalls: B Troop was staging at Polei Kleng on this day. Tom Moore and SSG Lewis had come over with us on the boat. I believe I was flying Chalk 2 when the Blues were inserted. I remember we had to repel at least some of the Blues. We returned to Polei Kleng and refueled. The Blues were not on the ground all that long when we returned to pick them up. I remember we had the three body bags plus some of the Blues. I will always remember those body bags. We were able to get everyone out in a single lift with all of our slicks. I received a DFC this day.

On the 20th, while on a troop-sized, aero-rifle mission, **SP4 James Larry West**, of D Troop was killed while on flank security. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 29 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 11B20.

Jim Crawley and Julius Clark recall: D Troop was on "on call status" at Enari when about noon helicopters lifted about 44 of us (most of 2nd and 3rd platoon) from camp into an area between Dak Pek and Dak To. LT Daniel was on that mission. As we formed up to leave the LZ, James West was on point. It was a thickly wooded area. James had a machete and was cutting brush. We were moving as a column with flankers out on both sides. About an hour into the march, James was about to be relieved. We received a few rounds of small arms fire and then the firing ended. Everyone was down and after while this VC ran down the trail ahead of us. We fired at him. They called a DUSTOFF and we made a poncho to carry James to a clearing about 100 yards away. He had taken one round in the chest. We all knew it was very serious. He didn't say much to us but said he felt "really warm", then closed his eyes. It took a long time for the chopper to get in and we were all upset. This was the only time we would take someone out in a basket. Some of the guys in D Troop have photos of someone going out in a basket - that had to be this mission because it was the only time D Troop experienced that during the first year in Vietnam. Windal Cartwright was wounded at the same time. He was hit in the arm. Eugene Wright, the medic, worked on him. Windal was evacuated with James. After the medevac was complete we continued our mission. We moved down the hill from where the shooting happened and found the dead VC we'd shot at on the trail. We continued the screen the rest of that day and were extracted that night back to Enari. I remember we

were all very solemn when we returned to base that night. There were no more jokes about being in Vietnam - we knew things were serious. Many of us remembered the tapes James and his girl used to send back and forth. We talked about James that evening and at the Reunions we still talk about him. He was a good man.

After reading the paragraph above CPT Tony Hoyer, Troop D Commander from Nov 1967 to Oct 1968, provided: As far as I recollect you have the correct James L. West. The comments about being southwest of Dak To are also correct. This was an extremely mountainous area with very tall trees. However, due to past fighting in those areas, the terrain was pocked with open bombed-out areas and many new and deep trails. SP4 West was on right flank security maybe as far as 35-50 meters from the main column as we proceeded in a westerly direction. After the enemy encounter, it was quickly realized that these two NVA soldiers were working as a recon element to provide advance warning to the NVA main force. As Troop Commander, it was always my concern of getting into a horseshoe ambush especially in the dreaded, unforgiving terrain around Dak To. Normally, the side holding the high ground had the advantage. The day James was killed, D Troop kept moving uphill. Not a good scenario and we were moving fairly fast to react to current intelligence reports. We had a small number of troops on the ground (small compared with a potential NVA battalion holding the hills in bunkered positions) with very few LZs in the immediate area that could be used to reinforce. As I remember, the single-ship LZ used for our insertion was the only LZ/PZ within miles and there was concern that the Troop could be cut off by a superior enemy force in using it for extraction.

RESOLVE THIS CPT Tony Hoyer, the D Troop Commander, recalls:

We were inserted in an extremely mountainous area with very tall trees southwest of Dak To. Due to past fighting in those areas, the terrain was pocked with open bombed-out areas and many new and deep trails. SP4 West was on right flank security maybe as far as 35-50 meters from the main column as we proceeded in a westerly direction. After the enemy encounter, we figured that this enemy soldier (believe he was NVA) was part of a recon element to give advance warning to the enemy's main force. It was always my concern of getting into a horse-shoe ambush especially in the dreaded, unforgiving terrain around Dak To. Normally, the side holding the high ground had the advantage. On this day, D Troop kept moving uphill, not a good scenario. We were also moving fairly fast to react to current intelligence reports. We had a small number of troops on the ground with very few LZs in the immediate area that could be used to reinforce. As I remember, the one we used for insertion was the only one within miles and there was concern that we could be cut-off by a superior enemy force in using it for extraction. The reason for the Medivac's delay was that he could not find an LZ close enough to us to land. Furthermore, the tall trees, mountainous winds, and lack of LZ caused him to pick a small bombed and cratered hill as a PZ. All these factors resulted in the Medivac using the jungle penetrator basket lift to extract James. The mission was terminated after the medical evacuation due to on-coming darkness and other factors. While still flying home after the extraction was completed, I had the misfortune of being told by the Lift Pilot that he had been directed to take ship directly to Dak To while the rest of the lift went to Camp Enari. I did not like the sound of that message. Then, I was told that I needed to make an identification. Only then did I realize that James West had died. I deeply regretted that, as all commanders did when losing a soldier on the battlefield. Upon landing at Dak To, I ordered one of my men with me on the lift ship to accompany me to the mortuary area (connex in a bunker) just off the Dak To runway. (I remember vividly that the Trooper really did not want to accompany me but two witnesses were required.) Once there, I had the sad duty of identifying Sp4 James L. West and signing the witness certificate - that was the first time I had to do that.

As I recall, I had a formation at Camp Enari the next morning to tell what I could on the death to all my Troopers and that according to regulations I would be writing a personal letter to the parents to

explain the circumstances of James death. After consulting with his platoon leader and First Sergeant Swann, it was decided to promote James L. West posthumously to Sergeant and to recommend several awards for him. (I can't recall the exact ones.)

Hopes this helps to restore the history. I am not sure if we recovered any NVA packs that day but I thought we did have one for MSG Harder, S-2 Intelligence NCO. *****

After the firefight, the problem was finding a suitable PZ close enough to us for the medevac (DUSTOFF 30) to land. Furthermore, the tall trees, mountainous winds, and lack of LZ caused him to pick a small bomb-cratered hill for pickup. I recall they used the jungle penetrator basket lift to extract James and have seen pictures of the basket going up. The mission was terminated after the medical evacuation due to on-coming darkness and other factors. After extraction of all ground elements, I had the misfortune of being told by the Lift pilot that he had been told on the radio that his Blue lift ship was to proceed to Dak To while the rest of the flight went to Camp Enari. I did not like the sound of that message. Then, I was told I needed to make an identification. Only then did I realize that James West had died. I deeply regretted that as all commanders did in losing a soldier on the battlefield. Upon landing at Dak To, I ordered one of my men with me on the lift ship to accompany me to the mortuary area, really a conex in a bunker, just off the Dak To runway. I remember vividly that the Trooper really did not want to accompany me but two witnesses were required. Once there, I had the sad duty of identifying SP4 James L. West and signing the witness certificate. That was the first time I had to do that. As I recall, I had a formation at Camp Enari the next morning to tell what I could on the death to all my Troopers and that according to regulations I would be writing a personal letter to the parents to explain the circumstances of James death. After consulting with his platoon leader and First Sergeant Swann, it was decided to promote James L. West posthumously to Sergeant and to recommend several awards for him. I can't recall the exact ones. Hopes this helps to record the history. I am not sure if we recovered any NVA packs that day but I thought we did have one for MSG Harder, S-2 Intelligence NCO. Looking back at D Troop, the death of SP4 James L. West was, and remains, a significant event in the unit's history. When many people talk about D Troop in that time frame, they use terms like 'before West was killed' or 'after West was killed.' Clearly he has not been forgotten in any way.

Also on the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop Aircraft UH-1C #66-00731 flown by an un-named crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cargo section, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater.

About the third week in February, SP4 Jim Dilard of D/1/22nd Infantry Battalion recalls: We were still finishing up the Battle of Kontum. At this time we were about 1 KM north of the rifle range on the outside of Kontum, west of the road going to Dak To. We had taken Hill 684 (AR801935) and our next objective was the high ground at AR802942 and then Hill 721 (AR8194). The day prior to this, we had walked into an ambush moving toward the high ground. We had pulled back to Hill 684, redug our positions, and spent the night there. On the next day I was walking point as we started out again for the high ground at AR802942. It was afternoon when we started up a slope and the vegetation got really heavy. At this time a LOH overflew us and started working the area we planned to move through. I felt pretty good when I saw that. Just a while later an AK opened fire on the LOH and they responded with an M-60. I remember I was very nervous watching the NVA and the LOH exchanging fire. I'd guess that lasted at least 15 minutes. Finally, the LOH stopped firing and we moved out in a slightly different direction. I guess the LOH had radioed something to our leaders because we went to check out some (gratoat??) areas in this valley. I always believe that that LOH saved my life by taking that fire. I have a special place in my heart for the LOH.

On the 21st, A Troop's Scouts found a network of caves with clothing laying outside. The Blues were inserted and made contact. After a few airstrikes, the enemy broke contact and the Blues found two dead NVA and captured two weapons and twelve packs.

On the 22nd, the Squadron's combined Infantry force was inserted to sweep a bunker complex. They killed one NVA and captured an impressive amount of ammunition including land mines, B-40 rockets, mortar round, 75mm recoilless round, etc. The Scouts that screened for the Infantry killed two NVA attempting to get away.

The 22nd was the beginning period for the RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm Award for the Squadron. In 1969 via DA General Order #21 the Squadron was awarded the RVN Gallantry Cross for the period 22 Feb 1968 to 17 May 1968.

On the 23rd, D Troop was inserted to reinforce A Troop's Blues and they made contact with an estimated NVA Battalion. Six airstrikes were employed and the Guns expended several times that day. By the time the Lift inserted 4th Division units as further reinforcement, the Squadron elements had confirmed 23 NVA killed, had captured 7 more with 31 packs plus some weapons and ammunition. The 7/17 Infantry remained on the ground that night.

On the 24th, an A Troop Scout was forced down, crashed and burned while covering for the Infantry. **SP5 Joseph McCloyn**, flying as gunner on the LOH, was killed at map coordinates ZA191759. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 18 Dec 1967 and his MOS as 67N20. A Troop's Blues and D Troop started moving toward the crash site and B Troop's Blues were inserted to reinforce them. En route the Infantry made contact, returned fire, and killed 4 NVA and destroyed a machine gun. Contact was soon broken and the Infantry extracted. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for OH-6A #66-07868 for this date that states one person was killed in the incident. However, the VHPA has yet to learn the unit that owned this aircraft and the Goldbook database has no records for OH-6A #66-07868. Anyone with information about the SP5 McCloyn's LOH is requested to contact Mike Law.

On the 25th, the following article titled "Peace Comes Back To War-Torn City of Kontum..." appeared in the Ivy Leaf provided by SGT Terry Lappe. This was a multi-page article with photos credited to SP4 John Stidham that starts on page 1 and continues on page 8. What follows is an edited extract from this article:

Before dawn the first U.S. Army unit felt the brunt of the attack. A Troop of the 4th Division's 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, which normally provides highway security for the area, was hit. By the beginning of the second week of fighting, the city of Kontum was free of enemy and the 4th Division task force, continuing its pursuit, had made contact with a sizeable and well-dug-in enemy force. Artillery, air strikes and infantry assaults were being used to systematically root him from these positions. The Kontum battle is not yet over; however, it has already been a stinging defeat for the 24th NVA Regiment, local VC units and their supporting infrastructure. The enemy's objectives of overrunning the city, destroying the local government and seizing control were clearly thwarted. Additionally, confirmed boy count shows more than 980 enemy killed in and around Kontum. Hundreds of weapons and other equipment have been captured and 16 prisoners have been taken. ARVN and other Vietnamese forces lost 41, 24 4th Division soldiers were slain and to U.S. advisors lost their lives. More than 2,000 people were made homeless, and 23 civilians were killed in the fighting. The fighting in Kontum and the rest of the 4th Division's portion of the Central Highlands has been summed up by MG Stone, who said: "The impact on the communists is clear. They have suffered a major political and military defeat at Kontum. Likewise, the enemy has had heavy losses at Dak To and Pleiku in recent weeks. The Free World Forces are clearly winning in this part of the Highlands. Our ARVN comrades have fought with valor and spirit and contributed greatly to the enemy's defeat."

On the 26th, B Troop did a pre-planned insertion of the Blues who made light contact and killed 5 NVA. The Blues were extracted and the search continued. The Scouts discovered an area with 8 hooches plus some tunnels and laundry drying. The Blues went in again and found a hospital complex with 2 operating tables, some medical supplies and documents plus 1 dead and 1 wounded NVA. The wounded man said the complex was a 35 man hospital and thought there were 10 more wounded in the area. The Scouts found and killed one of the guards. Everything was lifted out and the complex destroyed.

On the 27th, the Reassignment Losses section B Troop's Morning Report dated 12 March states that SP4 Bobby J. Jesse was attached to the 71st Evac effective 1045 hours.

On the 29th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00725 at grid coordinates ZA062365 in Kontum Province. The crew included CPT Phillip A. Saunders as AC, CPT Richard A. Bell as CP, **SP4 Ronnie Dean Schultz** who was killed as CE, and PFC Michael F. Peters as gunner. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while withdrawing from the target area, they took one hit from an unknown source which hit the tail rotor system, they crashed and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. The Wall database gives Schultz's tour start date as 29 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 67N20.

Mike Peters in May 1988 from Tallahassee, FL wrote: Ron was the CE on Major Inglett's favorite C&C bird, a UH-1C #66- 0725. I transferred from a MACV assignment to A Troop on 13 Feb and was the gunner on this aircraft. On 29 February, the Troop's AO was west of Polei Kleng and the day had been rather uneventful up to this point. I cannot remember the pilot's name. I believe he was a Warrant Officer. Captain Phillip A. Saunders was the AC. He also commanded the Troop's operations for the day. We were returning solo to Kontum to refuel when we heard a loud bang. Ron looked out and said that we had lost the tail rotor. CPT Saunders put out a MAYDAY and not long after that the aircraft started to fish tail. I can only guess that it got increasingly difficult to control. I am certain that Ron anticipated we would have problems when we landed so he said we would take the M-60s down and close the doors. We were still wearing our Monkey harnesses which basically tethered us to the helicopter but allowed us freedom of movement both inside and outside of the ship. We crashed into a heavily forested area and the aircraft came to rest on its left side, Ron's side. Sadly, the transmission broke loose and crushed Ron. It also pinned him in the wreckage. The rest of the crew got out of the aircraft quickly. I remember either someone saying or maybe it was just me thinking that we needed to get away from the ship because of the possibility of fire. After we stood there for a few second and realized the aircraft was not on fire and didn't seem like it was going to explode, CPT Saunders told me to take my machine-gun and set up a defensive position a few feet from the helicopter. Using the survival radio, he initially contacted a fixed wing aircraft and then helicopters from our Troop. The trees in the area were about four to six inches in diameter and very tall. CPT Saunders climbed a tree with what he thought was a smoke grenade and his radio. When it came time to "pop smoke," he suddenly learned that it was an incendiary grenade. He wasn't injured and our aircraft were able to locate us on the ground, so it all worked out fine. When he got down out of the tree, I remember him saying something like: "Why didn't you tell me that wasn't a smoke grenade?" I also remember thinking - "Well, Gee, I thought Captains could read!" While the canisters of the smoke and incendiary grenades were similar, they were clearly marked with black lettering. Pretty soon a medevac helicopter arrived with a hoist. I was rescued first and then the pilots. About that time, the Troop inserted the Blues. When they got to the aircraft, they were able to provide proper security for the team that got Ron's body out of the wreckage and rigged the aircraft for extraction. They also found my camera and Ron's. Before leaving, they took several pictures with both cameras. Later I got my camera back and MAJ Inglett gave me the film from Ron's camera. I also have pictures of the wreck when it was returned to our maintenance area

at Camp Enari. It was a total loss. I continued flying with A Troop as a gunner until my enlistment was up in May 1969. I really liked being in the Cav and flying in Vietnam but I still think about Ron. If the aircraft ends up on the right side, maybe I'd be dead and Ron would be writing this story. This has always given me a different outlook on life.

WO1 Ron Schmaling recalls: I was the CP/gunner on the UH-1C gunship that Ronnie Schultz originally crewed. He was a good friend. Both of us were upset when he was reassigned from my ship in Vietnam. Especially because he was assigned to CPT Saunders' ship. Saunders made his crew wear that stupid monkey strap arrangement and it won't keep anybody inside the aircraft. The morning of the day he was killed, Ronnie had come to me and told me that Saunders was going to take the ship out after multiple chip warning lights on the tail rotor had been noted. Ronnie had found metal chips in the gearbox and Saunders would not down the aircraft to replace the tail rotor. I told CPTs Saunders and Bell not to take the ship but they ignored me. Bell's nick name was "ding dong." I was flying in the second ship during the mission when they went down and saw the whole thing. There was NO ENEMY GUN FIRE. I was very upset with the 'official report' that enemy fire had hit the tail rotor and spoke out to anyone that would listen to me. Eventually Saunders tried to have me court marshaled because I wouldn't shut up; so I had to leave the unit to save my skin. I've carried a great deal of bitterness toward Saunders and Bell for Ronnie's death and their subsequent attempts to court marshal me. The bitterness is gone and the memories remain of a good crew chief, friend and soldier at arms. To this day Ronnie has not received the credit due him as one of the best crew chiefs I knew. May God bless his memory.

The following accounts are inserted here as something of a month end summary.

CPT Randy Clapp recalls: My first Vietnam tour was in 1963-64 with the 114th AVN CO based in the Delta at Vinh Long. I left McCord AFB on 31 Jan 1968. I arrived at the 7/17th Cav at Camp Enari on 3 Feb and Tet was still in full swing. I was a senior Captain at that time and had known LTC Pete Johnson. and MAJ Al Iller for several years. I was fresh out of the AH-1G transition course – my class was the 2nd to graduate students from Hunter. I also had lots of experience with UH-1C gunships. Armor Branch had told me that I didn't need any more command time so I was really hoping to get a senior staff position. I was somewhat surprised that the 7/17th Cav didn't have Cobras and weren't programmed to receive them for several more months. I was assigned to B Troop. I believe I was in Operations. I remember working with MAJ Jack Earwood for about two weeks and after that time he left for C Troop. I see in the Leadership Roster that Jack was the Gun Platoon leader; so maybe I was in that platoon as well. I just remember everyone way flying lots of hours because the entire squadron was fully committed to the Tet of '68 battles around Kontum. When things calmed down near the end of February, I remember working with some LRRPs over the fence in Cambodia and Laos. We worked extensively for the 4th Inf Division's Brigade based at Dak To. I remember we lost a LOH and the crew was killed during this period. I departed B Troop on 15 March to join A/7/1st Cav at Dion because they were getting Cobras and didn't have nearly enough Cobra pilots. Even though I only spent about 45 days with B Troop; I must say they were just a great bunch of people to be with. I stayed in the Army for a full career. Yet when I look back on all the units I served with and all the people I knew; those 45 days with B Troop are very special to me.

SP5 Bob Hamilton recalls: I served as helicopter crew chief in HHT during 1967 and 1968. My nick name was 'Turkey Creek.'

MAJ Bob Inglett recalls: The next few weeks after Tet were busy times for A and B Troops as we continued support the 4th Infantry Division's operations. We started receiving missions as far away as Ban Me Thuot to the south and Dak Seang to the north. Naturally we continued to work the Polei Kleng, Kontum, Dak To areas. We didn't physically move the Troop to those locations. We continued flying from Enari every day. I remember operating around the large tea plantation near

Ban Me Thuot several times. Looking back now I believe this was the finest unit I ever served with in my entire Army career. I'm not saying that because I was the commander. I'm saying this because of the caliber of the people in A Troop and how hard and well they worked together. For example, we had this CPL running our motor pool. Prior to joining us at Ft. Knox, he owned and operated his own garage. The guy was just wonderful!

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The tactical situation had generally returned to "normal" and the Squadron continued to support the 4th Div's Operation MacArthur; specifically the 1st and 2nd Brigades, the 173rd Abn Brigade, and TF 1/12. During the month the Squadron would report 71 NVA killed and one captured.

[Editor's Note: During the first few months of 1968, the VHPA Helicopter database has several references to Headquarters Troop OH-6A aircraft by specific tail number. It is important for the reader to remember that the UNIT field in the VHPA's database holds a code denoting the last known owner of the aircraft. Since we have no knowledge of OH-6As being organic to HHT, we believe this aircraft was being flown by one of the ACTs. Anyone with specific knowledge (like a log book entry or maintenance report) of the troop flying this aircraft on this day is encouraged to notify Mike Law.]

CPT Bob Young provides the following description of flying in the Squadron's C&C ship: TET of February 1968 was a month old and it was a bright and beautiful day in March. Today "Ruthless 6" will join A Troop's reconnaissance near Kontum. The mission is to gain contact with the enemy and capture prisoners. The squadron commander, LTC 'Pete' Johnson, loaded up his crew, copilot CPT Bob Young, crew chief SP5 Mike Lill and door gunner Mike Manger for today's mission. Old 66-038 was his command ship but it didn't have a strong engine. We never hovered at the required 6600 RPM. During the roll to takeoff we always got the low RPM warning prior to effective lift. Once in a dust out, the Colonel bleed it down to 5800 just before we made transition. He had the "touch." The C model doesn't fly well in the thinner air of the Pleiku highlands. While A Troop was moving into their AO, we conducted a recon mission ourselves. It was flown low and slow on the treetops and down the Kontum River. The boss moves out towards the trails that lead in from the North. He wants to see what is moving into or out of the area. He doesn't want an enemy surprise. We top a small ridge and there on the trail below us is a NVA courier team moving toward the battle. Everybody lets lose and we win. The bullet tracers start a grass fire but this does not prove to be significant and it was easy to see the dead NVA on the ground. The boss has A Troop put their rifle platoon into the site to pick up the courier material of maps, orders and weapons. An officer and 5 or 6 guards and guides were in the group. A good find of enemy troop information, order of battle and future plans. It is a good day for the US Cavalry. This paragraph was written by Bob Young in August 1999 as the narrative for his photo collection on the 7/17th website.

Also during this period the Squadron developed an anti-tank capability based on the SS-11 wire guided missile.

WO Dan Nichols provides the following: I believe there were only three SS-11 trained pilots assigned to the squadron during 1968. Let me tell you how this happened. WO John Newbold and I went to SS-11 training immediately after we finished flight school in 67-9. Then we went to Vietnam; my in-country date was 21 Aug 1967. I was assigned to A/227th of the 1st Cav. They didn't have any SS-11s and I think the only unit that did was the ARA. As a result of the "tank threat" near Ben Het in ???, I suddenly get orders assigning me to the 7/17th Cav at Camp Enari. WO John Newbold and WO Charlie Seitz were the other SS- 11 qualified 1st Cav pilots sent to the 7/17th Cav. We weren't too impressed when we arrived because they called us "new guys." We had all been ACs back in our old units, so we didn't appreciate this "new guy" treatment at all. Anyway, the SS-11 weapons systems were in boxes in the maintenance area when we arrived. We worked with CW3 John Daum, a maintenance officer, to get these installed on three Charlie Models. Once

these birds were equipped with the SS-11s they were dedicated to SS-11 missions and no longer flew as traditional gunships. Within a few days we had the systems operational and we flew enough training missions and fired the simulator missiles to become proficient again. The NVA didn't employ anymore tanks for some time. However, we were on alert status for what seemed like "forever." Most mornings we'd launch at least one ship to Kontum, sometimes Dak To or Dak Seang, and sit there on "stand by" for the rest of the day. Very exciting! I was assigned to B Troop, Newbold to A Troop, and Seitz to HHT. I believe Newbold was also flying for their Lift Platoon and was medevaced after being wounded. I don't remember even one attack mission. Finally, after a month of this waste of my time, I told them I wanted to fly guns. I was checked out in the H Model and made AC with both the Lift and the Guns. Near the end of my tour I was CPT Richard Bell's pilot. He was the Gun Platoon Leader. When B Troop moved to Phan Thiet, the SS-11 ships stayed at Enari. Soon after that the squadron got Cobras. I'm not certain how long they kept the SS-11 ships around, no more than a few months I'd guess. To my knowledge, CW3 John Daum fired the only real missile during the system's time in the squadron. He said if he was going to go through all that work to get those systems working that he was going to fire one and he did. I DEROSed on 19 Aug 68 from B Troop.

