

July 1971

The history section of the D Troop 1971 – 1972 Yearbook states that from the summer of 1971 the troop's primary responsibility was defending and protecting Camp Holloway by directing aviation assets in aerial reconnaissance and gunship support as well as assuming complete control of the defensive line. [Editor's Note: Until a better date for this event can be determine, this history will use July 1st.] All platoons, including the 52nd Security Detachment which became part of D Troop in September, have taken part in active patrolling around the Camp Holloway perimeter and areas of likely enemy avenues of approach. With the addition of an artillery Duster Section, her own mortar platoon and her direct 68th Infantry Radar Detachment, the Falcons of D Troop continued to provide an impregnable defense for 2,000 men at Camp Holloway. [Editor's Note: This is the earliest known use of the nom "Falcons" by D Troop.]

On the 6th, A Troop moved back to Phan Rang and were down from the 7th to the 17th awaiting the arrival of the maintenance section. The rest of the month was spent working the Song Mao area. Many cultivated fields, bunkers and trails were sighted. Further investigations of these sightings produced negative results. From July thru early Nov, C Troop remained at Lane, worked its traditional AOs north and west of Phu Cat, supported the 173rd Abn until it stood down in August. After that C Troop would support the Korean Divisions. CPT Billy Miller provides a few more details about A Troop.

I joined A Troop in early July for my second tour in Vietnam. I flew with the 3/17th Cav during the first one, so I was familiar with Air Cav operations. One of the first questions I had was "where are the Blues" because I hadn't seen any American Infantry and no one had mentioned them. I learned that while the TO&E still authorized the Blues - A Troop had none and that had been the situation for some time. They were not pulling security details some place else - they simply did not exist. A Troop's "normal operational mode" would be to support one of the ARVN Regts based at Dalat, Bao Loc, or Song Mao for a 5-6 days in a row, have a maintenance down day, then go support the next unit in the rotation. The Province Senior Advisor would furnish an ARVN ARP each time we supported his unit. Some times it was the same unit. Don't get me wrong - these weren't bad or poor units at all - it's just that they weren't nearly as good as Americans would have been. We had an unpublished practice of putting one of our Infantry officer types on the ground with this ARP just to make certain we had radio contact with them. You could never trust the ARVN Artillery, there was no American Artillery