On the 4th, A Troop inserted its Blues and D Troop to clear a VC village and rest area. They destroyed 20 hooches and a quantity of food and live stock while capturing two VC (one proved to be a 1LT). As the scouts screened around the village, they received heavy AW fire. Two airstrikes were called in, resulting in three VC killed.

On the 7th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage with fatality record for C Troop OH-6A #66-07827 in Quang Nam Province. The crew included 1LT Fred Nicely as pilot and **PFC Ralph Edward Consavage** who was killed as observer. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance mission, they took hits from an unknown source which hit the cockpit and engine compartment, they terminated the mission, and returned to their base. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 15 Feb 1968 and his MOS as 67N20.

1LT Fred Nicely recalls: I have a vivid recollection of the events of this day. Our mission was an area recon of Antenna Valley in support of a Special Forces team that was 'watching' the area. We were flying in our normal one LOH and one gunship configuration on this mission. We were west of FB Ross and had just crossed a ridgeline getting ready to start our recon. Suddenly one round came through the Plexiglas in front of me completely unannounced. By that I mean that I didn't hear the shot fired or see a muzzle flash. I was showered with Plexiglas slivers, some even stuck in my face. Initially I thought the round hadn't hit anything. Then I looked at Ralph and saw that he had a bad head wound. I told the gunship what had happened and started back for FB Ross. I talked to the medical people on Ross and described his head wound to them. They told me to go directly to Hill 28. He was dead when the medics got to the LOH to get him out. I believe Ralph had only been in Vietnam a short time. I think he was on his sixth mission – in his second week of training to be an Observer. The primary mechanic flew as the gunner in the back. On this mission it was SP5 David Corsiden. I flew LOHs for C Troop and F Troop for 13 months, then extended to fly Snakes for a total of 18 months. One of the OH-6As I often flew ended up at Fort Eustis as a training aircraft. I believe it accumulated 268 holes over a six-month period. Once I remember it took 29 holes from a 30-round AK-47 clip! I received several Plexiglas cuts and a few close calls but was never seriously wounded.

SP5 Bob (Robert J.) Derr recalls: I worked mostly on Hueys C, D & H models. I transferred into the 7/17 from the 339th Trans Co in October of 67 at Pleiku, assigned to C Troop and deployed to Chu Lai in December. I also participated in a few AC recovery missions just before I rotated back to the world in late March 1968. I remember working with SP4 Terry Regnas, PVT Johnson, CWO Gill Snow and CPT Dick Peterson. On this day, I remember the OH-6A that took hits through the

bubble. The crewmember KIA was flying the right seat. He was only in country a short time. I recall this was on his first mission while assigned to the Blues. This incident is etched in my memory as I had the job of cleaning up the aircraft.

Also on the 7th, A Troop supported TF 1/12 in the Ban Me Thuot area. The Scouts found a small system of 20 bunkers containing some people. They used artillery to keep the enemy fixed while they inserted their Blues with D Troop. The Infantry captured four NVA. As a Scout team was returned to refuel, they spotted about ten NVA carrying stretchers along a trail. They were able to kill one and wound another before having to leave the area.

On the 8th, A Troop's AO was northwest of Kontum and B Troop supported the 173rd Abn near Kontum. At 0925 B Troop observed about 15 NVA and killed four. By 1100 the Blues were in and made contact with an estimated company. In the fight that followed, three Infantry were wounded (two evaded) but ten NVA were killed. Some weapons (including 18 122mm rockets), ammunition, and food were captured. Later in the afternoon, A Troop's Scouts killed one of a group of five to ten NVA taking evasive action. B Troop was told to extract their Blues and support A Troop. A and B Troop's Blues with D Troop were inserted, found a bunker complex, and made heavy contact with an estimated company. The firing was so intense that the medevac ship could not land. [Editor's Note: The Squadron OR-LL specifically states that both A and B Troop suffered one KIA each. However, after extensive document research and interviews with participants, we can find nothing to support a Bravo Troop KIA. Therefore mention of this second KIA as previously printed is now removed from this History.] **PFC John (Johnnie) D. Beaver** from A Troop's Blues was killed during this battle. With support from the Guns, the Infantry advanced through the bunker complex and killed 15 NVA. The Scouts killed another NVA while screening the flanks. The Infantry was extracted at 1745. The air units then directed airstrikes at the enemy positions until darkness and lack of fuel forced them to depart. The Wall database gives Beaver's tour start date as 20 Nov 1967 and his MOS as 11B10.

SP4 Dave Harris from A Troop recalls: // insert his comments //

SGT Tag // insert his comments //

The B Troop Morning Report dated 11 March reported the reassignment of SGT Welby C. Lapointe to the 71st Med Evac Hospital effective 1700 hours on 8 March. This entry does not provide his MOS.

PFC Johnnie Griffiths of B Troop's Blues recalls. I believe that I came in country around 15 February 1968. We landed in Cam Ranh Bay. We were there for three or four days. I had previous APC school training at Ft Knox, KY just prior to getting to Vietnam. My MOS was 11 Bravo. I was told I could possibly be with a mechanized unit. They said some of you guys are going to go to the 1/5th Mech and the rest of you guys are going to a place called Dragon Mountain which is Camp Enari. So when we get to Camp Enari I went out in a jeep with PFC Rich Hefferman. When I first saw Camp Enari I thought well this is really pretty awesome. We have barracks and there are lockers in these barracks. I said wow, this can't be that bad! So the first night there I lock my fatigues and stuff into the locker and put my boots down and about midnight I hear all this puff, puff, and everybody said were getting mortared, were getting mortared, and I'm as green as grass so me and Rich and everybody. I'm looking crazy. I can't get my footlocker; I can't get my wall locker open. My pants were in there. I panicked. I ran out there just in my skivvies and hit the bunker and we were all out there just as scared as you could be. Of course needless to say I don't think I ever, ever put anything in a locker the rest of the time I was in Vietnam. Boots at the ready, my pants - most of the time I slept with my clothes on. That was the first night of real reality. We laughed at it. It was just kind of funny. Nobody got hurt. But it was the first experience of welcome to Vietnam. The first night we got there it was late. The next day they took us and introduced us to PSG Crites. He was our platoon sergeant. There were four or five of us new guys and he sat us all down in a room and

he looked at us very solemnly and he said I'm going to tell you something guys. Communication here is of the most importance. When we go out I don't care where you are you better pass communications down the line. He said I killed a guy and I want you guys to know that it was an accident but the guy was out there where he shouldn't have been with no communication and I will do it again if that happens. He got at my attention like you would not believe!! I said was! I'm going to talk my ass off here if I have to – no miss-communication on my part. We get issued our weapons and everything. The first week I think that was really nice was they took us around Camp Enari. We would go out for just a little overnighner. They took a bunch of us out just outside up in the hills there where it was pretty safe. Couple of sergeants who been there in country. SSG Roosevelt Dubose, SGT Richard Tartaglia some of these guys. They kind of took us out there and kind of broke us in real slow. We stayed all night, we set up the perimeter, did our Claymores. We had our guard duty and our watch. It was really a nice comfortable beginning. It made us feel kind of comfortable. They didn't scare the stuff out of us the first day we were there other than the mortar thing which they had no control over. I'll always remember that. Now I actually want to believe that some of the new guys went to A Troop or even D Troop because I know some of the guys that left. We didn't see them anymore. So I know some of them did get split up there. This was sort of Squadron level in-country training for just 11 Bravo. For about a week everything went kind of smooth and easy. And then probably the early part of March was the first real mission that I went out. I'll kind of give my scenario of how it happened. We are at a staging area far from Camp Enari. They called us and they said we have movement out there. We're going to bring the Blues in. This is my first mission okay. We get inserted and SGT Monserrett Aviles is on point. PSG Crites is on the ground with us. We walk across this little stream in kind of an opening area and then head into some trees. They put me second to the point, SGT Aviles, my first day out! I'm scared speechless! We were going through the trees. SGT Aviles kept telling me if you see anything let me know, let me know. He just kept telling me - keep your eyes open, look. This guy was sharp. Soon after that he nailed this VC right in front of us. All of a sudden pow pow pow. We start taking fire. Everybody hits the ground. We started getting more fire again. I'm right down on the ground. There was this VC with his brains blown out and here I am - reality is just really setting in! A little bit longer we said we need to backup – things are getting pretty intense. So we pull back across this little river into an opening. They called in an air strike. They dropped in 250 pounders and I thought Wow. I remember looking at the little PFC stripe on my fatigues. I looked at that and said this ain't nothing - really I did. I was in a war! We were about 50 to 100 meters from these 250 pounders and I said thank God we were going back to base now right. No, as soon as they finished the bombs - okay guys we're going back in for assessments. We went right back in! It was as if the bombs didn't faze them! We had one guy killed, four guys wounded. I helped carry one of the wounded guys out. What happened next is something I'll never forget because I had an M16. I'm carrying my 16. We are carrying him in his poncho back across this field. He is screaming in pain. My 16 drops and hits him on the head. And I'm saying oh my God, I'm sorry dude, I'm sorry. There was nothing I could do. He was already in pain and it slipped off my arm and it hit him in the head with my 16. We got him back and he is lifted out. That was my first day out. I believe A Troop was there. And I believe the wounded were from A Troop not Bravo. I believe the man who died was from A Troop honestly because we did not know him. As I'm helping carry the wounded guy out, we saw the guy that was dead there already. Your first day out you are not going to forget that! After that we extracted, went back to Enari, and were debriefed on what was going on. The debriefing was basically just checking guys and a lot of talk. SP4 Darrell Vance, a machine gunner, sort of took me under his wing and said Johnny, dude, you got your CIB your first day out! I said Yeah I guess. And he said good job, good job. And he told me how well we had done. He was a good kid. And we buddied together until after I got wounded and I heard two or

three days later he was killed. [Editor's Note: Darrel was wounded a few days later but he actually died from that injuries several weeks after being wounded.] So my first mission is around the 8th or 9th of March. That's when things really started getting hot. From then on we were in stuff every day. There was something always going on. LOHs were going down. They were taking us all over the place.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12984 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 185 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the forward main rotor system and cargo section, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated. Additional Details: The Helicopter database shows this was a Headquarters Troop OH-6As but the US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 07/1967, arrived in Vietnam in 01/1968 with 39 hours, flew 7 hours with B Troop in Feb and 61 hours with HHT in Mar. It is safe to assume that this aircraft was still with B Troop when it received the battle damage on this date. The Goldbook indicates the aircraft was repaired in CONUS and returned to fly in Vietnam again in Sep 1968.

Also on the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07809 flown by CW2 W.L. Wilson and Crew Chief PFC H. Sparks. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 10/1967, flew with A Troop in Vietnam 67 hours in Nov 1967, logged no time in Dec or Jan and 1 hour in Feb. The Goldbook's last record for this LOH show zero hours in March for a total of 68 hours on the airframe. The Helicopter database has a loss record for this helicopter dated 14 May 1968 at grid AR866348 but offers no details for the period between this accident on 8 March and 14 May. The decoded details of the Helicopter database accident record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

The aircraft was on a test flight. While in flight, the aircraft vibrated. An autorotation was made. Pitch was applied at the termination of the autorotation. The aircraft started to spin and struck the ground. The tail rotor drive shaft sheared.

PFC Howard Sparks recalls: I arrived in Vietnam in early Feb 1968 and by the end of that month I was in A Troop. I spent a lot of time more or less training on the flight line with some of the guys who had been there a while. I remember SP4 Louie Vega. My platoon sergeant was SSG Brightman. They had a helicopter there that hadn't flown but a couple of hours and they had some vibration problems with it. That was my first job – to get that helicopter flying. It was a brand new helicopter. So I went and check it out from one end to the other. I couldn't find anything wrong with it, period. So I told the maintenance officer that I couldn't find anything wrong with it except the tail rotor drive shaft didn't have weight on it for balance purposes. I said that I don't know for certain but maybe it didn't need any weights. Well he told me to put a new tail rotor drive shaft in that helicopter. So I did that. The Tech Inspector came and inspected it. I can't remember his name. He was a SP6. He had been there quite a while and he was very good. It was a difficult thing to do the safety wiring on the tail rotor area, so he and I worked on that and finally got it right. Then we called the test pilot out. He was CWO Wilson from Georgia. Everyone called him "Wild Willie." He was really an A-1 LOH pilot. He came out and he knew that I'd only been there a short time. So we got into the helicopter. He was going to show me how he flew it and scare me half to death. It wasn't my first flight in a helicopter but it was one of my first flights in country. We were about 5 or 10 miles outside of Camp Enari. He got to playing around – dive bombing, going straight up as far as he could go until it stalled, then fall to recover. He was really putting that helicopter through its paces. There were some Montagnards in a rice paddy. There were also some wild ponies running around in the area. Mr. Wilson thought it would be funny to play with them. He got behind those ponies and they went flying toward that rice paddy. All the Montagnards just got up and left. Well

he came back around for another dive bomb of them and for some reason or other he just didn't pull out of it. We hit the ground and the skids bent into a U shape. The tail rotor drive shaft flew, I'd guess, at least 50 feet. There were just the two of us in the LOH, both in the front. Here he'd made these Montagnards mad and I don't have a gun or nothing. I think all we had was a smoke grenade. I was scared to death that these Montagnards were going to come over and cut our throats. I know I would have done that if I were them. Finally he got a hold of one of the A Troop helicopters flying overhead. They gave me a rifle. Then Mr. Wilson said, "Well the way I see what happened is that we were flying alone, lost the tail rotor, and had to crash land." I just looked at him because I was still worried about getting killed. Now I'd work with him for a long time after that and he was the best test pilot there ever was, but that day was not one of his better days. For some reason or other, he just didn't pull up fast enough. If he hadn't pulled up when he did, we'd have both been killed. I stayed with the wreck about an hour before a maintenance team came out and we slung what was left back to Enari. A Huey arrived. I had to take the rotor blades off, then they picked it up and took it back. It only takes about 15 minutes at the most to remove the blades. There was a pin in a clamp that you removed. The LOH's rotor blades don't weigh much at all. There is a big nut up on top of the mast with a hole in it. We just put a hook through that hole and attached that to the cargo hook on the Huey. So there wasn't really any webbing. It was no problem at all. Just a strap with a hook on one end and a loop on the other end. We get back to camp and remember I'm new there – I don't know too many people. We had to go to the Flight Surgeon to make a report out. After that I went back to my barracks. About an hour later they came to get me to come to the company street. They have everyone out there – the whole Troop. I can't remember his name but I believe he was a Major. He had me and Mr. Wilson out there in front of the whole Troop. He called us liars. He said there was just no way anyone was going to go into the Flight Surgeon's office and both people write the same report unless it was made up before hand. He wanted to hang Mr. Wilson for that helicopter. It was a brand new helicopter. The LOH sat in front of maintenance for some time. I know that every time that Major saw it, he was spitting fire! I remember Mr. Wilson became a CW4 which is like God or something. Well, he took good care of me maintenance wise after that! The other idea that comes to mind about when I first got to Vietnam was the fact that the LOH was still a very new helicopter to lots of people. I remember getting into an argument with someone – maybe the platoon sergeant – about that helicopter with the vibration problem. They kept saying that they thought it was a hydraulics problem. Well the LOH only had a teaspoon full of hydraulics and that was for the collective; so that just couldn't have been the problem. Well, I'd just finished OH-6A school so I knew a few things but I didn't have a whole lot of experience. Most of the guys I worked with knew only what we'd learned on the job. So me trying to tell someone what I'd learned in school was almost like trying to tell him off. There were awkward moments. I remember my platoon sergeant saying stuff like, "Well I'd know as much as you and how to do those things if I'd been to school." My thoughts were – well he probably knows more than I do because of his experience, but he just doesn't know how to do it. I was happy with the schooling the Army gave me. I thought it was really neat. I'd gone to Huey school – something like 8 weeks, then 3 or 4 weeks of LOH school. Looking back I recall that it was a long time to be in school at Ft. Eustis, VA. It was all afternoon and night shift schooling. That was miserable but I liked everything that I learned.

On the 9th, the A Troop history states they had a LOH shot down. The Blues secured the crew and aircraft and everyone was successfully extracted. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07912 flown by an unnamed crew at ZA054993. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 40 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail section, they made a forced landing, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides no information about this aircraft.

PFC Howard Sparks recalls: After I crashed in 809, I was assigned to another new helicopter – the number that sticks in my mind is 929. We had such a turn over in crew chiefs and aircraft. Nothing stayed the same for too long. Sometimes you'd have ten aircraft assigned to you and sometimes none. Sometimes you'd have just one. Sometimes there were six or seven crew chiefs and sometimes just two. Well, back to 929 – my first new helicopter after the crash. You know they tell you the day before to get all our stuff together because you'll fly tomorrow in the AO. I do this but I'm kind of scared and kind of nervous. This was my first combat mission. So the next morning I get out there and complete the daily for this helicopter and I'm ready. Well here comes this guy – I can't remember his name but he was from New Jersey. It was the line chief – like the head crew chief for LOHs. He was a SP5. I didn't get to know him all that well. I think he'd come over with A Troop. He says, "We have a tradition that whenever a new helicopter flies, the line chief flies with it. So you'll just have to sit this one out." Well, he's my boss so I can't say anything. Anyway they leave and they'd been out about an hour when he gets shot through the shoulder. I think he also had some lung damage. The round went right through the transmission of the helicopter. He was evacuated to Japan. They brought the LOH back. Now it was almost an impossible job for us to replace the transmission. We didn't have the tools to do this in the field. So it was turned in. This SP5 returned to our Troop for a couple days just before he left for the States to ETS. I remember he kind of gave me a funny look. He definitely took one that might have had my name written on it. I never said much to him after that. I'd guess he was gone at least two or three months. So this was the second helicopter I'd got that I didn't get to fly. After that I'd have several helicopters and I don't remember their numbers. Like I said, sometimes I'd be assigned as the crew chief for four or five at one time. We flew just about every other day, sometimes every day. It all depended on how many people and helicopters you had.

PFC Johnnie Griffiths of B Troop's Blues recalls: A day or two prior to the 14th when I was wounded, I remember we'd found a weapons cache on a mission. Like I said before we were really busy let me tell you! I can't remember exactly where it was we went into. The LOHs had found movement out there and saw some cache hooches from the air. So in we went. We were walking in some heavily wooded area there and they passed the word back, kind of flank it here a little bit. So when we get in there we started receiving fire and everybody starts firing back. We take the area and find some bunkers. I want to say SGT Tartaglia after all is said and done he looked over into this bunker and he got shot through the shoulder. I can't remember exactly who it was. This VC was not dead. He was looked over the bunker assuming that everybody had been killed when this guy plugged him in the shoulder. Of course we all backed away and threw a grenade in there. That was the end of that. So that's another incident that we had there and there was quite a bit of weapons and cache there in that find. This man's wound was not a flesh wound. He was sent to Japan. [Editor's Note: The B Troop Morning Report dated 12 March reported the reassignment of SP4 Bobby J. Jones to the 71st Med Evac Hospital. A previous entry reported he arrived from A/1/8th Inf and his MOS was 11B20.] So in the space of just a few days I'd seen one of our guys killed and others wounded. I was beginning to think that I was bad luck and that's when SP4 Darrell Vance said Johnny don't worry about it. This is TET and stuff's happening! Just stay cool! But of course I remember thinking I don't want any of these guys getting hurt! These were intense times. I didn't know how I'm going to live through this day and I was pretty sure I wasn't going to get through the week!

On the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12988 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while leaving the target area, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the engine compartment, forward main rotor system, cargo section, and fuselage, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database suggests this was a B Troop LOH. See the next reference to this aircraft for more details.

Also on the 14th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07866 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 35 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cockpit, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated.

PFC Johnnie Griffiths of B Troop's Blues recalls: I got hit on 14 March so it was just a few days after my first mission in the field. The date should be on my Purple Heart orders. On the day I was wounded we were in Camp Enari when we got the word that there was a huge convoy out of Kontum that had gotten hit. The leadership decided to insert the Blues because there is activity up in the mountains there. They decided to put both A and B Troops' Blues. They told us it was going to be a hot LZ. The minute we get on the ground, we started getting heavy fire. It was so bad and so heavy with thick woods. We were pinned down there so we literally were low crawling up this mountain. As we were low crawling up this mountain all of a sudden I feel this thud. It felt like someone took a 1000 pound sledge hammer, hit me in the chest and it burned like fire. I laid my head down for a second. I looked over at my machine gunner and said I've been hit. His eyes told me he was in shock too. Obviously I didn't know until later on but an AK47 armor piercing round had gone through his smoke grenade. I was crawling with my M16. The round came through my right wrist and between the side opening of my flack vest into my chest and lodge over the heart. I laid there for just a few minutes because I'm in shock. I know I'm in shock. I had on my helmet. I believe God, my Father, watched over me and protected me. So I laid there for some minutes and didn't move but I knew I wasn't going to die. I had this feeling so I sat up and bigger than heck all that basic training stuff came back to me. OK, I grabbed my first aid packet and I thought that I might as well try to fix myself up here. At that point, they started firing at us again and I just flipped backwards on my back so I could get as low as I could. I laid there again for just a few minutes or whatever. I don't know the time span. I low crawled back down the hill and by then the doc medic came up and gave me a shot of morphine. I want to say Doc LeGar but he came later. I'm not for sure that that's who it is. I got a picture of him. I know who it is. Big guy, ugly, I'm sorry to say, homely, but a great medic. Good guy, kind of a nerd guy, nice kid. Wouldn't carry a weapon. They weren't allowed to but some of them carried them anyway. But our Doc didn't carry one. Anyway, he set me up and gave me a shot of morphine. They called in a Dustoff. I think it was probably about 30 minutes we had a medevac in there coming in hot. They got me in and five or six guys that had been wounded. They took us back to the 71st Evac. I'm laying out in the hallway there and they came out and said is this the sucking chest wound? I said no. They said good – well, you stay out here for awhile, we're busy. I said I'm fine. I'm staying alive. I got morphine. I feel good. No problems you know. But I looked at them and I said hey you take that bullet out of me I want to keep that bullet. Well I woke up probably that next morning or later that night or whatever, they taped it on my wrist. I still have it at home. So I'm there in the 71st Evac several days with an open chest of course. They don't close any of the wounds for fear of infection. They just stuffed them with gauze. MAJ McCracken came to see me. In fact when he came over there I want to say that told us that we got the Bronze Star for that battle. He told me about that then. He also told me that SP4 Darrell Vance had gotten hit and evaced. This was a few days after I was wounded. I'd guess I stayed in the 71st Evac several days and then was sent to the hospital at Cam Ranh. I didn't go to Japan.

On the 15th, SP4 Jim Hamilton flew his first flight in an A Troop LOH with 1LT Cully and SP4 Jim Ehrhardt. I came into country on 3 March with two MOSs: 67V20 and 67N20. During my first few weeks in A Troop I followed SP4 Ernie Lamb around so I could be his replacement. I'd get to know many of the old timers from the Ft Knox days before they DEROSed.

Also on the 15th, D Troop engaged a company-sized unit north of Pleiku. Contact was broken late in the day. A sweep of the battlefield the next day revealed three dead NVA, two AKs plus some ammunition, documents and about a ton of rice.

SP4 Bill Jarrell, with D Troop's 3rd Platoon, provides some details of this action. [It helps those of us who were not M-60 machine gunners understand what these soldiers lived with.] I'll begin by saying that I thought the name of this hill was 114, but now I'm not sure. My concentration was not on tactics or strategy. I was focus on the man on my right and left, and what was in front of me. We inserted in the usual manner, formed a line and moved out. We reached the base of the hill and started up. About 50-75 yards up we came across some bunkers and started receiving fire. It wasn't long before we were ordered to withdraw. That was the military term, but RUN was the order. I started sprinting down hill. Down is the optimum word here. We reached the place where our infantry squad was. In front of that squad was a berm. The other guys made a slight hop and slide behind the berm. Not me! Forgetting that I was carrying a 29-lb. M60 plus my gear and was moving as fast as I could, the berm launched me like Rocky the Flying Squirrel. Not taking into account wind velocity and direction, I landed on my back, bounce once, hit a tree and came to a complete stop. I was dazed and confused for a short while. Luckily I was able to join the party in a moment or two. In a less than perfect state I noticed we were "withdrawing" again. Still running down, but now aware I couldn't fly, I took a more deliberate path. I reach the base of the hill, and was out in a large field. I was order to turn and fire; by whom I don't know, I just heard the order. Being the gunner that I am and brimming with confidence, I dropped to the ground pointed my weapon toward the enemy and pulled the trigger. The sound that followed was not the preferred sound. Instead of Rat-Atat-tat, it was more of a CLUNK. Misfire. I recharged the weapon and it was followed by the same result. Being the fine soldier that I was, I checked the head spacing, it was OK. Remember now we were under fire. Firing Pin, I thought. I took the receiver off, got out my spare firing pin, put it in - CLUNK. I replace the bolt - CLUNK. I always figured Charlie got a big kick out this because I didn't get hit. He most likely was laughing too hard to aim properly. I looked and notice that there was a round in the chamber and one from the feed belt jam together. Not-Too_Good. I cleared the weapon pulled the trigger - CLUNK. At this point, we began withdrawing again. We call in air strikes and Armor showed up. Then we took the hill. The M60 never misfired again. Not one moments trouble for the rest of my tour. You figure?

On the 16th, A Troop worked southwest of Dak To for the next two days and killed two NVA. The Squadron OR-LL states that the rest of the month in the II Corps area was "one of the slowest periods encountered by the Squadron." The ACTs worked the area west of Kontum and around the Polei Kleng SF Camp but nothing serious was reported. While flying in an A Troop LOH near Ban Me Thuot, SP5 James R. Ehrhardt was wounded on the right side of his body and evaced to the States.

Also on the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for C Troop UH-1C #66-15067 flown by an unnamed crew who had 4 injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack, they took three hits from 12.7mm type SA/AW, they made a forced landing, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 03/1967, appears to have flown in Vietnam a total of 44 hours in the summer of 1967 before being assigned to Fort Knox in 08/1967 with 106 hours. It went to Vietnam with C Troop. It flew 88 hours in 02/1968 for a total of 439 hours on the airframe at that time.

WO1 Fred Breuche provides: I reported to Vietnam with several of my flight school classmates in early February 1968 when Tet of '68 was still in full force. I was initially assigned to A Troop with two of my classmates, WO1 Robert Bailey and WO1 Joseph Klesen, plus CW2 John Rawls. After less than 3-weeks in A Troop Klesen, Rawls and I were reassigned to C Troop and moved to Cu Lai. On 16 March I was shot down in a UH-1C, seriously injured and evaced to Camp Zama, Japan

for about one week and then to Walter Reed Hospital in Washington D.C. On one set of my evacuation orders I see a SP4 Larry Crites from C Troop but another set of orders lists him for a infantry company in the Americal Division, so I'm not all that certain he was in my aircraft. I received a DFC this day. I'd only been with C Troop about 2-weeks at this point. Here is how I remember that day. /Insert the rest of his material here./

Also on the 16th, via 7/17th Cav Special Order # 70, SP4s George Murphy and James McNabb were assigned to A Troop from HHT. George says we are also promoted to SGT E-5 at this time.

On the 17th, the Americal Daily News Sheets Vol. 1 No. 333 dated March 18 states that C Troop recorded two VC kills while flying in general support of the "Chargers" (Americal's 196th Infantry Brigade) yesterday.

Also on the 17th, the following article titled "Ivymen Clobber An Enemy Unit" appeared in March 17th issue the Ivy Leaf provided by Joe Caputo. This was a center-fold article which appeared with five photos (one a 119th AHC Huey) credited to SP4 John Stidham:

Ivymen Clobber An Enemy Unit – It all got started when scout helicopters from the 7/17th Cav on a routine patrol spotted a small force of VC, swooped in and killed an enemy soldier. Ground forces, an aero-rifle platoon and the cavalry's Troop D were subsequently lifted into the area about 10 miles southwest of Kontum. Troop D opened up on the unknown-size enemy force as helicopter gun ships sprayed the area. Air and ground forces killed two, wounded two more, and detained another pair. "They were so shook up from the miniguns that they were scattering, looking for their buddies," said CPT Anthony Hoyer (Haverstraw, NY). "They seemed lost." In a rock-shaded cave, near a churning stream, the detainees were searched, and first aid was given to the wounded. "Later we found more dead," said PFC Wayne King (Nicholasville, KY). "They were all over the place." Passing more bodies on the way up the grassless knoll, the Ruthless Riders detained three more wounded NVA soldiers. Fifteen brand-new packs, a large supply of unused blue sweaters and new helmets were taken. It looked as if a good day's work was over. Suddenly from the east, something moving, another NVA surrendering. Again 15 packs were found along with 10, 60-mm mortar rounds, rice and cooking pots. The wounded were grouped and dusted-off to the 71st Evacuation Hospital. Two LOHs carried off the cache and some captured documents. Another sweep turned up more enemy dead, apparently left behind as the remaining NVA force scurried away. Punji stakes crowded the path as Troop D moved northwest to reconnoiter some freshly made trails. Through the brush, the lead element spotted an enemy ambush strike. The Ruthless Riders hit the ground as the enemy opened up. Quick retaliation killed three more NVA and secured a B40 rocket launcher and two AK47 rifles. As dusk closed in, more enemy were seen in a well-fortified bunker position. Air strikes were called in against them. "It was like they were dropping Christmas presents in to us all," recalled SGT Terry Lappe (Omaha, NE). Two additional 4th Division companies were called in as reinforcements. Early the next day, an OH-6A scout helicopter was downed, smashing into the rock-like dirt directly in front of the enemy bunker complex. Linking up with the aero-rifle platoon, Troop D, pushing through rice paddies and up gentle slopes, swept to the east. Blasting away at the bunkers, all the helicopter crew was timely pulled out and quickly evacuated, the bunker machine gun was destroyed with grenades. After doing more than a usual reconnaissance job for two days, Troop D was extracted with an estimated 100 enemy dead from a force later believed to be more than 600, and was directly responsible for the capture of 12 land mines, 78 B40 rocket rounds, 42 82mm mortar rounds, 34 60mm mortar rounds, almost 100 75mm recoilless rifle rounds, 3,200 rounds of AK47 ammunition, seven boxes of hand grenades and one B40 rocket launcher.

On the 18th, the Americal Daily News Sheets Vol. 1 No. 334 dated March 19 states that a troop of the 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry was responsible for four of the Viet Cong killed as cavalrymen conducted a reconnaissance mission seven miles northwest of Tam Ky. C Troop, 7/17th Cavalry flying in support of the troop recorded VC kills.

Also on the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage records for two Headquarters Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews. Both were on recon missions. (1) #65-12984 The decoded details of the record state that at an altitude of 20 feet and 50 knots of airspeed, they took seven hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cockpit, cargo section, and vertical stabilizer, they continued flying and aborted the mission. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter as noted on March 8th above. The Goldbook shows this aircraft had been with B Troop and logged 61 hours in March for a total of 107 hours on the airframe. The March record states the aircraft belonged to Headquarters Troop and that it was turned in for CONUS repairs in March. It would return to Vietnam in 10/1968 but had no further service with the 7/17th Cav. (2) #66-07915 The decoded details of the record state that while at an altitude of 20 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the radio, armament, and skid, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Additional Details: While the Helicopter database indicates this aircraft was assigned to Headquarters Troop, the US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 01/1968, arrived in Vietnam in 02/1968 and flew 96 hours in March for the 7/17th Cav. The monthly records continue to show this aircraft with Headquarters Troop until 08/1968 when B Troop is shown as the owner having flown a total of 548 hours at that point. It seems more realistic to assume that this aircraft was a B Troop aircraft all along.

Concerning the events of this day, SFC Vernon Rose recalls: The A Troop Blues had been on the ground north of Dak To most of the day. We were out of ammo and water so we pulled back to a PZ. Some B Troop Hueys picked us up. I thought we were going back to get resupplied, but we learned that B Troop had a LOH down. My Blues just got in the Hueys and we were inserted at the bottom of a hill. We had 19 troops on the ground. LT Vasser was the Blue Platoon Leader. I don't know why but B Troop's Blue were still back at the staging area. There was a nice creek in this really beautiful valley, so we filled up our canteens. We worked up this valley and the LOH pilot came walking out of the trees. We got the log book and SSI and put him on a LOH. He wasn't wounded, just banged up a bit. The C&C told us to look around a little. I remember my point man stepped over a log and was hit by a shotgun. A few more guys behind him were also hit. A few minutes later I heard a pop sound but didn't think much about it. I noticed some blood on back of my RTO's helmet and mentioned to him that he had been hit. He put his hand back there, felt all this blood and flipped out. Then we discovered that he wasn't hit but I was. I noticed I was bleeding from my upper right leg. About this time all hell broke loose from the front where the LOH was and on our right side. The medic, SP4 Hurt, had been working on the point guys then he came over to me and started cutting off my fatigues. I could see blood pumping out of my leg but I was still standing up. I told the others that I was wounded. The medic put a dressing on me. About this time, an A Troop Huey came in. The area was very tight. There were too many wounded. They threw a few guys in the back and several other climbed on the skids. This ship couldn't take them all and just barely got out. The second ship came in quickly. This was part of the extraction of the Blues. I got on it with SSG Omni Harris and a few others. I was still bleeding badly so they flew me to the aid station at Dak To. I don't know where the first ship went. The aid station stopped my bleeding and removed a piece of grenade shrapnel. They showed it to me and asked if I wanted it. A little later a DUSTOFF ship moved me to the 71st Evac at Pleiku. That night they blew the end of the building and I was moved to Cam Ranh Bay and they blew the end of that building off too. I remember I didn't think I'd ever get out of Vietnam. I went to Japan, then Walter Reed for four months, and finally Fort Knox. I was eventually medically retired after being promoted to E-8. SP4 Hurt was a fine medic and I believe he received the SS for this day but to my knowledge no one was written up for any awards.

On the 19th, the Americal Daily News Sheets Vol. 1 No. 335 dated March 20 states that C Troop was responsible for one VC kill while flying in general support of ground units. The News Sheets states that Americal's 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry recorded five enemy kills in Operation Wheeler/Wallowa near Tam

Ky yesterday. A troop of the 1st Cavalry on a Search and destroy mission 12 miles northeast of Tam Ky killed one VC and C Troop, 7/17th Cavalry's gunships killed the other four while flying in close support of the troop.

The B Troop Morning Report dated 19 March reported the reassignment of SP4 Darrell Vernon Vance, a B Troop Blue, to the 71st Med Evac Hospital effective 1715 hours on 18 March. According to PFC Johnny Griffiths, Darrell was an M60 machine gunner. Anyone who knows the details of how he was wounded is encouraged to contact Mike Law. Darrell died from these injuries on 12 April 1968.

On the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has battle damage records for two Headquarters Troop OH-6As flown by unnamed crews on recon missions. The US Army Goldbook database suggests that both were assigned to A Troop LOH. (1) #66-07797 had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that while at an altitude of 10 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. (2) #66-07826 and the decoded details of the record state that while at an altitude of 30 feet, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

Also on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00728 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 15 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section and tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 25th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00649 flown by an unnamed crew who had one injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 70 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took six hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section and main rotor blade system, they continued flying and aborted the mission.

On the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident and loss with four injuries record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15033 flown by Aircraft Commander WO1 James G. Paul, WO1 J.R. Procter, Crew Chief SP5 D.K. Williams, and SP5 L.C. Whitfield. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 02/1967, appears to have flown in Vietnam a total of 46 hours in the summer of 1967 before being assigned to Fort Knox in 08/1967 with 113 hours. It went to Vietnam with B Troop. It flew 57 hours in March for a total of 419 hours on the airframe at that time. The decoded accident record details state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

Attempted to land on the edge of the runway on a dirt strip, went IFR in dust and lost RPM. The aircraft landed on the edge of a hole causing the nose to pitch down. The main rotor struck the ground. The pilot avoided other aircraft.

Also on the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for C Troop UH-1H #66-16025 flown by Aircraft Commander WO1 D.L. Morris and WO1 P.F. Rauber with one unnamed passenger. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the Accident Summary reads:

The engine failed. The aircraft glide was stretched to make an available clearing causing the aircraft to land hard. Engine failure was caused by bevel gear failure.

On the 29th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injuries record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07940 flown by CW2 D.A. Walker and Crew Chief PFC L.L. Vega who had minor injuries. The Accident Summary reads:

During flight the engine and rotor RPM increased. The pilot initiated emergency procedures. An autorotation was made to a field but upon flare, the pilot lost sight of the touch down area. The aircraft landed on a dirt mound. Cause was the fuel metering valve.

On the 31st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07940.

On the 31st, LTC Stephen Cameron assumes command of the 7/17th Cav replacing LTC Lawrence H. Johnson, Jr.

CPT Larry Kenyon recalls: As Pete was getting ready to turn over the Squadron, he called him into his office. He gave me a list of several general officers that he wanted to invite to his change of command ceremony. I was somewhat surprised to see General Westmoreland's name on this list. I started making the telephone calls. Many declined the invitation. A full colonel at USARV HQ curtly explained to me that General Westmoreland did not attend change of command ceremonies for LTCs. After I gave this information to Pete he said, "Well, that may be the case but tell the colonel to make certain General Westmoreland gets the invitation." I called back and passed that message on to the colonel. A few days later the colonel called me back and asked if we had a 4 star flag on hand or did he need to bring one with him because General Westmoreland was coming! Naturally, because everyone's boss was going to be there, many other general officers suddenly became available to attend. I later learned that Pete had served on General Westmoreland staff at the Pentagon. Pete was special!

Also on the 31st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12987 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 30 feet and 20 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the skid and main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database indicates this was a B Troop LOH. The next reference to this aircraft provides a more complete history.

Also on the 31st, a captioned photo titled "Rescue" appeared in March 31st issue the Ivy Leaf credited to SP4 John Stidham. The photo shows a UH-1H landing some infantry. The caption reads: "Rescue - A 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry (Airmobile) helicopter drops in to assist cavalrymen when the Ruthless Riders met with heavy fighting recently near Kontum."

The 31st was the ending date for the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) for C Troop. In 1969 via DA General Order #69, C Troop was awarded the PUC the period 31 Jan to 31 Mar 1968.

During this period, SP5 Len Litscher was flying as CE in A Troop, UH-1H #66-16013 remembers: I was the line chief of the Lift platoon. I would DEROS in May with Ernie Long. One mission we flew stands out in my mind. I don't know the pilots' names but the AC was a black LT. We were the last ship in an extraction of the Blues. The gunner was Jeffery Doine from WI. The pilot asked if I was 'really good' with the M-60 because it was going to be hot on the left side. I said that I was just Okey but that Doine was much better; so we switched positions. We got on the ground in a single ship, small LZ. We believed we were going to load seven Blues but there were nine waiting to get on. I told the pilots there were nine Blues and they replied that we couldn't leave them. I am certain he red-lined that ship as he lifted out. I just knew we'd all be in bodies bags soon. I was scared! I know the bottom of the Huey went through the trees as we lifted out. It was a great relief when I knew we were safely into a normal flight.

WO William J. Rand provides: During my first tour with the 7/17th Cav I joined C Troop in January at Enari and on 14 Feb went to Chu Lai. I was a WO then and flew in the Guns. When I became an UH-1C AC I was Blueghost 17. I stayed with that troop for one year, so I was there when they were redesignated F/8th Cav.

The exact date of the following incident is not known. We are rather certain it happened in March. MAJ Al Iller, CPT Bob Young, crew chief SP5 Mike Lill and door gunner SP4 Mike Manger were flying 038, the Squadron CO's normal C&C ship.

While all four men remember the incident, Mike Manger provides the most details: Our troops were already operating in the AO when we went out. Lilli and I had two different pilots now, Major Iller and Captain Young. I saw our infantry on the trail going toward suspected VC positions and we flew past a French tea plantation. The Frenchman was in front of his villa pointing in the direction of our infantry with an extremely worried look on his face. He might have thought our infantry was VC if seen from a distance. I don't know. We operated on our own, separate from any troops, so as not to get in their way. We found a group of VC foxholes in a circle and Lilli and I dropped hand grenades on them, but got no response. So Charlie had moved on and we followed. He was here somewhere, and we were close. We found a company of Ruff Puffs with two Green Berets and established contact. I saw two Ruff Puffs going through the pockets of a dead VC on a trail looking for maps or souvenirs, maybe. As we circled, we spotted a hole, or maybe it was a cave entrance, in the heavy brush. We direct the Ruff Puffs to it, but it was slow and tough going through the thorn bushes. Every time we circled, I pointed my machine gun to the hole to show the way, giving them directions. They finally got there but the NVA had left and this was just a foxhole. We worked with the Ruff Puffs for some time, then went on our own again. Suddenly the Green Beret was on the radio. They were under attack and needed help. He and his partner were both wounded. He said he popped a green smoke to mark his position. I spotted it and pointed it out to Major Iller. As we got there, the Green Beret radioed us to stop bombing them. I could see Ruff Puffs retreating, some laying dead in the field. Major Iller replied, "We're not bombing you." They were under a heavy mortar attack. Suddenly a loud bang and Lill yelled, "We're hit!" Captain Young said, "So am I!" I could see him grab his left forearm and grimace in pain. I left my seat and tended to his wound. He had several puncture wounds on his left forearm, which I bandaged and applied a tighter bandage to the pressure point in the upper arm, which I loosened because I didn't want to cut off all circulation. We returned to base to get medical attention for him and picked up another pilot. I'm quite certain we were shot by friendly fire. We were directly above the Ruff Puffs when we were hit from below. When we landed to let off Captain Young, we examined the gunship to make sure no critical parts were hit. The bullet entered below and to the left of the co-pilot's seat, hit the seat, fragmented with fragments hitting Captain Young's left forearm, and fragments going through the ceiling directly above the co-pilot's seat. Captain Young's forearm was the only critical part hit. I saw several puncture wounds, but no blood, so I loosened the bandage I had tied to his upper arm. I stood directly behind him until we landed. I knew he was in severe pain and wouldn't leave his side until we got him to a medic. When we returned, our gunships were firing all around the Ruff Puffs to protect them. Major Iller called for the Air Force spotter plane and they put in an air strike. Years later, Captain Young revealed to me that the core of the bullet that hit him ended up in his flight glove, and he wore it on a chain around his neck.

MAJ Iller recalls: I do know we were operating out of Bam Me Thuot in the vicinity of the French tea plantation. I believe Bob was an Assistant S-3 and that his reassignment from A Troop to HHT was complete. If I recall correctly A Troop had been sent there and was encamped by the airfield and was conducting operations in that area. Bob was hit in the lower left arm. Fortunately, no bones were hit and the round basically hit the fleshy part of the lower arm. I remember Mike Manger providing first aid to Bob's arm and we returned to the Bam Me Thuot airfield where medics attended to him. After landing at Bam Me Thuot airfield, Lill and Manger checked out the aircraft damage. They found that the round entered the underside of the aircraft near the CP's position narrowly missing the connecting push pull tubes and forced trim gradient of the CP's cyclic control. Bob was evac'd at some point to Nha Trang as I recall where he 'recouped' for a week or two, then returned to the squadron at Camp Enari. On his first flight, after returning while sliding his hand

into his flight glove he discovered some object in the little finger of the left glove. That object turned out to be a spent AK47 round as I remember.

SP5 Mike Lill recalls: I believe the shot came at the left side of the aircraft, as always, through the floor hitting the sliding armored plate, which was in the fully retracted position. Besides hitting Bob's arm, fragments also hit the side window and the green house above Bob. As the left side rider, gunner, I saw the whole event take place, but I couldn't take a shot as the combat was so close I would hit both friend and foe with a burst from the sixty. I was always a little to quick with trigger, but this time I had to refrain. After inspecting the damage area at Bam Me Thuot I had to clean the blood from the floor before the new copilot (nameless) would get in. CPT Young replaced 1LT Mike Hurley as the co-pilot on the Squadron Commander C&C ship.

Concerning events that happened about this time we have:

SP5 Homer Gwyn Huie recalls: I remember flying as a gunner in a Huey out to a remote airstrip to help remove the weapons off a wrecked UH-1C. The events of 26 Mar match my memories rather well. I remember after we put all the equipment in our Huey plus the people - it was very heavy! I wouldn't want to repeat that takeoff again – it was scary! A few months before I DEROSed and ETSed on 26 September 1968 I helped setup a PX in the Squadron's area. About this time the role of Squadron Armorer changed considerably as the Armorers in the line Troops took over the duties for their weapons. My Army training and experience did serve me well. I recently retired from an airline after serving for more than 30 years as a manager in their supply center.

April 1968

The Squadron spent most of this month working the familiar AOs from Dak To south to Polei Kleng and southwest to the long Plei Trap Valley that basically paralleled the Cambodian border. The 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division was moving units into the Plei Trap and the Squadron spent many days screening ahead of them. A few days were spent near Dak Pek and north of Ban Me Thuot. The Squadron would report 24 NVA killed during the month.

C Troop Redesignated F Troop, 8th Cavalry

On the 1st, the “Blueghosts” of C Troop were officially redesignated F Troop, 8th Cavalry. Under this name, the troop served in Vietnam until 26 February 1973. In view of this action, this history concludes references to “the original C Troop” as this point. Please note that on May 1st, the Army redesignated another unit as C Troop and this history refer to the “new C Troop” as the “replacement C Troop.”

Sometime during this month, MAJ Jack Earwood assumed command of the original C Troop replacing MAJ James D. Marett.

Many of the guys in C Troop were “blueghost originals” that deployed from Fort Knox and would continue to serve with F/8th Cav. The following section is reserved for parting comments from these soldiers.

WO John Shanahan provides: I flew with Gun Platoon. There were some really funny guys in it: WO Al Saboka, WO Glen Opheim, and WO Bill Owen to name just a few. I remember WO Tom Pueschel painting the blueghost logo on our aircraft.

WO John Shepardson provides: When I joined C Troop at Fort Knox I was assigned to the Troop's Headquarters Platoon with the primary duty as the troop commander's pilot. I flew the C&C ship with MAJ Marett at Fort Knox and later in Vietnam with the radio call sign of Blueghost 6X. Later I also flew with MAJ Earwood. MAJ Earwood flew a lot more than MAJ Marett. Most of these commanders often flew on what can best be described as “solo scout missions somewhere in the general area” of the Scout and Gun team operating from the Troop that day. Here we were – a UH-

1C flying low and slow maybe as much as a few clicks away from the Scout and Gun team all by ourselves. This wasn't for anyone who was faint of heart! I can remember many times finding something and the CO would have the "real Scouts" come over to check it out.

Also on the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00733 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 300 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit and tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12987. No other details are recorded but it had sustained battle damage on March 31st. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 07/1967, was assigned to Fort Knox and when to Vietnam with B Troop. The March record shows it logged 95 hours for a total of 392 hours on the airframe. The database indicates Headquarters Troop turned it in for CONUS repairs in April. It would never fly again and was dropped from Army inventory about 05/1969.

Also on the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for, B Troop OH-6A #65-12986 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 30 feet and 30 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 12.7mm and 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the left side of the cockpit and main rotor system, they made a forced landing at Hensel AAF, the helicopter was repaired in theater and evacuated.

Also on the 2nd, the B Troop unit history is a classic for the period. "The morning began as usual. The Scouts were receiving light automatic weapons fire. The Guns returned the fire silencing the enemy weapons. The Scouts continued to work the area initiating light contact through-out the morning. They acquired only one extra hole in the LOHs and no casualties. Airstrikes were called for, received, and directed in upon the enemy position. BDAs were conducted following each strike and the Air Force credited with the destruction of many bunkers with interconnecting tunnels." This clearly described a "usual day" in an air cav troop! The AO for the day was the Plei Trap Valley. However, it got ugly just after noon. **CPT Archie Andrew Hayman**, the Scout Platoon Leader, was conducting the recon of a suspected NVA base camp with PSG M.C. Hood as his observer. The Wall database gives Archie's tour start date as 10 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 61204. The VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss with one fatality and one injury record for B Troop OH-6A #65-12988 at grid YA839935. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 07/1967, arrived in Vietnam with B Troop, and logged 438 hours with B Troop from 11/1967 until it was destroyed. Returning to the events of the 2nd, the LOH received intense anti-aircraft and automatic weapons fire from 360 degrees, went down and burst into flames. PSG Hood, though wounded, crawled around the opposite side and pulled CPT Hayman's body from the burning wreckage. The Guns expended and the C&C got two flights of fighters to unload around the downed bird. Artillery was used to keep the enemy away from PSG Hood and the Blues were inserted about 800 meters to the west. Just prior to the Blues reaching the LOH, two individuals were repelled in and extracted PSG Hood. The Blues extracted CPT Hayman's body, collected some equipment from the LOH and destroyed it.

CPT Barry Oxford provides the following: I took the Blues in to recover his body and rescue his platoon sergeant who was flying Observer that day. He went down in a hail of small arms and automatic weapons fire from a NVA company. The LOH burst into flames on impact but the PSG managed to escape and we found him sitting against a tree with his flight helmet turned completely around. I shared Archie's last meal with him before he left on this fateful mission, LRRP rations. It was ironic in the fact that it was not his mission. The other scout aircraft had trouble refueling and was not back on station. But that was so like Archie, always ready to step in when necessary. Over

time our minds tend to hide unpleasant memories, but its never really unpleasant to recall good friends and remember the fun times.

On the 4th, A Troop found an NVA soldier hiding in a foxhole near a fresh trail. Firing into the area, they killed seven. The Troop received a change of mission and when they returned in the afternoon they noted that four of the bodies had been removed and the others stripped of their equipment. No further contact was made.

On the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop OH-6A #66-07937 flown by an unnamed crew. Other Helicopter database records indicate this was an A Troop LOH. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the level flight operations area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the doghouse, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 8th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop, UH-1C #66-15064 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 70 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the engine comp and main rotor blade system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 9th, A Troop was working north of Ban Me Thuot when the Scouts found some NVA near an abandoned village. The Guns killed three.

On the 10th, A Troop had a gunship shot down by heavy automatic weapons fire while covering the emergency extraction of a LRRP team. D Troop was inserted to protect the downed aircraft while the injured crew was evaced. Due to the enemy situation, the aircraft was stripped and destroyed in place. On this date, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00727 flown by an unnamed crew at grid ZV221131. The decoded details of the record state that this was a reconnaissance armed escort of other aircraft mission, while approaching the target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail section and tail rotor system, they crashed, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 01/1967, was sent to Fort Knox, arrived in Vietnam with A Troop, and had logged a total of 593 hours when it was destroyed.

On the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00733 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 500 feet and 85 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

SP4 Hoyt L. Inman recalls: I believe this was Lynn Grantham's aircraft. It was another ship with the 40-mm gun on the front and rockets on each side, just like my #66-00732. I don't remember why I was flying in it that day maybe just giving Lynn a day off. I remember Mr. Bill Walton coming to a Firebase the first time I was shot down up at Dak To. He flew my aircraft back to the base. I remember that WO1 Sam Booker was the co-pilot. He was shot in the heels of his feet and had a hard time landing the helicopter. And the pilot was a Captain but it wasn't CPT Earwood or I don't think it was. Whomever it was he was also hit in the chest. That's all I can remember. I know we were flying low level and went through or between two trees. The AKs went off in both trees. I was the only one on the aircraft that didn't take a direct gun shot. A bullet did strike my helmet and shattered my face shield cutting my face in several places. I also received some cuts on my arms. In fact we had to make a running landing on that steel runway. He ran out of runway. As he tried picking the helicopter up and we started spinning because there was a piece of metal hung in one of the pulleys on the cable to the tail rotor. Mr. Walton got there and looked the aircraft over. He was the one that discovered the jammed pulley I am sure of that. And I believe he asked me if I was

willing to fly back to base camp or was I ready to give that aircraft up. I said if you're willing to get in it and fly it then I am willing to go with you.

On the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07929 flown by CW2 D.C. Peters and CW2 K.A. Orchard. This was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

During a low level recon, the engine failed. The pilot autorotated in trees. The main rotor hit trees. The aircraft settled to the ground and rolled on its left side. The cause of engine failure was unknown. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database suggests this was a recent replacement helicopter. It would log at most 44 hours with A Troop in April. On the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter databased has a loss record for this aircraft at grid ZV131093. It is reasonable to believe it took these six days for the maintenance records to reflect the operational loss.

Also on the 12th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00645 flown by AC 1LT W.A. Post and copilot WO1 B.P. Wise. This was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

During flight, a loud noise was heard in the engine compartment. A running landing was made to a level field. The aircraft slid on its fuselage 10 to 15 meters. Cause was tenon failure. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 10/1966 as a B Model, was converted to a C Model at Fort Knox, arrived in Vietnam with A Troop, and had logged a total of 645 hours with A Troop. The database suggests that after this accident, the aircraft went to ARADMAC on the USS Corpus Christie Bay for repairs and returned to Vietnam service with another unit.

On the 13th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop OH-6A #65-12999 flown by an unnamed crew who sustained two injuries. The US Army Goldbook database indicates this LOH was assigned to C Troop in 11/1967 and logged 150 hours with C Troop by 02/1968. By April, it had logged a total of 299 hours with the Squadron when it was turned in for CONUS repairs. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 200 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took three hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail section, they made a forced landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to theater and recovered.

On the 14th, the following article titled "Ruthless Riders Aid Downed Crewmen" plus four pictures captioned 'Rescue Mission' appeared on page 7 in the April 14th issue of the Ivy Leaf provided by SP5 George A. McLaughlin Jr.:

A dramatic air-to-ground rescue was carried out recently when a Cayuse reconnaissance helicopter crashed in a dense highland jungle. Within minutes after being alerted, a high-speed rescue team from the 7th Squadron, 17th Cavalry (Airmobile) was hovering over the wreckage. Cavalry ground troops scrambled from a slick (top, center) to cut a landing zone (LZ) while others, like the soldier above, formed an instant perimeter to defend the area. Through quick and untiring efforts, an LZ was soon carved from the triple-canopy foliage, and the hovering dustoff ship lowered its stretcher-anchored hoist. Seconds later an injured crewman was secured on the dangling stretcher (top, right) and finally plucked from a living nightmare (right), while the Ruthless Riders responded to enemy automatic weapons fire.

On the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07905 flown by 1LT D.W. Boyd and Crew Chief SP4 J.R. Stine. This was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

During flight, the engine out warning light came on, but the engine continued to operate normally. The landing approach was too fast. The pilot terminated at a high hover 5 to 10 feet. The aircraft

turned right and fell through landing hard. Additional details: The US Army Goldbook database indicates this was a replacement LOH assigned to A Troop in 02/1968 that logged a total of 128 hours before being turned in for CONUS repairs in April. The aircraft was returned to Vietnam service with another unit in late 1969.

Also on the 17th, the 1/22nd Infantry Battalion S-3 log states the Yellow Scarf (7/17 Cav) AO was all TA: 800000, 860000, 860880, 890880, 890850, 800850, 800000. [Editor's note: Believe the grid has to be ZA instead of TA.] The battalion had recently moved units into areas adjacent to this AO and the Brigade wanted to make certain the Battalion was aware of the Air Cav operating in the area.

On the 18th B Troop's AO was west of Polei Kleng in support of the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. They entered the AO at 0700 and conducted BDAs for the remainder of the morning. At 1157 a Scout flown by WO Jim Paydo observed a large underground storage area that had been uncovered by a B-52 strike. When the LOH moved closer to examine this hole, it was shot down by intense AW fire. The OH-6A burst into flames prior to reaching the ground. The Guns covering the downed LOH also received heavy AW fire from three .50 caliber positions. The Guns continued making gun runs until airstrikes could be obtained. The Air Force arrived on station and immediately began to work. A total of seven airstrikes were employed in rapid succession. The heavy enemy fire diminished. The Scouts made a quick pass over the area and reported both crew members of the downed aircraft were alive. DUSTOFF was called but was unable to get into the small area. The enemy fire had intensified. At 1540, B Troop selected an LZ as close to the downed crew as possible and the Blues were inserted. The first lift was on the ground and the second was on short final when three enemy AW positions began firing at the lift ships and the Blues in the LZ. One more LOH flown by CWO Bob Schulte received a hit from a .50 caliber wounding the pilot. The OH-6A made a quick pass over the tree line firing his minigun, silencing one of the AW positions and departed for Polei Kleng. Upon reaching Polei Kleng, the pilot was taken to the 71st Evac. At 1645, the Blues reached the downed OH-6A which was a total loss and rescued its crew. All personnel on the ground were extracted by 1715. Five WIAs were taken directly to the 71st Evac and the Blues returned to Camp Enari. All elements departed the OA at 1745. This action resulted in seven NVA KIAs by body count, three AWs captured, and several .50 caliber positions destroyed. The Reassignment Losses section B Troop's Morning Report dated 20 April states that the following were attached to the 71st Evac: WO Jim Paydo, SGT William E. Baker, CW2 Ronald K. Nelson, SP4 Randall T. Rodgers, CPT Barry Oxford, SP5 Jonathan G. White, and CW2 Robert A. Schulte.

Also on the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07866 flown by an unnamed crew at grid YA803934. This was a recon mission, during the level flight operations area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the engine comp, they made a forced landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 6712 and by 6803 had flown 122 hours for B/7/17th Cav.

The following article titled "Pilot honored for ground action" appeared in the 5 Oct 1968 issue the Army Reporter along with a photo of Denny Vaughan.

Camp Enari (1st Avn) - A helicopter pilot from B Troop, 7th Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry has received the Distinguished Service Cross. Capt. Denny R. Vaughan was presented the nation's second highest award by Gen. Creighton W. Abrams during ceremonies here. Vaughan distinguished himself on April 18, 1968, while participating in an air rescue mission near Kontum. An OH-6 Cayuse was hit by anti-aircraft fire and crashed in the midst of a NVA battalion while on a reconnaissance mission. Receiving word of the crash, Vaughan volunteered to lead a twenty-man force into the area in an attempt to rescue the downed flyers. As the lead aircraft approached the LZ it came under heavy enemy fire and the flight commander decided to abort the mission. However, Vaughan convinced the commander to hover his aircraft at twenty feet while he and his men

jumped to the ground. Although he suffered an injured ankle during the jump, he quickly deployed his troops and began moving toward the crash scene. After covering only a short distance, the rescue team came under heavy automatic weapons fire. Vaughan called in and adjusted airstrikes around his position. Moments later their position was attacked by the NVA soldiers. He continually exposed himself to the enemy's gunfire to direct his troop's defense. As the attack was driven back, another series of airstrikes were called in, allowing the rescue party and the crew of the downed aircraft to return to the landing zone for pick-up. In addition to this award Vaughan has received the DFC, a Purple Heart, an ACM and an AM for valor.

An edited version of the awards citation reads: Captain Vaughan distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 18 April 1968 in an air rescue mission west of Kontum. During a low-level aerial reconnaissance, a scout aircraft was struck by anti-aircraft fire and crashed in the midst of a reinforced North Vietnamese Army battalion. When it was reported that two crew members had survived the crash, Captain Vaughan immediately volunteered to lead a twenty-man force in an attempt to extract them. On the approach to the landing zone the lead aircraft began receiving intense fire from machine gun positions surrounding the pickup site, and the flight commander decided to abort the mission. Captain Vaughan, though fully aware of the enemy's strength, persuaded the flight commander to remain at a twenty-foot hover while he and his men jumped to the ground. Ignoring an injury to his ankle, he rapidly deployed his platoon and began maneuvering it toward the downed ship. After moving a short distance, it received heavy enemy automatic weapons fire. Captain Vaughan requested and adjusted air strikes around his platoon's position. The bombardment stopped the attackers' fire and he continued to lead his men toward the injured crew members. The North Vietnamese launched a furious ground assault on his platoon. Captain Vaughan fearlessly exposed himself to the withering hail of fire to organize and direct his troops' defenses. As the attack was driven back, he once again called air strikes on the enemy, enabling him and his men to return to the landing zone with the downed aircraft crew for extraction. HQ US Army, Vietnam, General Orders No. 4080 (August 23, 1968).

WO Buddy Harp provides: This date, April 18th, and action remains one of my most vivid memories of Vietnam. WO Joe Papke was flying with me that day, PFC Eric Johnson was the CE, and SGT John McAllister the Gunner. We were the second of three aircraft in to rescue the downed crew. I went to see WO Jim Paydo in the hospital before they evacuated him to Japan. I ran into Jim at Ft. Rucker during the summer of 1969. He was going through a CH-47 transition. He told me that looking up and seeing the Hueys and Blues coming in to get him was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen, in the whole-wide world, during his life. Naturally that heart-felt expression made me feel fantastic. Needless to say, we enjoyed a couple of cold beers that evening. Sadly Jim was killed when his helicopter, an OH-23, suffered an engine failure and crashed into the San Francisco Bay in October, 1969. WO1 Mike Dickerson and I joined B Troop in February '68 just after the big battles in Kontum, Pleiku and other Tet offensive targets were winding down. We'd gone to flight school together and came to Vietnam as replacements. He ended up flying Scouts and I was assigned to the Lift Platoon for about three months, then I moved over to the Gun Platoon and started flying Charlie Model gunships. My mentors in the Lift Platoon were Harry Olson, Doug Sparks, Rick Schoney, and Jim Rucker. I vividly remember going to Dak To, Dak Pek, Dak Seang, Ben Het, Ban Me Thuot, Plei Djereng, and Plei Kleng often. It always seemed to me we always found more business than the 4th Inf Div had time, manpower, or desire to handle. We were reporting tanks before reporting them was acknowledged.

Also on the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for Headquarters Troop OH-6A #66-07929 at grid ZV131093. This seems to be the resulting maintenance action from the engine failure on the 12th while serving with A Troop.

A photo captioned "Watch From Overhead" appeared in the April 20 issue of the Pacific Stars & Stripes with the following narrative:

An OH6 "Cayuse" of the 7th Sq., 17th Air Cav., keeps watch overhead as a ground trooper from the same unit escorts a detained Montagnard after sweeping a suspected enemy-held village in the Central Highlands near Pleiku. (USA)

An un-captioned photo appeared in the April 22 issue of the Pacific Stars & Stripes with the following narrative:

Troops of the 7/17th Air Cav. Sq., 17th Combat Aviation Group, are dropped into a landing zone from a Huey troop-carrying helicopter. The 7/17th is one of those rare aviation units with ground troops for its copters to support.(USA).

SP4 Bill Jarrell from D Troop recalls: On Easter Sunday 1968, we were told there was a heavy concentration of NVA in the hills. Because we expected to make heavy contact, I was carrying 300 more rounds of ammo than usual, as well as grenades and the like. I flew out on a Charlie model loaded with the 106mm recoilless rifles. The take off was a real thrill. The pilots (I don't remember their names) said we couldn't lift off because it was bleeding off too much, so they were going to do a fixed-wing take off. I had no idea what that meant, but I soon found out! Anyway we were scooting along the ground and helicopter was slowly getting more lift. There was a fence at the end of the runway. We just did clear that fence. The pilots got a good laugh at a one scared 11Delta. I was inserted with a scout section. We walked all day up and down hills and never made contact. First Charlie was one place and then another.

On the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop OH-6A #65-12969 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the bank right on target, they took hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cockpit, engine compartment, cargo section, and fuselage, they made a precautionary landing and aborted the mission, the helicopter was repaired and evacuated. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database indicates this was a C Troop (F/8th Cav on this date) LOH and suggests that it received enough serious damage on this date to be turned in for CONUS repairs. It would return to Vietnam in 06/1969 to serve with another unit.

Also on the 19th, the 1/22nd Infantry Battalion S-3 log states that Tornado 3 (A Troop) took one soldier with a 105.6 temp to the Kontum Dustoff pad.

On the 20th, the 1/22nd Infantry Battalion S-3 log states the battalion 3 said loc YA825908 would be good airstrike location. This is the location of 100 bunkers spotted by Tornado 6.

On the 21st, the 4th Infantry Division ORLL states B Troop killed one NVA at YA890814.

On the 23rd, the 4th Infantry Division ORLL states B Troop killed one NVA at YA801974.

The Battle of Chu Moor Mountain was fought April 24 – 29 by elements of the 4th Infantry Division, especially the 1/22nd Infantry Battalion. George Heidt, who served an RTO in the 1/22 INF and who has researched details of this battle, visited a 7/17th Cav website asking about the Tornado radio call sign. He has copies of the S-2/S-3 radio logs for this period and provides the following summary:

The Battle of Chu Moor Mountain took place between 24-29 April 1968, at approximately grid YA868888 and was one of the bloodiest battles the 1/22 was involved in during the war. Although I only have the radio logs from the 24th through the 27th, it appears that A Troop was one of the primary helicopter units involved in the battle, and most certainly helped keeping the casualties from being much worse than they were. Between the 24th and the 27th, the 1/22 suffered 122 WIA and 11 KIA, on the 28th, we suffered another 8 KIA and an unknown number of wounded. The 1/14 INF joined the battle on the 28th and 29th, and suffered an additional 34 WIA and 4 KIA. Along with A Troop, other helicopter units involved where the Gators from the 119th AHC, the Gladiators and Cougars from the 57 AHC, at least 4 teams of Gambler Guns from the 4th AVN Battalion, the

Ghost Riders from A Co, 158th AVN, 101st ABN, at least seven different Dustoff ships, and the Headhunters. There were also Cider FACs and three different Spooky aircraft involved. Gator 574 was shot down with one WIA, Gladiator 063 was shot down and crashed with three WIAs, and Cougar 14 forced down when the AC was WIA. I have extracted all the entries regarding A Troop during the 25th through the 27th from the radio logs and they are attached. I'm sure that because of the amount of action that was occurring, there were a lot of things that were never entered. Thanks again to all of A Troop that were involved.

On the 24th, B Troop was working west of Kontum and observed many new bridges and a wide, hard packed trail. Closer examination determined that the trail was a road for 5-ton trucks! Air strikes and artillery were directed against the bridges. During the BDA, 15 to 20 NVA were seen and taken under fire. The Blues were inserted to develop the situation and had just made contact with an estimated platoon when the 4th Division's G-3 sent specific instructions to extract the Blues. Contact was broken and though three Lift ships were hit, the extraction was successful. B Troop had five wounded, none seriously. Airstrikes were called in and artillery registered for effective H&I.

Also on the 24th, the 4th Infantry Division ORLL states the aerial rifle platoon of D Troop was inserted at YA745949 to check out a bunker complex sighted by B Troop. The platoon conducted a reconnaissance with negative findings and began its extraction when six US were wounded by SA and AW fire from the east of the PZ.

Also on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #65-12975 flown by CW2 W.C. Miller and WO1 B.J. Block. On the 25th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for this aircraft. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

After engine failure, the pilot entered an autorotation. Full aft cyclic movement was restricted because of an M-16 on the pilot's lap. The aircraft touched down with forward ground speed. The aircraft hit a dirt dike. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 06/1967, remained at Fort Worth before joined A Troop in Vietnam in 11/1967. It logged 388 hours with A Troop prior to this accident. The Goldbook shows that the airframe was returned to CONUS but in 09/1968 it was removed from the Army inventory.

1LT Terry Bishop recalls: I was still 'brand new' in the Scout Platoon at this time. I'd been assigned to A/9th Avn Bn, 9th Inf Div (the Jayhawks) soon after I arrived in country on 2 Dec 1967. I flew H Model Hueys with them until I was infused to the 17th CAG in April 1968. I'd flown the General officers and Brigade Commanders C&C ships, some ash & trash mission and survived Tet '68 with them down in the Dong Tam area of IV Corps. I was just about to make AC and had just returning from Jungle School in the Philippines when I got my transfer orders. When I arrived in Pleiku, I was told to report to the 7/17th Cav and in my diary for 9 April I wrote, "Had the most dangerous job in the cav assigned to me today. I'm a scout LOH type." That's the day I joined A Troop's Scouts. The next day I started my OH-6A transition. I have some very distinct memories of my feelings once I arrived at Camp Enari. Without going into a lot of background conversation, the bottom line was that I wanted to get into the "war." I had heard and seen some LOH casualties in the Delta. Maybe I was feeling a little of the "10-foot tall and bulletproof" syndrome. I certainly didn't have anything to prove. When you come into the Cav as an FNG there are plenty of stories floating around that tend to boggle your mind. I just wanted to "see the real thing" or contribute something to winning the war. What a shock I was in for! The one part I really enjoyed about flying the LOH was this - I didn't do well with authority figures. This seems laughable, since the military has an abundance of them. But when you fly scouts most senior officers don't give you any crap, because they won't fly the mission. You can always pock them in the eye with that fact - don't give me any crap or you can fly that LOH tomorrow. Most of the senior officers were decent guys but I

just never did well with rank and all that it entailed. Some of 'the originals' were still there like CPT Charlie Rayl who had survived Tet '68 and had a lot of experience flying OH-6s down on the trees. We also had some 'replacements' that had become Scout team leaders like WO Bernie Block. They were good mentors and I'd like to think that I got along with them pretty well. By the 19th I'd completed my OH-6A transition and flew my first day in the AO as the only pilot in the aircraft. I also flew on the 20th, 21st and 23rd but I was still 'a cherry' On the 24th, I was flying right along side Bernie that morning. We weren't far from Dragon Mountain, near Camp Enari, when this incident occurred. We had been warned a few days prior that the OH-6As were having some fuel control problems – specifically that you could lose control of the throttle. I believe this is what happened to Bernie. His RPM was climbing and there was no way to stop it, so he shut the engine down. This was what we were instructed to do in case we had this problem. He went into a glide. Since we were only a few feet off the deck anyway he didn't glide for long. The rice paddies were dry at this time of the year, but he hit a dike instead of making it to the flat area. The LOH immediately cut its tail boom off and began to roll. There was a huge ball of dust with various and sundry aluminum parts flying out of it. Several of the LOHs landed, including me. Frankly I didn't expect anyone to survive – but they did just fine! The integrity of that egg shape design held up like magic! If my memory serves me correctly, we flew them back to Enari where they got another LOH and flew the rest of their missions that day.

On the 25th, the extracts from the 1/22 INF S-2/S-3 journal that involve A/7/17 CAV:

- 0833 - Tornado 3 with guns and scouts are going up around D Co.
- 0905 - Tornado Red 16 receiving fire from west.
- 0948 - Tornado 3 left to go get fuel, will be back in 30 to 45 minutes.
- 1118 - Airstrike over, Tornado White going in.
- 1134 - Tornado White had expended and is going home. Will try to get more guns.
- 1229 - Tornado 21 finished at this time. Gambler 9 is going in at this time.
- 1335 – Tornado White checked in again.
- 1427 – Tornado White has 10 minutes left on station and then will be replaced.
- 1450 - Tornado 21 Checked in and will help in DUSTOFF.
- 1531 - BDE informed us we have another set of guns as soon as Tornado 21 goes off station.
- 1618 - DUSTOFF of 4 WIA (not serious) completed and Tornado guns departed D Co location. Will be back to pick up the 3 remaining WIAs.

On the 26th, the A Troop history states their C&C was hit by 50-cal fire which wounded four of the crew and knocked out all of the ship's ammo. They were able to return safely to Kontum. The 4th Infantry Division ORLL states at YA198695 a UH-1H from A Troop received an air burst, slightly wounding three US. The aircraft landed on Highway 14S to check the damage, but had to lift off and return to Kontum when it received fire from both sides of the road. 1LT Terry Bishop's diary reads: "Went out in AO as AC. CO got shot down on the way. Then we went north of Dak To, the NVA were thicker than flies."

Also on the 26th, the extracts from the 1/22 INF S-2/S-3 journal to involve A/7/17 CAV:

- 0851 - Tycoon 5, 2 Scouts and 2 Guns checking in. [Editor's note: believe the call sign should be Tornado 5.]

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15062 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while approaching the target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the armament, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 03/1967 at Fort Knox, appears to have logged 132 hours

there, came to Vietnam with A Troop, and flew with A Troop 226 hours until 03/1968 when its owner became Headquarters Troop. It is possible this ownership was only on the maintenance records and that the UH-1C continued to fly with A Troop. It would serve with Headquarters Troop until 07/1968 when it was transferred to another unit in Vietnam. 1LT Terry Bishop's diary reads: "Back to Dak To. Went to Polei Kleng instead. Received lots of fire. Returned to check the ship. Didn't take one hit. Bill had a rocket – stuck in the rocket pod. Half sticking out."

Also for the 27th, the extracts from the 1/22 INF S-2/S-3 journal to involve A/7/17 CAV:

0606 – 7/17th Cav will be working in 1/22 AO today.

0857 - Tornado 6 and guns will be working to the western part of AO at YA887887.

0920 - Tornado will be working to south and will be on this push.

0955 - Tornado scout birds receiving ground fire at this time.

0957 - Tornado Red received ground fire and is being escorted back to Kontum.

1111 - Tornado White 25 going in for C Co to expend.

1114 - Tornado White 25 received ground fire on his pass.

1118 - Tornado White 25 expended and is going back to rearm and refuel.

1121 – Tornado White 23 guns checked in, are going to Ploi Kleng for check of guns. Will e back at 1230 hours.

1300 - Tornado 6 and guns departed, will get another set of guns in 30 minutes.

1312 - Tornado White 25 checked in for support.

1709 - Tornado White 25 departed loc. Tornado White 23 on station at this time.

[Editor's Note: Teams of Gambler and Cougar gunships also participated in this action.]

On the 29th, B Troop was conducting BDAs west of Kontum when they found seven NVA and killed two. Ten hooches were destroyed. At 1600, the 3rd Brigade CO directed MAJ Hefford to insert a seven man squad into an area where four US KIAs, some weapons and radios were located. The area was a small LZ on the side of a hill. The bodies were scattered and the equipment had been left by a unit of the 3rd Bde when the LZ came under heavy mortar and automatic weapons fire during the extraction. During the inserting, the LZ once again came under heavy mortar fire and the Lift ship was damaged. B Troop put artillery on the enemy mortar position and the insertion was completed. The seven men spent almost two hours on the ground before reaching a PZ with two US KIA, 15 weapons and three radios. They were unable to retrieve two other US KIA. Once again the NVA mortars opened up and B Troop replied. The squad, KIAs and equipment were extracted to the Brigade HQ and B Troop went home for the night.

SSG Jim Littlejohn provides some interesting details about A Troop's Blues during this period: I had been in the Army about ten years when I got orders to Vietnam. I was an SSG E-6. I remember coming through the replacement center at Cam Ranh, being picked up in a Huey and flown to Camp Enari where I joined A Troop's Blues in April, 1968. The Platoon Sergeant then was SFC Lowell Bowman who had served with the 25th Inf Div because he wore that combat patch. He was still with A Troop when I left a year later. 1LT Casey was the platoon leader. He and I became good friends. I remember going on R&R to Vung Tau with him. Later when he was the Club officer at Enari, I was responsible for the radar detachment with D Troop on the perimeter and I saw him often. I am still in touch with his family. Returning to April 1968, I was one of the four E-6 Squad Leaders. There was SSG Woodruff who would die while flying with the Scouts. There was SSG Harris and another SSG but I can't remember his name. There were four buck sergeants, one for each squad. My radio callsign was Blue 1 because I was the leader of the 1st Squad. My squad had SGT Malcolm Smith, SP4 Ron Debou, PVT Blackburn, a Canadian man we called Tiny who carried the M-60 plus our RTO. I cannot remember the RTO's name. He was tall and thin with blond hair. He was from Tennessee. In late 1968 three of us attended the 3-week Recon School at Nha Trang. SGT Kenneth Kay was one of the other guys who attend that school. I think we were the first 7/17th Cav guys to

go through that school. The class had 15 to 20 guys. I remember one of our graduation exercises was to run a mile with a ruck that had a 30-lb sand bag in it. I served with A Troop for an entire year and have lots of newspaper clippings and other documents from that time. I recalled being in a Huey that got shot up from the bottom. I was wounded in the arm. I remember the left seat pilot had two holes in his chest. After we crashed or landed, I pulled that pilot out of the helicopter that was still running. I remember treating two of his wounds but missing one. Maybe MAJ Marshall remembers this. I cannot remember if I was in A Troop or D Troop when this happened. Eventually we were picked up and I was taken to the 71st Evac. They cleaned me up and released me back to my troop.

WO Conrad Hamp recalls: I joined the Squadron and was assigned to the Aviation Section in HHT in March 1968. I stayed with them about three months mostly flying their gunships. I got checked out in the SS-11 wire guided missile system. I was just a new guy and being on stand-by with SS-11 helicopters was still exciting to me. I never actually fired one of the missiles but I spent enough time with the simulator that I would have welcomed the opportunity to try it. The others I remember in the Aviation Section were WO Bob Glomb, WO Roy Rogers, and WO Pete Peterson. CPT Jim Basta was the section leader at that time. I started building and flying model airplanes at Camp Enari. I think at least two or other others were interested in them. These were the direct wire control type at the time. I got pretty good with them.

On the 30th, A Troop was busy. 1LT Terry Bishop's diary reads: "Flew on CPT Charlie Rayl. Watched over a repelling operation west of Polei Kleng. Got socked in – started late – and left grunts in overnight."

SP4 Ted Ziegler recalls: I was drafted into the Army and reported to Ft. Knox in Feb 1967 with the MOS of 05C40 (radio teletype operator) after completing Basic and AIT. SP4 Pete Bulka had the same MOS and we were in HHT our whole time. I ETSed on 12 Jun 1968. We worked for SFC Willie Burnett and basically provided all the electrical wiring for the Squadron's buildings at Camp Enari. Initially we had lots of these 10 KWV generators. We started by nailing two 2x6s together in the shape of a "T" and using these as wire poles. Next we got one 400 KWV generator and replaced the poles with about 25-foot round wooden poles. This diesel engine powered generator was located in the fenced yard around the S-4 area. Pete and I stayed busy wiring the mess halls, headquarters building, orderly rooms, and then the various hooches and other buildings. By the time we ETSed we had a second 400 KWV generator and a switch so we could take one offline for maintenance. Some other unit had come through all of Camp Enari and replaced to small 25-foot poles with standard 50-foot poles that held transformers. Pete had some prior experience in this area and was able to get us some pole climbing spikes plus the right equipment to allow us to do our jobs without getting hurt. I'd say that all this electrical wiring work was pretty much completed by the time we ETSed in June.

MAJ Doty recalls: About this time, mid to late April, that we started receiving Cobra trained pilots in anticipation of our trading our Charlie Models for AH-1Gs.

May 1968

The Replacement for C Troop

On 1 May, C/2/17th Cav 101st Abn Div was redesignated C/7/17th and alerted to deploy to Vietnam in early July. C Troop had not been able to deploy to Vietnam with the 101st in Dec, 1967 because it's total compliment of aircraft consisted of five OH-23Gs. It had received nearly a full compliment of officers and enlisted men as the Division was brought up to full strength and was the only 101st element to remain at Fort Campbell for the New Year's party. In January, C Troop received what is believed to be the last Charlie Model "504" from the Bell production line. During the next month, CONUS stripped every unit, including Mother Rucker, of every last UH-1C and was able to scrape enough gun systems from the Atlanta depot to outfit C Troop. During March they trained in the snow

on all of Fort Campbell's empty firing ranges and Drop Zones. With virtually no one to "supervise" them and with "considerable relaxation" of the aerial gunnery range regulations, MAJ Robert "Jack" Frost and a hand full of other Vietnam vets taught the basic arts of Combat Assault, aerial reconnaissance, convey escort, etc.

MAJ Jack Frost provides: Troop C was being filled to combat strength when I arrived to assume command. Both "First Shirt" Harry L. Turner and I often wondered how in hell we were ever going to turn all this *green stuff* into first rate soldiers. Somehow with constant doses of esprit, cunning, mischievous intent and humor, combined with the three serious oldies that had been to Vietnam, we got ourselves "trained" to the point of being called, quite rightly, an ACT. Getting ready was certainly a challenge. Things I remember include, but by no means are limited to, the following: First, Wilson "B" (Harry called each of the seven enlisted Wilsons by a letter) loaded out a 2 ½-ton truck with fuel bladders and used the fuel pump to "hold" them in place on the bed of the truck. But in his earnest response to "Alert! Alert! Alert!", he forgot to raise the tailgate when he took off from the hanger area and drag energy took over. The bladders moved to the rear and simply knocked the pump to the ramp where it automatically turned into a bladder-impaling device for the rubber drums that followed. Second, some enlisted "leg" from the airfield unit placed a disturbance call from his barracks to complain about the noise emanating from the Troop C barracks. When the MPs arrived they discovered the noise had stopped because our entire barracks had emptied out to greet the MP sedan! The Blues then proceeded to surround the car and lift it off the ground with the MPs still inside. Under escort from the entire unit, the sedan was carried from the Troop area and placed gently back on the street headed toward Main Post. The Troopers then "thanked" the MPs for their visit and returned to their barracks. Third, I know every unit has a load of "this is what we put in our conex containers" stories but I'll never forget the four coke machines WO Mike Piccone's father sent us. His father managed or owned an auto dealership and he felt we needed these to help keep our beer cold in Vietnam. Fourth with the 101st gone to Vietnam and Troop C left behind to wait for engines and other "critical" parts of our TO&E, we were fair game for all the BS details all the admin stay-behind weenies could dream up. Among the greatest of these was the Airfield Commander, COL "Whatever." He and I were cross-threaded from day one and we both knew it!! He was trying to retire without a blemish to the grass in front of his headquarters and I was trying to dig foxholes in it to train the Blues!! When we were finally ready to fly our birds to Sharpe Army Depot in CA, our takeoff was delayed when this colonel observed a "thunderstorm" in the radar quadrant of our route of flight. It took some deft, politically astute, well-chosen words from my great XO, CPT Terry Glover, to point out that the "thunderstorm" blip was in reality the southwest corner of the hanger!! Finally we were permitted to takeoff. At one point, I was an ace away from his slapping either an Article 15 or Court-Martial on me for insubordination to a superior officer, because I was insistent that the Troop would not deploy as scheduled unless the crews and pilots were issued their chicken plates, groin protectors and shin guards. I refused to accept any promises of "shipment enroute" or "in-country issue" because I knew these lifesaving items were in short supply. He was livid and I was equally firm in my demand that my good Supply Officer, WO Glenn Hartman, would be available 24 hours a day to cooperate with his Logistics Officer. All it would take was a phone call that our chicken plates were on Post. WO Hartman would then gladly pick them up, place them in our conexes, under my supervision and then the colonel would have in return, my guarantee that both the Troop and I would gladly get out of his face. Finally, I never lost sight of the fact that being a Commanding Officer was a terrible responsibility and an extremely lonely position. If our country was sending us to war; it was important that I do my best with the Youth of America and the trust of the mothers and fathers whose sons we were making into soldiers that would survive combat. If I could impart a fear of myself, which exceeded his own fears of what the enemy could do to him, then each man stood a decent chance of living. Only long, hard, miserable, hot/cold/wet boondock conditions living in smelly, muddy, filthy clothes without one

second for kids, wives, girl friends, buddies, cars, stereos, TV, beer, etc. can bring us to that point. When we went to Camp Atterbury and half the Blues made a parachute jump while the rest assaulted by Huey and the Scouts and Guns made their *attack* which proceeded to set the range entirely ablaze in 15 minutes; I knew that Troop C had arrived!! More than 200 dead VC and NVA in five months proved our readiness! A damn good Troop you were bar none! But most important for me now, some 20+ years later, is the knowledge that not one of the pilots that deployed with Troop C died during that tour and that they were able to return to families and loved one -- for that I am very, very thankful.

WO Vic Rose adds the following: MAJ Frost really drove us hard. Even though we had virtually the entire air field to ourselves, he decided we could learn more in the field. So after we had trained as platoons and were basically "dangerous," he took the entire troop out to one of the old DZs and we set up camp just like we would do later in Vietnam when we had to move to a new area. While half of us were setting up tents and "learning how to build furniture from the rocket box wood", he had the other half shooting up some range and inserting the Infantry. We stayed out there for two weeks in the snow and dirt. But we learned to keep the important parts of the helicopters and the weapons systems clean. And we flew lots of hours to get the experience of being very tired and still having to be mentally alert for another mission. We called ourselves The Chaparrals. We even designed a Troop patch that we wore on our flight jackets and had made into decals for the aircraft. This was the famous 'Try Me' patch. Most of us were from the same officer and warrant officer flight classes, so we had friends from the minute we walked in the door. Over the months that we trained together, we became very close. I think most everyone remembers the manner MAJ Frost was able to apportion all the LSDs (little sh_tty details). He assembled all the officers in the flight planning room and gave us this proposition, "We have a long way to go and much to get done. Now I could assign these duties without regard, but I want volunteers for these jobs before I have to stick someone with a duty he does not want." There may have been some grumbling at the end of that meeting, but I was satisfied. I did learn; however, that being the training officer for a unit deploying to combat was a lot different than being the training NCO in an AMNT Det in Italy. I still think we all learned a lot and it was fun doing it. To the best of my knowledge not one Chaparral pilot died in Vietnam. A lot of the credit goes to the training we received at Rucker and from the units we flew with in Vietnam; but a lot of credit also goes to Jack Frost.

WO Glenn Hartman recalls: I had several years of service as an EM before going to flight school and becoming a Warrant. So I was older than most new pilots when I joined C Troop at Fort Campbell. For some reason MAJ Frost decided that I would be the supply officer and that started a friendship that continues to the present day. His first tour in Vietnam had been with the 155th AHC at Ban Me Thuot, so he knew what it was like for an aviation unit to live and maintain their equipment a long way from anyone else. Naturally he wanted to acquire as much equipment as possible while in the States to fill the 63 conex containers we would take to Vietnam. He showed me how to use "considerable creativity" with the DD Form 444 (Inventory Adjustment Report) to return some extra typewriters we had some how "acquired" and to draw an extra 3/4 ton truck. Our unit had a self service account of about \$3,000 per month to cover such items as light bulbs, mops, etc. The procedure was - if you spent all the money in your account; you would be considered for more next month. To this day I still feel sorry for the young LT from the Air Field Command. Either he was being very, very generous or he wasn't too quick; because he counted the same set of bunks, mattresses, and kitchen trays at least three times when we hand receipted our equipment back to him!! Needless to say, but we spent it all and then some in the months leading up to our deployment and we were well provisioned when we left for Vietnam. But Frost had more vision than I could deliver. For example, he was bound and determined to get a 5 1/2 ton wrecker so we could pull rotorheads in the field. There is no way an Air Cav Troop was authorized a 5 1/2 ton wrecker!! Try as we may, we never got one. We did have two 2 1/2 ton trucks and Frost wanted to

get 50 cal MG rings mounted on them before we left. He knew we could "find" the 50s once we got to Vietnam. Well, those mounts were WW II or Korean War issue and we never got them either. Later when we got to Vietnam I was still the supply officer and I used to fly C&C with Frost rather frequently. He was a brave man and a hard charger. More than once he scared me half to death with some of the things we did.

A Troop spent the entire month working around Dak To.

For 3 May 1968 - previous editions of this history noted that the VHPA KIA database lists a SGT Herman Jackson killed in action in Thua Thien Province in I Corps while serving in the A Troop Scout platoon. Mike Law researched this and found that this person was incorrectly linked to the 7/17th Cav. CPT Charlie Rayl, the Scout Platoon Leader at the time, verified that the Scout Platoon only had one Jackson. His name is Henry Jackson. He was injured on 18 May 1968 and would later die from these injuries in a VA hospital on 28 Aug 1970.

Also on the 3rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00734 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack at an altitude of 100 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 4th, MAJ Dick Doty assumed command of A Troop replacing MAJ Bob Inglett.

Also on the 4th, A Troop's Scouts found a trail that had recently been used by an estimated NVA company with bicycles. While covering the LOHs, the Guns received fire and returned it. During the BDA after the airstrike, the Scout received intense fire; so the Gun unloaded again and more airstrikes were employed with unknown results.

Also on the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00646 flown by CW2 R. Reyna with Crew Chief SFC B.J. Rorrer. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

While test flying the aircraft to check vibration at 25 feet above the ground, the pilot heard a loud explosion. The aircraft nosed to the left and lost RPM. The pilot autorotated into the POL area. As the aircraft settled, the pilot used full flare to stop the forward speed and keep the aircraft from traveling further down the hill. This caused the main rotor blades to strike the tail rotor drive shaft. The drive shaft was cut into and the tail boom was damaged. The second stage compressor failed due to the crew chief leaving off the FOD shield so they could get into the inlet section of the engine. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 10/1967 as a B Model, was converted to a C Model and sent to Fort Knox, arrived in Vietnam with A Troop, and would serve with A and Headquarters Troop for a total of 1,111 hours on the airframe when it was assigned to another Vietnam unit in 09/1968.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07877 flown by Aircraft Commander CW2 W.L. Wilson and copilot MAJ W.L. Soupene. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission and the accident summary reads:

Tail rotor failure during normal flight. An autorotation was entered. On landing, the main rotor blades flexed down severing the tail boom. Caused by fatigue failure of the tail rotor gear box housing support arm. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database suggests this was a replacement aircraft that had just arrived in Vietnam with 123 hours on the airframe. It also suggests that the aircraft was sent back to CONUS for repairs and that it would return to Vietnam service with another unit.

On the 7th, A Troop found 12 NVA killed during a BDA of a B-52 strike. The Scouts saw three NVA near a bomb crater and quickly dispatched them. Also on the 7th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for A Troop UH-1C #66-00647 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a direct combat support close air support mission, while approaching the target area, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 8th, the B Troop Morning Report states that 1LT Clifford Simpson and SP5 Otis F. Cole were evacuated to the 71st Evac at Pleiku. SP4 Dana Charette who served as a Scout Observer during this period of time recalls that these two soldiers were wounded while flying a LOH. 1LT Simpson was shot in the arm and never returned to the Troop. At this time it is possible that 1LT Simpson was serving as RED 6, the Scout platoon leader. [Editor's note: We have not been able to identify the LOH these men were flying that day.]

On the 12th, **SP4 Darrell Vernon Vance**, a B Troop Blue, died of injuries he had received earlier on 19 March. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 27 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 11B20. Paul Cribbs, an infantryman with D Troop, remembers that B Troop's Blues had been inserted with D Troop during a ground sweep. Vance was wounded and evacuated. Paul recalls that he and others visited Vance in a hospital but that he later died from his injuries.

Also on the 12th, the following article titled "Cav Clashes With Red Force" appeared in May 12th issue of the Ivy Leaf provided by Rick Schoeny. The article had two photos showing infantry credited to SP5 John Stidham:

Kontum – Some 57 soldiers successfully eluded a multi-battalion NVA force nearly two miles from the Cambodian border in a recent action which culminated in the destruction of a 2½-ton enemy truck. The exit under fire came as vastly outnumbered soldiers from the 7/17th Cavalry were awaiting the arrival of the first of a series of extraction helicopters. Seconds after the helicopter had touched down in the LZ, enemy automatic weapons fire, coming from a bamboo thicket just 30 meters from the zone, burst open. As a handful of cavalymen jumped aboard the chopper, others threw back a wall of steel at the foe. Succeeding helicopters braved enemy fire until all 57 cavalymen had been picked up. As the last ship pulled from the LZ, a Cavalry pilot making a strafing run, said the enemy – “So many that I couldn't count them” – was flocking into the same zone. Moments later the besiegers became the besieged. A 7th Squadron gunship strafed an NVA 2½-ton truck, demolishing it. Air strikes pounded bunker complexes, spider holes and bridges destroying the enemy position. Photo caption – A hot cartridge wings by a 7/17th Cav soldier as he sprays an enemy position with M16 rounds during a recent clash near the Cambodian border. At right fellow cavalymen hold off elements of the NVA multi-battalion force which was later strafed by gunships. (USA Photos by SP5 John Stidham)

SP5 George A. McLaughlin Jr. recalls: I remember being the crew chief on 017 this day. It was the last ship out of the LZ that day. I kept copies of the Ivy Leaf when they came out with the story of our action in it.

On the 13th, southwest of Dak To, A Troop's Scouts took six NVA under fire. They scattered in all directions. While searching for the scattered enemy, the Scouts found a small machine gun on wheels, 17 packs and about eight soldiers. In the quick exchange of fire, one NVA was killed. A Troop used their guns, artillery, and airstrikes to kill eight more. The search continued; and when the Scouts found an estimated platoon, six were killed. The Guns rolled in and before the enemy escaped they left 15 more dead.

On the 14th, A Troop worked northwest of Dak To and had the Guns fire up a suspected NVA position. The Scouts confirmed one killed but had to quickly leave the area when the artillery was ready. The Scouts returned and found that the artillery had killed one more; then they killed a third

who was attempting to flee. The Guns spotted three enemy walking along a trail and killed two. When the Scouts came to check this out they found four more and took them under fire. Bad weather forced A Troop from the AO but it had been a good day's work.

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07823 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while hovering at an altitude of 20 feet, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the main rotor system, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. Also on the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00731 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 200 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, main rotor blade system, they made a forced landing and modified the mission, the helicopter took-off and was repaired in theater. Finally on the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15003 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 300 feet and 65 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cockpit, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00735 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 50 knots of airspeed, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they made an emergency landing and terminated the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater and recovered.

Finally on the 17th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record for Headquarters Troop UH-1C #66-15223 flown by an unnamed crew at grid ZB008804 (northeast of Dak Pek) with 4 injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 50 feet and 40 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they crashed and the helicopter was lost to inventory and destroyed. Since UH-1C #66-15223 did not deploy with the Squadron, we must assume it was a replacement aircraft and may have been assigned to A or B Troop even though the VHPA database indicates HHT. After a detailed search for a B Troop UH-1C that was destroyed with 4 injuries, we have selected 223 as the ship SP4 Hoyt Inman was in.

SP4 Hoyt Inman provides: All I can remember about the time I was shot down outside of Dak To is we were flying at altitude, we received gun fire and our engine quit. We autorotated into the tops of the trees. I do not remember it well. I believe my gunner was Perez. I do remember that the engine and transmission came out of the aircraft. The fuselage ended up about 40 or 50 feet off the ground. We were hung up on the vines and under growth. The engine and what was left of the main rotor blades and transmission was hung up about 20 or 30 feet above and to the side of us. Those parts were on fire. Both the pilots were still in their seats with the nose of the aircraft wedged in the undergrowth. I had to get them out by flipping the seats backwards. The Gunner was still in his position and his feet were pinned between the aircraft and the undergrowth. He was screaming for me to get him free. He could see the transmission and engine burning and was afraid it was going to fall on him. I got them all on first medevac helicopter but the McGuirrie Rig broke when they were sending it down for me. So they left me there! You talk about feeling alone! That was the last I ever saw of those three men because their medevac ship took them to Pleiku and they were evacuated out of country. It was over an hour before another medevac came for me. As I was being lifted out, the ship started receiving ground fire. They took off with me hanging about 50 feet from the aircraft. I was trying to bring the two M-60s up with me but being pulled through the trees I drop both of them. That was when I damn near had my left arm pulled off! The medevac took me to the hospital in Kontum and that's why I didn't see the other guys after that. About a week later when I got a ride back to Pleiku. When they dropped me off at the flight line, I was rushed up to the main office. I

learned that the First Sergeant wanted me to call my Mother in the States because they had already sent word that I was MIA. They wanted me to talk to her myself. This was the first time I'd ever talked on a radio phone because I didn't know that they could link a radio transmitter to a land phone.

WO Paul Uster provided: I deployed to Vietnam from Fort Knox on a boat with the 7/1st Cav but I didn't go to Vinh Long with that Squadron. I'd guess that about half of the guys that went over on the boat also didn't go to Vinh Long. When I came in country at Vung Tau, I initially went to an AHC at Cu Chi but I can't tell you which one for about two weeks, then I went up to B/7/17th Cav at Camp Enari. We were on the boat during Tet of 68 and got into Vung Tau not too long after Tet. So I joined B Troop at Enari toward the end of March. I joined the gun platoon and have lots of memories of flying Charlier Model gunships west of Polie Klang. We took a bunch of fire and we took several hits. We were bleeding fuel bad out of the bottom. We flew back to Polie Klang and put it on the ground. I was in the left seat and Mike Hodge was in the right seat. He'd come over to Vietnam in the 7/1st Cav with me but I'm certain I was the AC that day. He flew it in and taxied down the runway and was taking his time. I yelled, "Mike get this thing off the runway, land it someplace and get it shut down!" So he finally moves off. Of course the fuel is mixing with all the dust and pretty soon you can't see out the windshield because it is coated. He finally sets it down on the ground. As soon as he did, I got out of the aircraft. You just don't know if it was going to blowup or not. I think I ran 50 or 60 feet away and turned to look. He is still sitting in there and the engine is still running. The fuel was still dripping on the ground and I figured Wow! So I walked over, opened his door and asked 'What are you doing?' He answered, 'Two minute cool down.' I reached in and shut the fuel off and told him to get out of the aircraft! Then another time I was with Mike at Camp Enari. There was a ditch it seemed to me about half way down the revetment area. We were down on the ground and he wasn't going to make it. I finally had to take it away from him and put it on the ground. He tried to kill me a couple of times! Another story was in May; I think the 17th, when we actually got shot down. Once again west of Polie Klang – really an unbelievable area out there. Myself and – I can't think of his name – but we had a couple of Charlie Models with the anti-tank missile system mounted on them. He was qualified in those missiles. He and I were flying together and it wasn't a missile ship. We took a round in the engine and went down in the jungle. The tree canopy was 80 feet or so. It was tall. I was in the left seat. The crew chief and gunner are in the back. The doors are open. On the way down through the trees, the ship rolled on its right side and beat itself to death. The engine was still running but I remember we had no power, so I'm guessing we must have taken the hit in the power turbine. I remember seeing the temperature was way high. The only injury I received was from my chicken plate that busted my lip. I shut the engine down. The door gunner on the right side had his feet and legs outside the cargo area and under the aircraft. Fortunately there was lots of vegetation that piled up under us on the way down. He had punctured wounds and his legs were broken. The other pilot had a broken and dislocated shoulder from being thrashed around in the armored seat. He was about ready to pass out most of the time. He was ashen white. I believe he was the AC at that time. The ground sloped under us. I opened up the door on my side, climbed out onto the left side of the Huey and got down on the ground. But it was all I could do to get back up on it! The adrenaline had stopped by then and suddenly I was exhausted and weak. It took me a long time to get back up on the aircraft. We had a LOH over the top of us right away. They, of course, called out the Dustoff rescue ship. They dropped the basket down but said they needed some help up there. So stupid me, I let our crew chief go up. He had been hit with a tree branch in the chicken plate. He had a big bruise on his chest but other than that he was OK. We had gotten the door gunner out from the wreck and put him on the ground. The other pilot was pretty much out of it. They sent the basket back down and I got it into the cargo compartment. I loaded the injured gunner into it and before I could stop them from pulling it up, they started reeling it in but it was caught on the back seat. This jerked the straps off of the

stretcher so he and the basket fell back down into the aircraft. Oh, he was happy about that because that really hurt him some more. They had to go back into Kontum, refuel and get another basket, etc. I thought they would never return! It probably took them an hour but it seemed like forever. You know, this isn't right. I'm thinking that we sent the other pilot up first. We were talking over an emergency radio. They sent the basket back down and that is when they wanted the crew chief so he went up. While they were gone it was just I and the injured gunner on the ground. We still had a LOH overhead but I was still nervous. They return and we get the injured gunner up. Now I'm down there all by myself. I'd guess it had been 2 or 2 ½ hours since we crashed. We were certain we had been shot down and how far away are the bad guys? In that jungle you couldn't see more than 30 meters away. It was steep and hilly and the heavy vegetation just compounded the whole problem. I am just waiting to get shot or hear the bad guys coming. Of course you can't hear a lot because you have the helicopters above you. They finally send the basket back down again and I got in. I can't remember – it seems to me that I had some machine guns with me. Now how I got them, I don't know. I know I still had my handgun with me and I guess one machine gun. I'm lying in the basket going up and I'm just certain that I'm going to be shot. As soon as they get me close to the helicopter, they start moving off. Once I'm inside I remember talking to one of the pilots. He is leaving Vietnam tomorrow and I ask, 'What are you doing out here? Thank you very much, but what are you doing out here?'

The 17th was the ending period for the RVN Gallantry Cross with Palm Award for the Squadron. In 1969 via DA General Order #21, the Squadron was awarded the RVN Gallantry Cross for the period 22 Feb 1967 to 17 May 1968.

The July 1968 issue of Hawk, the official newsletter of the 1st Aviation Brigade, listed the following recipients of the Silver Star award from 1 through 18 May 1968: CPT Anthony X. Hoyer of D Troop and CPT Barry T. Oxford of B Troop.

On the 18th, A Troop did a BDA from a B-52 strike west of Dak To. **CW2 Douglas Alexander Walker's** OH-6A #66-07806 received heavy AW fire, crashed and burned on impact at grid YB835285. **SGT Henry Jackson** was his observer. The Wall database gives the following tour start and MOS data: Jackson, unknown, unknown; Walker, 28 Oct 1967, 062B. The wing Scout OH-6A #66-07937, crewed by 1LT Jim Cully and SGT Vic Macias, landed and endeavored to rescue the crew. He quickly came under enemy fire. The second LOH was disabled and part of the crew wounded. A Dust Off ship was called in and rescued the three men. Due to the large NVA force in this area, neither aircraft were extracted. Several airstrikes were directed into the area but no BDA.

1LT Jim Cully wrote the following: Jackson will be one of five people added to the Wall on Memorial Day, May 31, 1999. Seating at the ceremony is open and available starting at 12:00 PM that day. Jackson is buried at Jackson Cemetery, Lori Hill, near Penile Kentucky. His sister, Delia Wilson, will be an official guest. Some Background: On a visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, Charlie Rayl discovered that Sgt. Henry Jackson's name was not listed. Knowing that Jackson had died in a V.A. Hospital in 1971 from wounds he received while serving as an A Troop Scout Observer in May of 1968, Charlie decided to see that this mistake was corrected. He contacted the people responsible for the memorial, and after locating Jackson's sister, gave assistance to her in obtaining and filing the required forms and documentation. Last December word came, after submitting the last eye witness account by MAJ Bob Inglett, that all the requirements for approval to add Jackson's name to the memorial were met.

Jim Cully was a Scout Pilot with A Troop in 1968, call sign Red 11. Jim is currently the ALSE Technician with DynCorp, contracted to the Aviation Technical Test Center, Fort Rucker AL. This past Memorial Day he traveled to Washington DC to attend a very special ceremony. SGT Henry Jackson and five other names were added the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. SGT Jackson died on 28

Aug 1970 at home in Pineville, KY from wounds received in Vietnam on 18 May 1968. Below is a description, in Jim's own words of the action that claimed SGT Jackson and the pilot of his aircraft.

The mission was a BDA (bomb damage assessment) of an Arclight (B52) mission. A Troop was on station with two scout teams consisting of two OH-6As and two UH-1Cs in each and a C&C UH-1H. SGT Vic Macias was my Scout Observer. Our scout team was refueled and waiting in the 'northwest trashy area' at Dak To. A call came that a loach was down in the AO. On arriving at the crash site, we saw the burning OH-6A with the pilot, CW2 Scotty Walker still inside. We later learned that he was probably killed by ground fire prior to crashing. SGT Henry Jackson was severely injured from burns and broken limbs and was lying near the helicopter. Vic Macias got out of our helicopter after I landed near the crash site. A Medevac Crewchief and Vic carried SGT Jackson to the medevac bird. I took a hit and reflectively popped the collective. The helicopter bounded briefly into the air and then landed hard. I pulled the fuel cutoff and jumped into a bomb crater. Vic saw the rotor turning down and returned, joining me in the crater. He touched me on the leg and that scared me so bad that I almost messed myself. I had been waiting for the bad guys to come and was watching our gun ships shoot up their positions. We were in the bomb crater when the Medevac Crewchief came back; he evidently saw our rotor turning down also. We crawled after him, down the hill and back to his bird. The ground fire was so intense that I thought it impossible to fly out. The Medevac crew got us all safely back to Dak To. We are alive today because of A Troop Guns, the Medevac crew and the grace of God.

I am extremely proud of Vic Macias for his actions that day and for winning the Silver Star. Henry Jackson died from his wounds some two years later at his home in Pineville Kentucky. This Memorial Day weekend, I traveled to Washington to attend the ceremony adding Henry's name to the Wall. Also attending were Henry Jackson's sister, Bob Inglett, the Troop Commander, Charlie Rayl, the Scout Platoon Leader, Wayne Miller, Scout Pilot, and Bill Hallinean and Louie Vega both Scout Observers.

Charlie Rayl should be commended for this as through his tireless efforts, SGT Jackson's name was added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Charlie visited the Wall six or seven years ago and noticed the Henry's name was missing. He tracked down relatives and most of the soldiers that participated in the action of 18 May 68. He secured eyewitness statements from all and applied for SGT Jackson's addition to the Memorial.

As a side note, Vic Macias, winner of the Silver Star that day was not an American Citizen. When he returned from Vietnam, he took his papers to a naturalization office and was told by one of the clerks that his Silver Star and a quarter would get him a cup of coffee. Vic was so mad that he didn't apply for citizenship for another 15 years. Though he has the orders for the award, the medal was never issued. Louie Vega worked his way through college and law school and is now a judge in California. Charlie is a lawyer in Kansas and a past president of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

At later years Charlie Rayl stated that Henry Jackson died 28 Aug 1970 and is buried in Pineville, KY. Charlie recalls a visit to Henry's family prior to A Troop departing for Vietnam.

Also for the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage and loss record with injuries for A Troop OH-6A #66-07937 at grid YB835285. Because the grid coordinates are the same, we assume this was the LOH flown by 1LT Jim Cully and Vic Macias that was left near OH-6A #66-07806.

On the 19th, a photo captioned "Assault" appeared on the front page of the May 19th issue the Ivy Leaf credited to SP5 John Stidham. The rest of the caption reads: Cavalrymen from the 7/17th Cav (Airmobile) conduct a line assault on a hilltop west of Kontum. The offensive resulted in the discovery of approximately 200 recently evacuated bunkers and a vast network of tunnels.

On the 20th, 1LT Terry Bishop's diary provides some more details about A Troop. It reads: "Packed LT Cully's things for shipment home. Quite a job. Saw him off – going to Japan – shot in foot."

On the 22nd, another A Troop LOH was shot down and burned north of Dak To. One NVA was killed by the airstrikes put in after the crew was extracted with only minor wounds.

On the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07797 flown by an unnamed crew at grid ZB102455. It is reasonable to assume that this loss dated the 23rd reflects the maintenance records for the one the unit history states was lost on the 22nd.

On the 24th, A Troop's Scouts checked out a small bunker complex, found an NVA soldier hiding in a foxhole, and killed him.

Also on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an battle damage and loss record with fatalities for B Troop OH-6A #66-17752 flown by **CW2 Robert Milton Paulk** and **WO1 Floyd Lee Williams, Jr.** performing a VR mission at grid YB836193. Details are a little sketchy. The Wall database gives the following tour start and MOS data: Paulk, 30 Oct 1967, 062B; Williams, 12 May 1968, 062E. This indicates that Paulk, as the most experienced pilot, was treaching or checking-out Williams. The VHPA records state that they found 50 cal gun pit, flew a second run to mark with smoke, were hit and killed by gun fire or when the LOH crashed and burned. This was a very new replacement aircraft. It only had 31 hours on it when it was destroyed. These events took place in the famous Plei Trap Valley. Please report any further details to Mike Law.

SP4 Dana Charette recalls: I trained at Ft Knox in Armored Recon in Dec and Jan in 6-inches of snow to go fight in the jungles of Vietnam. When I arrived at the 90th Replacement Battalion in Saigon, I kept telling them I wanted to be a door-gunner. I was sent to Nha Trang to the 17th CAG and told them I wanted to be a door-gunner. They sent me to the 7/17th Cav at Camp Enair and I told them I wanted to be a door-gunner. They said, "How would you like to be a Scout?" So I flew in LOHs for 3 ½ to 4 months. My mentor were Rich Hefferman who was a CE on the LOHs and SGT Dave Cottrell who was a lead Scout like I was going to become. And of course the pilots mentored me. WO Robert Paulk was first pilot to take me up in a LOH. Then I flew with WOs Schoeny, Orton, and Ron Nelson. I logged my 17th flight hour with WO Ron Nelson when our LOH was shot to pieces in the OA. It was still flyable so we made a running landing at Dak To. It was something of a fixed wing landing in a helicopter with skids. That bird never flew again. So we were pretty lucky. I don't recall the date and we didn't receive any sort of award for it, so I don't know the date. Then I flew more than 200 additional combat hours. While I wasn't shot down again, we were shot at quite frequently. Then this LOH CE named SP4 Dan Therrien gave me the nickname of magnet ass. The weapon they gave me when I started flying LOHs was a 38 caliber pistol. I remember I had to borrow an M16 from the clerk/typist to use in the AO. When B Troop first came over, they had trained to have an AC in the right seat, a CP in the left seat, and the Observer sitting in the back with an M60. We also had a mini-gun with 2,000 rounds of ammo. They discovered that when they were actually going to engage the enemy, this is too much weight. So they decided to take away the position of an Observer in the back with an M60 and his ammo and replace the CP with the Observer – so the Observer was now left seat of the pilot. Thus the weight of one man, one M60 and its ammo was taken away. This made the LOH much more nimble in the AO. In Bravo Troop, the pilots wanted a full set of controls for the Observer. This is the way I remember the leadership in the Scout platoon. After CPT Hayman died in early April, CPT Marty Peterson took the job. When Marty moved to Operations in May, I believe CPT Gibbins was RED 6. I was flying with CPT Gibbins when Robert Paulk was shot down. I remember 1LT Simpson and flew with him several. I don't think 1LT Simpson was ever RED 6 but if he was it would be between CPT Peterson and CPT Gibbins and 1LT Simpson wouldn't be in that job very long at all. In fact in early May he crashed into a tree and broke his arm. He was evacuated and never returned to the unit. My friend SP4 Dan Therrien was the Observer that day with Simpson. Dan was just fine

as far as not being injured. He continued to be a LOH CE. I flew with CPT Gibbins a few times and then I transferred to Flight Operations. I seem to recall the Gibbins was wounded soon after we got to Phan Thiet. A little before I transferred out of the Scouts I started flying with a new pilot 1LT Mike Roney. This is how our officers were trained in LOHs, even though they were already trained pilots, they would fly with a seasoned LOH pilot for a few missions until they got the gist of how things were done. Then they'd fly with a seasoned Observer. I was 1LT Roney's first Observer. I remember we cranked up the LOH and he said, "By the way I've never been shot at." I smiled at him and asked if he knew my nickname? Well, he was shot at that day! Now eventually 1LT Roney ended up being the Scout platoon leader - RED 6 but this was well after I'd left the Scout platoon. I had 225 Combat hours and I did this in 3½ to 4 months. I'd been something of a WWII amateur aviation historian. I recalled that if the B17 crews flew 25 missions – that was considered their tour of duty. It took them anywhere from 11 to 13 months to accrue 25 missions. Their missions averaged between 8 and 12 hours, so 10 hours. So I did the equivalent of 25 B17 missions but I did it in 3½ months. I figured my dues had been paid especially since I'd earned the magnet ass nickname.

Finally on the 24th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop OH-6A #66-14412 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 100 feet and 100 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The database indicates that 412 was a factory fresh replacement aircraft and that in August this aircraft was assigned to A Troop, so maybe it was an A Troop aircraft when this event occurred.

On the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop OH-6A #66-17794 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, at an altitude of 20 feet and 80 knots of airspeed, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater. The database indicates that 794 was a factory fresh replacement aircraft and that in August this aircraft was assigned to B Troop, so maybe it was a B Troop aircraft when this event occurred. Also on the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00735 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, during the attack approach target area, they took two hits from 7.62mm type SA/AW in the cargo section, tail section, they continued flying and completed the mission, the helicopter was repaired in theater.

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17782 flown by WO1 J.H. Sydow who suffered minor injuries at Di An, Bien Hoa Province, III Corps. The Accident Summary: During a landing approach to the runway, the nose yawed to the left. The pilot noticed the rotor RPM was dropping and the engine RPM was gone and tried to shoot an autorotation. The aircraft came down fast and hard which caused great damage. The fuel line was not connected. Editor's note: This was a factory fresh aircraft that may have been in the replacement pipe-line some place in III Corps for B Troop. The damage was so extensive that the aircraft would be assigned to various maintenance organizations until August of 1969.

On the 28th, B Troop's maintenance section published the first issue (Vol 1, No. 1.) of the 'Doofless Drifters Digest'. You can see a digital scan of this issue on B Troop's website. At the bottom of the page we read that there were seven newsletters printed at Camp Enari from late May until possibly the first move to Phan Thiet. CW3 Bill Walton and his 'HQ Circle Red X Ranch' maintenance team were primarily responsible for this publication. Bill has four of the seven copies and is interested in obtaining the rest. What follows is an edited version of a photo copy of this issue that appears in the B Troop website.

The purpose of this particular 'skinny sheet' is to pass on maintenance info and tips, publicize 'goofs' and give our praise where it is warranted. It will be published once a week, on Tuesdays, maintenance workload and Charlie's marksmanship permitting. Contributions and/or comments are solicited and appreciated. [Editor's notes: This issue had two columns containing about 11 articles.] The first article is titled 'Aircraft damaged by gunfire since 18 May 1968' and contains three groups of statistics: VC & NVA, 2; Crewchiefs & Gunners, 3; and Pilots, 1 with the comment: "At this time we are slightly ahead of Charlie, so lets see what we can do to keep our part of the score down. It is realized that it is quite hard in the heat of battle to exercise discretion but remember the aircraft that you shoot down may be your own!" Another article is titled 'Write Up Six of the Week.' It reads: The pilot who made the most unreadable write-ups. WO1 Uster. Another article is titled: 'Crew Chief with the least mistakes on his aircraft forms' – it lists SP5 Amadeus Sandoval. Another article is titled: 'Most Nervous Pilot of the Week' – it lists Charlie Rhyne with the comment, 'Would you believe his aircraft was shot up twice in three days by his own crew!!'

B Troop's aircraft maintenance team also showed their creative and humorous side when they built the first OH-6G (gunship). CW3 Bill Walton wrote the following: Here is the story as to how the OH-6G came to be. We were still at Camp Enari when one day, in 1968, we were a little "short" on mission ready UH-1Cs so my Maintenance section decided to "modify" an OH-6A. With the assistance of Armament Specialist Tony Holmes, I hung rocket pods on angle irons that were laid in the floor and stuck out of both sides of the aircraft. Then we hung an empty 40mm grenade launcher turret on the front of the bubble using safety wire. The tube sticking out of the turret was a rolled up file folder which Holmes painted black using shoe polish. We called it "our OH6G" (Gunship) and I invited all the Scout pilots to come, look, and fly if they wanted to. Of course all they could do was look and take pictures. After the photo session, we removed the weapons system and it was an OH6A again. This picture (on a unknown website) somehow made it to the Army Aviation School, at Ft Rucker Alabama, and was copied and used so many times (in pre email/digital days) that it had become almost a line drawing. The last time I saw it at the Avn School was the winter of 1970. A few years ago Hughes aircraft discovered the OH-6G picture and wanted to use it. I agreed but told them there was a major problem with the original slide as, apparently, the processing chemicals in the Pleiku PX were too hot/whatever and there were minor cracks in the emulsion (which are readily seen). They told me that they could fix it, so I mailed the slide to them, but they returned it with the remark that the cracks in the emulsion were more than they could handle.

On the 29th, A Troop's Gun noticed the blast from a mortar. Luckily a set of jets were "on station" and were quickly directed again the mortar position. The position was destroyed and three secondary explosions observed.

On the 30th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-15066 flown by an unnamed crew. There was one reported injury. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while leaving the target area, they took one hit from 7.62mm type SA/AW, they continued flying but aborted the mission.

Finally, still in the States, C Troop had completed its ATTs and prepared its aircraft and vehicles for shipment by the end of May. The aircraft were flown to Sharp Army Depot. Those who took part in that "operation" have many fond memories. If you see a Chaparral ask him about the close-up pictures of the "O" on the Goodyear blimp or the fat lady's poodle at the pool in Tucson used as a "ball" for water polo!

The August 1968 issue of Hawk, the official newsletter of the 1st Aviation Brigade, listed the following recipients of the Silver Star award from 15 May to 14 Jun 1968: MAJ Alfred J. Iller of HHT.

SP4 Ernie Lamb recalls: I DEROSed in June from A Troop. I started my time with the 7/17th Cav with the 67N20 MOS but became a 67V50 for the OH-6A. During my tour I flew a little but spent

most of my time in maintenance. I often went to the staging areas to provide immediate support of the aircraft. After the War I remained in contact with many of the A Troopers that went over on the boat. I've returned to Vietnam six times with various friends including CPT Bob Young.

Don Oliver provides us with a very good insight of the fighting north of the Dak To area: It wasn't long after the 173rd got into their hilltop positions on three hills overlooking Dak Pek and a couple of clicks to the west that the NVA opened up from the entire length of the higher ridge line that ran north and south a few more clicks to the west. Resupply to the 173rd hilltops became very dangerous and I remember that the 179th lost a Chinook that was shot down from above by 12.7 mm fire. The battle for the hilltops became a three-day exercise in close air support for which I had a ringside seat as my ship was MAJ Longhofer's C&C. Longhofer worked very closely with the Air Force FAC to alternate gunship runs with airstrikes. After three full days of nearly continuous air attack the NVA were still at it - Scouts reported seeing them launching their 122mm rockets from gaps in the tree line at the top of the ridge. The FAC driver even got a good secondary with a smoke rocket. Finally, the powers that decide such things had had enough. Normal "Arc Light" rules were set aside and a flight of six B-52s made a daylight drop at about 15,000 feet. When the smoke cleared, the battle was over. The ridge line became a tomb for that NVA force. When the B-52s came in, all other aircraft except our C&C were ordered out. Flying with Jim Longhofer was a real experience. He had deployed as the Scout Platoon Commander, then moved to Opns, XO and finally CO. As CO he was more careful than most to make sure the whole crew knew what we were up to and why they were doing it. Longhofer's style was to get his chin bubbles right down in the weeds like a Scout ship. He apparently never forgot his "redbird" heritage. On the other hand, he was not a cowboy, and we never lost people or aircraft because of an ill-considered risk. He was an excellent combat officer who led by a quiet, intelligent example and respected his people for who they were and what they could do when allowed to take the initiative.

June 1968

Editor's Note: While A Troop's Annual Unit History provides some details about their participation in the fighting north of Dak To during this month, B Troop's provides no details concerning their involvement in the fighting north of Dak To in the Dak Pek and Dak Seang area.

For Saturday, the 1st, Rick Schoeny's Diary reads: Back to FB-29. We finally got the Blues on the ground and recovered the two bodies from Paulk's wreck. My last day in the AO with another pilot, from now on it is me (Red-17) and an observer.

For Sunday, the 2nd, Rick Schoeny's Diary reads: My first day as Red-17. We worked west of Dak To and worked the area NW of Fire Base 25. We worked with the ground troops in the area by scouting ahead of them and by covering their flanks. Knocked off at 19:00 and had to RON at Dak To because of the weather. Word has it that we will be switching off with A Troop every other night.

On the 3rd, while operating southwest of Kontum, A Troop found four large openings with stairs going into the ground. The Blues were inserted and discovered that the bunkers had been used for ammunition storage. While screening around the Blues, the Scouts found two NVA and killed them.

Also on the 3rd, B Troop UH-1H #66-16022 was destroyed in its revetment.

SP5 Joseph Morrison provides: I was an Avionic Repairman. I'd reported to Ft. Knox in Jan 1967 and came to Vietnam with the advanced party. I was assigned to HHT. June 3rd was pretty much a routine day, not much happening. I sat in the Avionics shop most of the day reading a book. That evening SP4 Bill (W. R.) King and I were on call and by 7:30 that night I had received three calls regarding aircraft with Avionics problems, none of which sounded too serious. W.R. was outside at the rear of the Avionics shop trying to get a model airplane to fly. I decided to leave him to enjoy himself, grabbed my headset and my tool kit and jumped in the jeep and drove off to the first tail

number. I pulled up and the crew chief, named Murph, was on the roof of the Huey. I jumped out and shouted up to him, "Hey Murph, we got a call you have an Avionics problem?" He said, "Yeah, the ADF isn't working, can you take a look?" I said it was probably a waste of time because we couldn't get parts for the ADF systems. The ADF was short for Automatic Direction Finder. Most of the pilots used it to listen to Armed Forces Radio. He pleaded with me, telling me that a certain pilot who was a royal pain in the ass if everything wasn't just right was flying his chopper the next day and couldn't I please take a look. If I didn't sign off on his logbook he would take a lot of grief. I agreed to take a look. I opened the left side pilot's door and climbed up in the seat. Settling the headset over my head covering my right ear but not the left, I reached up flipped the battery switch to the ON position. Then I turned the ADF power knob to the ON position. I was rewarded with nothing but silence. I turned the ADF power switch OFF and flipped the batter to the OFF position. I climbed down and walked to the rear of the chopper where I popped the door that housed the ADF radio. I looked inside and found two plugs dangling loose. The plugs were for the AC/DC interlock relay which controlled the ADF. Someone had removed the relay - probably one of our guys. We were having a lot of trouble getting replacement parts such as the AC/DC interlock relay. I was distracted for a moment for some reason as I bounced the plugs in my hand. The next thing I felt and heard was a loud explosion. My arm, face and hair were on fire. I guess instincts or training kicked in at that point. I hit the ground rolling around until the fire was out. As I was rolling around I saw that the helicopter was engulfed in flames. I thought I'd better get out of there before it blows or the M-60 ammo inside starts going off. I picked myself up and ran to the next revetment where another crew-chief pulled me down behind the protection of the revetment and told me to lie down. I told him, "No! Murph was probably hurt!" He said, "No, Murph jumped clear but you are hurt." About that point I realized I was in serious pain. I felt like I imaged it would be to get hit by a Mack truck head on. A little bit later, not sure how long, one of our guys, a medic, from Pittsburgh, PA was at my side tending to me. He kept saying, "Remember Pittsburgh" over and over again. He and I got along pretty good. As I said he was from Pittsburgh and he knew I was from western Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, I can't seem to recall his name. He was pretty shook up. They brought a medical jeep around, loaded me on a stretcher and took me to the base medical facility. This was an emergency only location. They cut off all my clothes except my boxer shorts and examined me. I had been given some morphine so I wasn't really very lucid. They loaded me on a Medivac Huey. The Huey took off and we flew to the other side of Pleiku to the Air Force base hospital. We landed and two guys picked up the stretcher. They carried me to the emergency room. I remember they were bouncing me around pretty good on the stretcher and I hollered at them to get in step to stop the bouncing. They took me inside. I was examined again and taken for x-rays. I can remember clowning around because I was so high on the morphine that I was even posing for the x-rays! A doctor came in with my x-rays. He told me I had shrapnel in my liver and they were going to have to operate. I told him while he was in there he might as well take out my appendices - why waste the trip. He very seriously told me he couldn't do that. A medic showed up with a straight razor and told me he was going to have to shave my chest. I told him, "Ok, but to be careful!" The next thing I remember I was wheeled into the operating room and I was staring up into this very large light over my head. Someone said to me start counting from 100 backwards. I said 100, 99, 9... That was last thing I remembered until I was being wheeled outside under a covered walkway to what I would later learn was a Quonset hut ward with probably forty beds lined up along each side the length of the building. I would later learn there was a latrine with showers with both hot and cold water the other end. They put me into a bed. That night was very rough. I was in a lot of pain. My chest felt like someone was squeezing it in a vice. My right arm was in a cast from wrist to shoulder. It was bent at a 90-degree angle at the elbow and hung up to keep my arm from swelling up. My left arm had an IV drip running through it. So I was confined to lying on my back. The nurse that night was very understanding. She gave me more morphine but after awhile told me she couldn't give me any more. She stayed by my bedside holding my hand until I finally fell asleep from exhaustion. The

next morning when I awoke I was still in a lot of pain. When the surgeon came by first thing in the morning, I told him about the pain. He muttered something, then reached down and jerked the tape that was holding a bandage over my chest where they had cut me to get the shrapnel out of my liver. I immediately felt better - the pain was gone. He told me, "I tell the nurses to be sure to not tighten the tape when a patient is exhaling but occasionally they tighten the tape up when your lungs are empty. That is why you were in such pain. Feel better now?" I told him yes, and thanked him. He told me he would be back later. Sometime during the day, some of the guys from the Commo Platoon stopped by to visit me. I remember Joe Caputo, Bill King, Pete Bulka and maybe Ted Ziezler. A couple of days later CPT Basta and MAJ Brown (maybe even the Colonel) stopped by to see me. They told me not to worry - that if anyone said anything about coming back to Vietnam I was to find a land line and call. At some point SGT Burnett and CPT Fligg stopped in to see me. A day or so after surgery, I was sitting up in the bed. The doctor came by with a tray of food. He said, "I think it's time for you to eat some solid food." I said, "Bring it on! I'm starved!" He told me to take it easy and began feeding me because I couldn't use either hand. After about a dozen bites I was full. The Doctor chuckled and told me I had done real good. One night I dictated a letter home to my mother. The nurse was nice enough to write and mail for me. The next night they came through and told us if we wanted to call home they had a link with a high-frequency radio that we could use. The radio operator would call another radio operator in the States and that guy would call your home using the telephone. This way you could talk to the person stateside. You had to remember to say 'over' after you spoke. Unfortunately, there were a few rules. We couldn't tell them we were hurt. We couldn't tell them where we were or any of that stuff. I got to talk to my mother for a minute and then went back to the ward. Later I would learn that I had almost missed her as she had been leaving to go to the store, had forgotten something and got out of the car, and come back in the house as the phone was ringing. A few days later she would receive the letter from the nurse. She felt better about me because she had spoken to me and she knew I wasn't dead. I spent a week in the hospital there in Pleiku. Then they moved me by airplane to Cam Ranh Bay. I spent a day there before they loaded me on another plane destined for Japan. I was a week in the hospital in Japan. They cut the cast off my arm took x-rays and recast the arm. Then laying on a stretcher I was loaded onto an Air Force plane. I was strapped into the bottom spot a few inches off the floor. The stretchers were stacked three high. The plane was full of guys on stretchers and some in wheelchairs. We stopped someplace during the long flight to drop some of the guys off before arriving at Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington D.C. During the flight one of the straps broke that held the stretcher in place. Fortunately I was so close to the floor it was only a small bump when the stretcher hit the floor. The plane landed at Andrews in the early morning hours. Each guy was loaded into his own ambulance and transported to Walter Reed Army Hospital. Some guys were transported to other hospitals. Upon arrival at Walter Reed I was placed in a wheel chair and an American Red Cross nurse or volunteer wheeled me up to a pay phone. She asked me where my family lived. I told her Pennsylvania and she said the Red Cross was paying for a call for me to call home. I told her it is the middle of the night (actually about 4 a.m.) and I didn't want to wake my folks up. She said if I was her son and had just got back in the States she would want a phone call. So we called home. Mom answered and I told her where I was. She sounded real happy to hear from me. They put me in a ward for the night. The next day after I woke up and ate breakfast, they took me up through the paraplegic ward to remove my cast for x-rays. There were all these guys in their beds on that ward missing arms, legs and, in some cases, with no limbs at all. It was pretty gruesome! I felt really fortunate. I would spend three weeks at Walter Reed before returning to active duty. My one regret was I turned down a Purple Heart while I was Walter Reed. Later I wrote several letters but the request for the medal was denied as they claimed they had no record of me being injured in Viet Nam. I've still got pieces of metal in me but was glad to attend the Squadron Reunion in 2009.



What was left of B Troop UH-1H #66-16022. Photos provided by 1LT Ken Philley

SP5 Bill King wrote the following to Joe Morrison: It was around 6 p.m. on June 3rd, you and I were working the evening shift. You know some of the guys had gotten interested in flying model airplanes over there, myself included and several of our pilots as well. Anyway, someone came in the avionics shop, that evening, and said he was having trouble getting the engine started on his plane and asked me if I could help him. So, I went out and started cranking on the thing. I was out there flipping the prop over and over and it would sputter a little, but wouldn't start. You stuck your head out of the shop door and said, "Come on we got some work to do." I hollered back, "Okay Joe, be there in a minute." But, I kept cranking on the plane. Then again you hollered out the door, "Let's go we've got a problem to work on." and again I hollered back, "Be there in a minute." but I was intent on getting that engine started, and I kept cranking on it. Now to tell you the truth, I don't remember if I ever got the thing started or not, but when I went back to the shop you had already left. I didn't know which helicopter you had gone to and I figured you would be right back so, I sat down at the desk and was writing a letter to my mother, that I had started earlier that day. All of a sudden it was like the chair I was sitting in dropped out from under me. There was a tremendous concussion and explosion. I ran to the door. There was a tremendous fireball out on the flight line. I didn't know what had happened, I thought for a second or two that we were under attack. I saw a lot of guys running in the direction of the fire, so I started running too. I ran so fast that I fell down. I got up and kept running when all at once I could see our jeep right in front of the fire. I was within 50 yards or so of the fire when the ammunition started going off so I ducked behind a revetment wall and stayed there until it quieted down. I don't remember much after that. I was just kind of wondering around stunned and didn't know if you were alive or dead. I think it was Mr. Archer that grabbed me and said they had gotten you out and had taken you to the hospital. I went to see you in the hospital a few days later. Your arm from the shoulder down was in a cast and you looked pretty rough, so I figured you would go back to the states and be discharged. You were pretty lucky that day because the rocket hit not six feet from where you were and where the fuel tanks were. Plus you were trapped in between the revetment wall and the helicopter. I have always wondered, what if both of us had been out there? I don't know if both of us could have been that lucky!

Don Oliver recalls: I was the CE on UH-1H #66-16022 on deployment to RVN, but some months after we got in-country SFC John Bonds asked me to take over 018 which had become a parts depot to keep the other lift ships aloft. As it happened, Chris Murphree (not Murphy) had been in Scout maintenance, then went aircrew as a Scout. After some VERY hair-raising adventures, he transferred into the Lift and took over 022. He got a squared-away ship in which to transition to Bell equipment and I was tasked with getting 018 back in the air. On the day in question (as I distinctly recall the incident after 30-some years) Sandy Sandoval, Dennis Henson, Bill Hahn and I had finished our post-flight maintenance and were walking back up to the maintenance shack when we heard the rockets launch from the Charlie. As I recall the incident, Chris was buttoning down the

engine cowling from the ground on the left side of the aircraft and an avionics tech was just finishing some work in the nose bay. The 2.75 rocket hit the lower right side of the aircraft just forward of the tailboom junction, igniting the aft fuel cells. (Had the rocket hit in the engine exhaust stack, the engine would have been destroyed. It is still relatively intact in my photos.) As related, 022 burned to the ground. Chris was never quite sure how he got out of the revetment. As he related what happened, he found himself on the ground directly outside the revetment from where he would have been standing relative to the engine cowling. He was in pretty good shape and he may have gone over the top of the revetment. I recall that the avionics tech had a cut on his forehead. From what was discussed in the EM club after the incident, we understood that the armorer had changed the lamp in the sight reticle on the Charlie and powered up the system to check the light. While Bill Walton has a better handle on this, we were told he had confirmed that the armorer had the breakers pulled when he hit the switch, but the pair launched anyway. (While I do NOT do rockets, I was told that it only took around 1.5 volts to launch a pair.) The armorer's jeep and driver were parked in front of the Charlie with the driver sitting in the jeep. This vehicle took the right hand rocket as described, but the missing fact is that the motor kept burning after it hit the jeep. It had not made enough turns to arm the warhead as the jeep was only 15 to 20 feet in front of the rocket pod. I do not know the identity of the driver (a young soldier of the infantry persuasion), but I heard that he was last seen on a heading of 090 degrees from the jeep at an altitude of approximately four feet saying, "Feet, don't fail me now!" Meanwhile the armorer, who was just doing his job, had to endure comments at the EM club bar to the effect that, "Gee, just four more and you're an NVA ace!" As noted above, I do have pictures of 022 after the incident and I would be happy to share them. I also recall that she burned so fast that when the fire trucks got there from Hensel Field she was already gone. While we were certainly familiar with the concept of "marking the LZ with a burning LOH," the idea that a LIFT SHIP could meet such a fate (particularly at the hands of a gunship!) was a little unsettling. As I recall it, Jim Rucker and Rick Schoeny speculated on our next flight to the effect that, "Gee, those guys have always been jealous of how easy we can take off . . ."

CPT Bill Ipock and CWO Rob Woodside flew Guns for B Troop during this period. They met each other for the first time in years at the Atlanta VHPA Reunion. Together they provided the following story: It was late in the afternoon. Most everyone was back in the hooches but the maintenance crews were taking advantage of the last of the sunlight on the flight line. Suddenly there was the unmistakable SWOOCH sound of a rocket motor and a loud explosion. Everyone hit the dirt believing it was enemy incoming. After a few minutes of calm, people started coming out from under cover and moved toward the flight line where the sounds had come from. As it turns out someone in B Troop's maintenance was making an adjustment to the electrical components of the weapon system on a UH-1C. He had powered up the system and accidentally touched off a pair of rockets. One rocket went up the tail pipe of an H model while two guys had the rear cowling open working in the engine compartment. If the rocket had not actually gone into the engine cone before exploding, it could have been much more serious for these men. The explosion knocked them from the Huey and though they were dazed and shaken, they were otherwise unhurt. The Huey burned completely and kept everyone away when the ammo started cooking off. The revetment was also badly burned and became a long-term reminder to everyone of this event. The second rocket hit the jeep just after the front wheel well, before the driver's compartment, and embedded its warhead in the engine block. Rob has some good pictures of both the jeep with the white rocket tube clearly protruding from its side and the roped off revet containing what little was left of the Huey the next morning. Rob said the next day, a Skycrane came in with a long, long cable to sling the jeep from the flight line and drop it someplace far away (like in a lake maybe?).

For Monday, the 8th, Rick Schoeny's Diary reads: I slept in the Chapel on one of the benches and with no shower, shave or tooth brush but we had to fly today so the grubby group worked the same area. A Troop worked Kontum and at 16:30 they came up to Dak To to spend the night. We were

back at Camp Enari by 17:30. At about 19:00 there was a roar and then an explosion. It sounded like incoming rockets so we headed for the ditch. It turned out that a gun ship cooked off a pair of rockets and hit a slick (O22-my old ship). No one was hurt but a part of me went with the ship. It was mine for 14 months.

On the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident with injury record for A Troop OH-6A #66-17815 at An Khe flown by WO1 A.D. Wilder had minor injuries and SP5 Hallinnewa. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was turned in, repaired by Hughes Aircraft in CONUS, and returned to serve with A Troop in April 1969. The decoded details of the record state that this was a combat mission. The Accident Summary: Pilot was enroute to refuel and heard a loud clanging sound. The aircraft began to vibrate and the pilot had no tail rotor control. The engine RPM decreased to 82 percent and the pilot autorotated into a partially cleared field. The rotor blades severed the tail boom during landing. Suspect drive shaft failure of the tail rotor.

On the 6th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record B Troop UH-1H #66-16022. This aircraft was destroyed by a 2.75" rocket accidentally fired by a maintenance team working on a nearby UH-1C in the revetment area at Camp Enari. Two men were working on the aircraft at the time. The CE, Chris Murphree, was working up top. He jumped off and was not injured. The Avionic Repairment, SP5 Joseph Morrison, was seriously injured in this accident and was evacuated to the States. Tony Holmes was working on the Charlie Model and had parked a jeep in front of it. Additional Details: The US Army Goldbook database provides a history of this helicopter. It joined the Army inventory in 02/1967, arrived in Vietnam with the Squadron with 83 hours, and had logged 550 hours as of 05/1968.

On the 7th, while still working southwest of Kontum, A Troop received a change of mission to support a friendly unit that had been surrounded and had several casualties. While the Guns laid down suppressive fire, the Scout got the unit to a hasty PZ where the Lift picked them up.

On the 8th, MAJ Jim Longhofer assumed command of B Troop replacing MAJ Robert A. Hefford.

On the 8th, the following article titled "Avn Cavalry Extracted Under Fire" appeared on page 6 of the 8 Jun 1968 issue the Army Reporter which was provided by Joe Caputo:

Dragon Mountain, (1st Avn IO Photos by SP5 John T. Stidham, 1st Avn-IO) – Continuing their support of Operation MacArthur, ground troops of the 7/17th Cavalry, 1st Aviation Brigade were recently inserted into the midst of a highly developed NVA basecamp in the Central Highlands near the Cambodian border. But before a complete ground sweep of the camp could be completed, the squadron was informed of a brigade-size enemy unit closing in, making immediate extraction from the area necessary. Previously helicopter crews had sighted approximately 50 bunkers, 30 foxholes and 24 huts linked by a network of roads and trails crossing 10 bridges. The site appeared to be a staging area for the supply routes from the border four miles to the west. One observation helicopter pilot spotted a deserted truck parked along one of the roads. "Following heavy pounding from tactical air strikes and gunships, the ground elements of the squadron were inserted into the area. CPT Anthony X. Hoyer, D Troop commander, led his 57-man platoon directly toward the NVA bunker complex. Before reaching their objective, however, the troops were informed of a brigade-size NVA force which had been spotted nearby. The platoon was ordered to return to the LZ for extraction. "As the first ship came in, all hell broke loose, and they began lobbing in mortar rounds and automatic weapons fire on our right flank," reported SP5 John T. Stidham. "They were firing on us as we boarded the ships and while we were being lifted out." Heavy concentrations of artillery and air strikes continued to pound the enemy after the troops were extracted from the area. There was no report of enemy casualties. Four photos accompanied this article showing one Huey and several infantry without mentioning any new names.

Also on the 8th, the following article titled "17th Cavalry Seeks, Finds Mt Complex" appeared on page 3 of the 8 Jun 1968 issue the Army Reporter which was provided by Joe Caputo:

Dragon Mountain, (1st Avn-IO) – In a joint Troop effort the 7/17th Air Cavalry sought out another large enemy stronghold in the mountains northwest of Kontum recently. Of the 450 bunkers sighted, 50 per cent had been vacated within the last 24 hours and many others were still occupied by elements of the NVA brigade that had been operating out of the huge complex. Other fortifications spotted in the stronghold by the aerial scout teams included 500-600 feet of trenches, 50 foxholes, 4 hooches plus 2 mortar, 2 anti-aircraft and 2 rocket positions. Recon by fire was conducted by helicopter crews from both A and B Troops. They received some automatic weapons and .50-call anti-aircraft fire from scattered enemy positions throughout the area. One of the anti-aircraft guns was destroyed, along with a long NVA soldier caught in the area. The gunships and light observation helicopters killed three other NVA soldiers during this phase of the operation. The two aerial troops then flew in 36 ground troops from the Squadron's D Troop. The Infantrymen, under the command of CPT Anthony X. Hoyer, Haverstraw, NY, destroyed the other anti-aircraft gun, as well as 15 bunkers, all of which had been abandoned by the enemy when tactical air strikes were called in earlier. Before being extracted the scout platoon captured an assortment of equipment which included a variety of rocket parts intended for the maintenance of the rocket launching sites destroyed in the air strikes. Minigun and rocket strikes were made on the entire area by the 17th CAG helicopters repeatedly during the operation. Several tactical air strikes and artillery shellings were also called in.

On the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for A Troop OH-6A #66-07877 without any further details.

On the 12th, while performing a VR mission west of Kontum at grid YA896732, A Troop OH-6A #66-17812 exploded in mid-air killing **WO1 Herbert W. Scott** and **SGT John T. O'Donnel**. The Wall database gives the following tour start and MOS data: O'Donnel, 3 Apr 1968, 11D20; Scott, 11 Jan 1968, 062B. The Blues were inserted and recovered the bodies.

CW2 Robert Bob Reyna provides: //from tape recording//

On the 15th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for Headquarters Troop OH-6A #66-07915 flown by an unnamed crew. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while hovering in the AO, they took three hits from 14.5mm and 12.7mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, cargo section, and fuselage, they made a forced landing, the helicopter was repaired in theater and recovered. The database indicates that 915 was a factory fresh replacement aircraft and that in August this aircraft was assigned to B Troop, so maybe it was a B Troop aircraft when this event occurred.

On the 18th, **SGT Richard Robert Antonovich** of D Troop was killed at Camp Enari. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 10 Oct 1967 and his MOS as 11H20. Philip (Flip) Keilman recalls:

I served in HHT from Dec 1967 until Dec 1968. I worked in the personnel (S-1) shop for ILT David P Horstick. I arrived as an E-2 and left as an E-5. My parents wouldn't let me enlist as an IIB and that really made me mad. I felt I wasn't doing enough as a clerk in Vietnam so I volunteered to go out on missions with the 4th ID and D Troop. Anyway, I went on several missions and even got to fly as door gunner fairly frequently. Everyone thought I was crazy for going out when I didn't HAVE to. I knew SGT Terry Shields very well. He was one of the guys in my hooch. He worked in the S-3 shop. Anyway, I was in the bunkers the night Antonovich was killed. Whenever I go to the Wall I always remember him. The supporting information for the Wall lists the cause of his death as hostile action, small arms and then indicated-"misadventure", which is I believe how they identify friendly fire incidents. We may never know exactly what caused him to end up in the perimeter wire

and be mistaken for Charlie. I remember when the bunker line was ordered to fire. We thought there were bad guys in the wire. Another sad incident from Vietnam.

Also on the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop OH-6A #66-14393 at An Khe flown by WO1 A.D. Wilder who had minor injuries. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was turned in, repaired by Hughes Aircraft in CONUS, and returned to Vietnam to serve with B/7/17th Cav in September 1969. The Accident Summary: N2 RPM dropped. A partly cleared area was selected for a landing. At termination of the approach the engine and rotor RPM dropped rapidly. The aircraft fell through resulting in minor damage to the aircraft. There was sand on the first three stages of the compressor rotor assembly and compressor.

Finally on the 18th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15064 at An Khe flown by Aircraft Commander 1LT W.A. Post and WO1 W.F. Bates who had minor injuries. The Accident Summary: The aircraft was hovering out to the runway for takeoff and the right skid caught on the side of an aluminum plank of the runway causing the aircraft to pitch to the right. The main rotor struck the runway causing the aircraft to turn left. The main rotor severed the tail boom. The transmission was pulled from the aircraft. The reader should note that the An Khe location mentioned in the VHPA database might be related to some aircraft maintenance region that at this time supported the 7/17th Cav. It seems more likely that A Troop was flying out of Camp Enari on this day. A good example of this can be seen in the July 5th record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15205. The VHPA database indicates the location is An Khe while the accident narrative clearly states they were at Plei Mrong flying between Camp Enari and Dak To. Anyone with specific knowledge of these events and locations is encouraged to contact Mike Law.

On the 19th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a battle damage record for B Troop UH-1C #66-00732 flown by an unnamed crew who experienced two injuries. The decoded details of the record state that this was a recon mission, while at an altitude of 15 feet and 85 knots of airspeed, they took eight hits from 12.7mm and 7.62mm type SA/AW which hit the cockpit, cargo section, and engine compartment, they made a forced landing then took-off. The helicopter was repaired in theater. We believe CW2 Frank Archer was in this aircraft. He was wounded in both legs and the lower abdomen from five hits that came up through the floor. He was evacuated to Japan and remained in a body cast until late in the year.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for A Troop UH-1C #66-15064 flown by an unnamed crew at grid YA862474. It is reasonable to assume that maintenance action was caused by the accident on the 18th.

On the 21st, A Troop's Scouts received intense small arms fire and observed about 30 individuals and ten bunkers while working west of Camp Enari. Artillery and airstrikes were called in and killed three NVA.

569th TC Detachment assigned to B Troop

About the 24th, the 569th TC Detachment was attached to B Troop to augment their maintenance capability. SP5 Raymond L. Unger, recalls:

The 569th T.C. Aviation Detachment was formed on 15 April 1968 at Fort Campbell, KY. Men were transferred in from various places, mostly straight out of AIT. I had been at Fort Campbell since January with the 6th Artillery Battalion of the 6th Infantry Division so I didn't have far to go. We were platoon strength unit and had two sergeants in charge. They were SFC Ohman and SSG James D. Trommatter. We spent the next two months training for duty in Vietnam. We were never told this officially but we trained in mock jungle villages, trained for convoy ambushes, were given M-16 rifles, had to go through that damned gas chamber again, were inoculated for some weird stuff, had our teeth examined and fixed if necessary. On or about 1 June 1968 we were given a two-week

leave. We were told when we returned we would be deployed to a restricted area overseas and that we should take care of our personal business and make out a will. Now all this playing in the woods of southern Kentucky was starting to look serious. On 24 June 1968 we boarded an Air Force C-130 Starliner at Fort Campbell airfield. We boarded with our duffle bags full of jungle fatigues, steel pots, flak jackets and our very own M-16s and even had our jeep on board. After getting airborne and leveling out SFC Ohman announced, "We are headed for South Vietnam." He told us we were to be assigned to the 1st Aviation Brigade and our new address would be, 569th T.C.DET, B Troop, 7/17th Air Cavalry, APO SF 96262, and that we should write to our loved ones and give them our new address. We flew from Fort Campbell to Alaska, where we refueled, on to Japan for another refueling, then, finally, after 24 hours - Vietnam. This entire time we were in web seats, facing the rear of the plane. I suppose this was better than a two-week boat trip but it was uncomfortable. We were to land in Saigon. After circling for an hour or so, we were told we could not land there but was given no reason. Speculation ran wild, mortar attacks, and base overran, the whole gambit. It turned out it was just fog. We were diverted north to a place called Camp Holloway, the pilot came back and warned us that when we landed it would be full reverse and full brakes so be prepared. To this day, I don't know if they were ever able to get that huge airplane out of there on that short runway or if it is still there. What I wasn't prepared for was stepping through the doors of that plane into the intense heat. We loaded on to a bus with wire mesh over the windows. The driver told us it was so the VC couldn't throw in grenades - this was very comforting to a 19 year old in a strange new land. Along the route to our new home we went through a lovely little town named Pleiku, finally arriving at Camp Enari. The red clay was dry the day we arrived, we would later find it to be slick and goey when it rained. The first few weeks at Camp Enari, there wasn't much to do; they had us pull all kinds of duty, pouring cement for new hooches seemed to be a favorite. I volunteered to ride "shotgun" on convoys to Kontum to get the sand for this task.

On the 26th, A Troop Scouts received intense AW fire. The post airstrike analysis revealed six dead NVA.

568th TC Detachment and 288th SC Detachment assigned to A Troop

On the 27th, the 568th TC Detachment and the 288th Signal Detachment were attached to A Troop to augment their maintenance capability.

SP5 Joe Brinn of A Troop recalls: I was assigned to the 568th TC Det from Ft Rucker in March, 1968 as a UH-1 mechanic while the unit was being formed at Ft Campbell, KY. The entire 568th TC Det was put together with members assigned from other units. I arrived somewhat late to the party at Ft Campbell as most of the unit had already been formed so I did not get much time to meet many people before shipping out. As with most I was just a young scared individual who pretty much kept to himself. That was a pretty hectic time on the flight out there with the 568th. All of the equipment as well as several of our personnel left by ship one month before we left by air in Air Force C-141 planes. We then departed as a unit for Vietnam in May, 1968 with our steel pots on our heads, our rifles slung on our shoulders and our duffle bags under our feet. The unit was assigned to A Troop. Upon arrival, several of us were reassigned to other units for DEROS shuffles so that the new unit would have personnel with differing rotation dates. The 568th was a depot maintenance unit and performed the major overhauls on A Troop aircraft. I served as a doorgunner and CE in the Lift Platoon and as a Scout Observer during my tour from May 1968 until May 1969. I have never talked to or met any of my old CE buddies from those days after leaving Vietnam. I have looked for them the past couple years and would dearly love to sit down and talk about old times with some of them again. I was very young back then as so many of us were at that time so I was not use to making a lot of friends. Only had a couple CE guys I hung around with along with one or two pilots who kept me under their wing. I have forgotten more than I can remember from those days as much of it was pretty much a blur to a young farmer boy from MI.

SP4 Roy Damon Morris recalls: I served in A Troop from June 1968 until June 1969. In Vietnam people knew me as Damon but I go by Roy now. My history in the Army starts with me having a fixed-wing mechanic's MOS at Ft Rucker. I was trained to work on Army fixed wing – Birddogs and Beavers. Eventually I had vocal orders to report to Ft Campbell to join the 568th TC Detachment that was forming there. After I'd been at Ft Campbell for about 3 months they determined that my vocal orders were for the wrong MOS. I remember the unit went to great pains to make certain everyone was prepared for overseas deployment – shots, weapons qualifications, gas mask, wills completed, etc. I don't remember a whole lot of technical training. We didn't have tool kits or anything like that in the states. SSG Getts was like the NCOIC of our detachment. I don't remember us having a Tech Inspector until we got to Camp Enari. Most of us were about 20 years old but we had an older guy name Don Brower who was about 26. We all addressed our Detachment CO, CPT Ted Bidigare as Captain or Sir. Brower often referred to him as Uncle Teddy. On our C-141 flight from the states to Vietnam we stopped in Alaska and then Japan. We were told that the hanger we'd use as a break room in Japan was shared with Flying Tiger Airlines. The officers were sitting at a table in the center of the room. Brower is talking with the Flying Tiger flight attendants. It was about time to go. The ladies asked if there was anything they could help us with and Brower had a cupcake or something like that in his hand. He tells them that today is his uncle's birthday and maybe the ladies could wish him a happy birthday. They say sure and take the cake over the CPT Bidigare. When they are finished singing to him, he said, "Brower sent you have here – correct?" That was funny!! I'd guess there were at least 40 maybe 50 guys in the 568th when we deployed. Almost immediately after we landed, they sent half of us new guys to Camp Holloway and the other half to Camp Enari. I was in the group with CPT Bidigare that went to Camp Enari. We moved our stuff into one of the wooden hooches in the A Troop area. Again I still have this fixed wing aircraft maintenance MOS. So CPT Bidigare said he'd try to find a place for me in the Troop or they'd have to send me to a unit that had my MOS. He asked me if I would be willing to crew a Cobra helicopter? I said yes and that would be my job for the next year. He assigned another soldier, Mike Bass, to teach me how to be a Cobra helicopter CE. The only bad part was that Mike was going home in three days. The helicopter I was assigned was #67-15577 and my pilot was WO Billy Causey. When I first met him, he asked if I was the CE that had never seen a Cobra before? I said, Yes Sir. He said show me what you did to prepare this helicopter for flight. So I did. Then he said now I'll show you what I do and you check me. We did that. Then he said, "Go get a helmit. You are going to go with me. I'm not going to fly a helicopter that you won't fly in." So I got a helmit and away we went. That was my first day in country at Camp Enari. When I became a CE I was transferred from the 568th TC to A Troop. That evening after chow, I moved my stuff from the 568th hooch to the weapons platoon hooch. That hooch was right on the street immediately across from the mess hall. I remember being issued a tool kit in Vietnam. Remember a CE doesn't need a lot of tools. The 568th guys – they needed the tools for the hundred hour inspections and heavy maintenance work. I don't remember receiving any tools from Mike Bass. The kit I was issued had to pair of tie-wire plyers. Now I don't think we ever used them, but they sure looked good. When I first arrived I believe the First Sergeant was 1SG Merser and then later on it was 1SG Barber.

SP5 Dale Lorenzana recalls: I arrived in Vietnam as an individual replacement guy versus with a unit like the 568th TC Det. I joined A Troop about mid-June 1968 just a few days before my 21st birthday. I'd enlisted in the Army in Oct 67 and remember being at Ft Eutis just before Christmas to start 67N20 school. That was eight weeks. Then I had another six weeks I'd guess for Cobra maintenance school. I believe I was in one of the first classes to graduate Cobra maintenance specialistics in the states. I did rather well in both classes and was a SP5 when I arrived in Vietnam. When I joined A Troop I don't remember any other school trained AH-1G maintenance guy but we started getting them soon there after. It is my opinion that I was part of the first wave of

replacements for the guys that were still there from the Ft Knox days. I remember our Tech Inspector had been a SP5 CE for at least one tour in Vietnam. He reupped and extended to get promoted to SP6 and to be a TI. I was assigned AH-1G#67-15572 but we had more Cobras than we had CEs so while we had our own 'primary aircraft' there was a pool of aircraft we all had to work on. Not long after I started there I remember being told to pay special attention to the tail rotor control cables that ran down the tail boom and up the tail fin. Prior to this we didn't routinely open the access covers to look at that part of the wire cables. I was shocked to find the wire cable was badly frayed – indeed only a couple strands were holding it together. That was a tail rotor failure just waiting to happen! I reported that and literally there were lots of people happy that I'm made that discovery while the aircraft was on the ground! Remember everyone had a nick name in Vietnam? Of course with my last name, I needed one! Even though I was senior in rank for a new guy, I was still a new guy in the unit. I didn't pay too much attention when we had troop formations. I just played along so I wouldn't get yelled at. I was day dreaming or generally not paying attention one day and the NCO yelled at me – "Lorenzana you're a little spacey today!" Everyone picked up on that so my name is "Spacey" to this day.

CW2 Willie Crabtree recalls: I was a WO-1 Commander of the 288th Signal Det. I was 38-years old and some people wondered what I did wrong to still be a WO-1 at my age. They didn't know that I switched over from the Air Force the year before. We left for Vietnam on the same aircraft with the 568th TC Det and were assigned with them to A Troop. I am looking for 1LT Terry 'Andy' Anderson of B Troop.

B Troop Relocates to Phan Thiet from Camp Enari

On the 27th, B Troop started moving from Camp Enari to an area just south of LZ Betty near Phan Thiet and was opened to Task Force South. Briefly TF South was organized in July 1968 to provide a joint American Vietnamese command for the four southern Provinces (Binh Thuan, Lam Dong, Tuyen Duc, and Ninh Thuan) of II Corps. It was headquartered in Dalat. The major units were two ARVN Regiments (located at Bao Loc and Song Mao), the 3/503 Airborne Infantry Battalion (detached from the 101st Abn Div) located at Phan Thiet, a few American artillery batteries, and an ACT. B Troop was the first ACT to work for TF South. Additionally the 192th AHC (the Polecats) lived at Phan Thiet and provided general aviation support for this entire area. When B Troop moved to Phan Thiet, they were assigned an open area of sand south of the POL area since the 192th and the Airborne Battalion already had all the good real estate around the airfield. Another construction effort began. The perimeter consisted of a 6 foot tall barrier of sand hastily scrapped into one long, basically circular dune. They lived in tents and filled sand bags. Gradually the "ammo box" floors were installed under the tents.

WO Gary Brydges states: I went to Basic Training at Fort Polk. I started there in March of 1967. After Basic I was shipped off to Fort Wolters for Primary Helicopter School starting in May 1967. I went through that without any problems. I think we got out of there in five months – in November, I believe, I was out of primary. I had a little time off because of a delay in classes. I reported into Rucker late in the year of 1967. I completed advanced training at Rucker and graduated in April of 1968. I was lucky enough to be in the upper part of the class and was assigned to Cobra school directly after Rucker. So I was sent to Fort Hunter for a Cobra transition prior to going to Vietnam. I completed a month of transition training in May. I went home for a few days and then went to Vietnam in early June of 1968. I was assigned to B Troop. The Squadron and Troop at that time were based at Pleiku. The unit, much to my chagrin, at that time did not have Cobras. They were still flying Charlie Model Hueys for gunships. So I flew as co-pilot with the old guys who had been through Tet and had a lot of experience. They were really good teachers for us FNGs. We were at Pleiku and I was learning the ropes in the Charlie Model when the Troop was sent to Phan Thiet, a little coastal town in Southern II Corps. We moved the entire Troop down there in one operation.

We set up our own perimeter in an old cemetery near the airfield at Phan Thiet. I wrote a letter home to my folks above every week during my tour. My mother saved all of them in a box that came to me when she passed away. In 2008 I finally sat down and reviewed those letters. Periodically something I wrote in 1968 can shed light on some of the missing dates in this history. For example, I mailed a letter on the 30th from Phan Thiet. In it I wrote that B Troop was notified of the move on the 26th. So I believe various components of the Troop relocated during the 27 – 29 June time frame.

On the 28th, the first increment for the new C Troop departed for Vietnam. CPT Joe Laehu recalls:

CW3 Bob Kinlaw and I flew the first helicopter from Fort Campbell to Oakland Army Depot to start the effort to relocate all our aircraft to the west coast for deployment. We had packaged the weapon systems in wooden crates and loaded these in the cargo compartment along with as much gear as it could hold before we started out on the trip. When we got to western Texas we started experiencing high-density altitude conditions – the UH-1C just had no performance. When we got to El Paso, Texas we arranged for the wooden crates and other gear to be shipped to California and called back to Fort Campbell with instructions that everyone else shouldn't start out with fully loaded helicopters. When we got to Oakland I remember being surprised when someone directed us to part the C/7/17th Cav helicopters in a certain area. I said, 'Hey, we are C/2/17th Cav.' They replied, 'Not any more – you've been renamed to C/7/17th.' That was the way Bob and I learned about the troop's name change. Eventually all the helicopters were ferried to Oakland, then some local pilots loaded put them on this WWII troop carrier that had been converted to carry aircraft. The name of the ship was MS something. As I recall Bob and I with about 20 to 25 mechanics sailed on 28 June. Naturally this gave us an earlier DEROS date than the rest of the guys in C Troop.

D Troop Moves to Ban Me Thuot East

D Troop's unit history simply says that from June through October it was based in the Ban Me Thuot area. They stayed at Ban Me Thuot East, at two other bases about 4 kms west of Ban Me Thuot, and at LZ Phillip which was 10 kms northeast of the city. They did a lot of base camp security but also had SRP, LRRP, cordon and search, road convoy escort, mine sweeping, vehicular/mounted and dismounted reconnaissance, and ambush missions. D Troop was frequently used by especially A Troop to supplement their ARP and their history indicates they enjoyed this work. After reading this paragraph, SP4 Bill Jarrell provided the following:

I believe we did enjoy our missions in the Ban Me Thuot East area. Much of it runs together now in my mind. I pulled a lot of perimeter security and we did a lot of recon. But I think two ideas are significant. First, D Troop had given CPT Hoyer the nickname 'mother' because of the way he looked after us. I can honestly say to this day that next to my father, I hold Tony Hoyer in the highest esteem. I believe I am alive today because of his decisions, the way he conducted himself and the way he had the various platoon leaders do their jobs. Second, though D Troop only had two KIAs during that first year in Vietnam, they had many, many WIAs that were serious enough to get the men evacuated out of Vietnam. In the months I served with them there were several guys injured and evacuated.

Don Oliver provides another story about this period: Soon after B Troop had moved to Phan Thiet another Lift crewchief, Bill Hahn, was walking toward his aircraft through some tall grass when he saw a little snake that seemed to be following him along the ground. The snake was about 18 to 20 inches long and, as I recall, sort of lime green in color. Bill started walking faster and the snake started following faster. The damn thing was *stalking him!* As soon as he got to his aircraft, Bill grabbed his survival machete and dropped back to the ground just as the snake arrived. After chopping the snake into neat two-inch pieces, we took it to the flight surgeon who was visiting from

Pleiku. He checked his snake book and discovered that the fellow with the big appetite was a krait, one of the most dangerous in Asia, often called a 'two-step' snake by the infantry because you can only go two steps before you're dead if one bites you.

The following article titled "Chopper Crew Rescues Downed A.F. Jet Pilot" appeared in June issue the Eagle Talons (the newspaper of the 17th Combat Aviation Group) provided by Rick Schoeny.

Dragon Mountain, Vietnam – A downed AF jet pilot cut himself loose from the 30 foot tree he was suspended from, only to be greeted by a lone 'Ruthless Rider' awaiting him in the dense, enemy occupied jungle west of Dak To recently. The airman had been caught in the tree when he parachuted into the jungle after his F-105 jet fighter had been shot down by intense enemy fire. Aerial scout teams from the 7/17th Air Cav operating in the area received the Air Force's 'Mayday' call and within minutes were hovering over the stranded pilot. The extremely heavy jungle canopy prevented the helicopter crews from getting close to the airman, or from inserting protective ground infantrymen. One of the two 7/17th OH-6A 'Cayuse' light observation helicopters found a small hole in the vegetation blanket where he could drop closer to the ground. The observed, 1LT Kenneth Gibbins (Mineral Wells, TX) jumped from the aircraft 15 feet down to the jungle floor. Walking approximately 100 meters uphill, the lone cavalryman approached the stricken airman just as he had cut himself loose from his parachute and dropped 30 feet to the ground, sustaining slight back and leg injuries from the fall, LT Gibbins then helped the man back to the opening from which he had jumped, and a dustoff ship picked the two officers out in a medevac basket they lowered down. During the rescue operation, one of the two 'Ruthless Rider' gunships hovering with air cover over head was fired upon by a B-40 rocket. Once the two men had been lifted out safely, the gunships made firing runs, followed by AF tactical air strikes on the entire area.

SP4 Rich J. Hefferman provides some interesting details about his B Troop OH-6A #66-07915: I flew Scouts as a CE/OBS from mid Feb 68 to Sept 68. I flew with most of the Scout pilots. I broke in most of the infused Scout pilots we got in July. In June of 1968 I crewed 915 when it carried both the M127 minigun and a 4 shot 2.75" rocket pod. This was not the field modified 2-shot pods that some units fielded. We did trade off some power especially because of the air working the Central Highlands. By using a two man crew and using a CAR-15 instead of a third crewman using an M60 we broke about even on the gross weight. I have several photos of the ship posted on the B Troop website under the "Scout's 68-69" heading. The armor who worked on the ship was Tony "Limey" Holmes. To the best of my recollection, we always used W-P (white phosphorous) rockets to mark targets for our gunships. The system did work well. The problem was that while you were scouting the area if you received fire you had to mark the target immediately with smoke to bring accurate gunship fire on the target. This was not possible unless you fired the rockets from a distance to mark the target. Although it must have shocked the NVA to see an LOH roll in hot firing both a minigun and punching off rockets at the same time. At this time B Troop used a two man crew with the CE/Observer using a CAR 15. We did not use modified M-60's at the time.

SP4 Dana Charette recalls: It was in June that I stopped flying LOHs because one of the people I came over with as a replacement, Dave Grossinger - I'd known him in advanced training – was working in Flight Operations. He said, "By the way, how would you like to work in Flight Operations?" I said, "That sounds like a good idea." He spoke with SSG Philpott who was the Flight Operations NCO and CPT Marty Peterson who was TYPHOON 3 the Operations Officer. So I was the fourth member of the Flight Operations staff. I was a SP4 at the time and went in the liaison NCO's slot. Dave had the clerk slot. I moved to Flight Operations about two days after we moved to Phan Thiet. Initially CPT Peterson and I went to Phan Thiet, then Dave Grossinger joined us and finally SSG Philpott. Then SSG Philpott re-upped, took his reenlistment leave, and he was gone – I never saw him again. About two months after this, Dave's brother who was in the USMC was hit in Vietnam and Dave accompanied him home via the hospital in Japan. So I assumed all of

the enlisted men's duties in Flight Operations and I hadn't been trained! I remember I had to call HQ on many occasions to get instructions on how to fill out the various reports – Op Rep 5 for example. These were classified reports and I didn't keep a copy of any of them. This was about a 5-page report for each day. It included such information as the number of rounds fired, rockets fired, enemy KIA, etc. Lots of statistics. So even though I had the 11D MOS, I was never in the Infantry – only Scouts and Flight Operations. As I mentioned I was the only enlisted man in Flight Operations! It was just me and CPT Peterson and then me and CPT Newhouse. I'm guess Dave Grossinger left in September. Then maybe in last September, one of the RTOs for the Blues – John Domek came in to help run the radios. Finally we received a SSG to take Philpott's place – I forget his name. This would be some time in October. Certainly by December there were four of us in Flight Operations again. It was this way until I DEROSed in Feb 1969. Now they also brought in WO Sam Booker as a liaison officer. I think he was gunship pilot and maybe he flew with the Lift. He was a very nice guy.

The September 1968 issue of Hawk, the official newsletter of the 1st Aviation Brigade, listed the following recipients of the Silver Star award from 14 Jun to 1 July 1968: SP4 Monserrate Aviles of B Troop.

Within the Ruthless Rider Association there has been considerable discussion about the Blues and most especially those with the 11B MOS being awarded the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB). MAJ Bruce Wilder recalls:

I joined the Squadron during TET 68 and was assigned as the CO of HHT. I served in that job until Sep 68 when I became the Squadron S-1. The orders for the CIB awarded to the squadron's Blues on or about Feb 1969 was on a General Order published by the 4th Inf Div. I do not have the paragraph number or the GO number. I know that those who held the 11B MOS at the time of TET 1968, were awarded the CIB, and several of them went home wearing the CIB. I came in during TET 68 which was months after the original unit shipped in from Fort Knox, and I don't know what, if anything, was done to get the CIB for the "first team." That would have been under Larry Kenyon's time as S-1. I worked with the Office of the Adjutant, 4th Div, to get the award for the all 7/17th 11Bs who had been in country and had seen combat to meet the requirements for the CIB. I know that I saw the mimeograph copies of the General Orders and handed them out to the Troops before I left for CONUS. 1LT James 'Gary' DeWitt had or was getting ready to moved to A Troop, so he could fly guns, since he was the other Artillery Officer in the Squadron, and wanted to be branch qualified for the tour with the ACS. MAJ Roger Winslow might be a POC. As best I remember, the award of the CIB to members of 7/17 had to be added to a published GO as a special paragraph. It's been a long time! I just remember the faces and smiles of those who finally received the CIB after many months in combat! As I recall, there was no award ceremony. And all this is coming from one of the few Artillery Aviators who served successfully in an ACS without taking the Branch transfer to Armor.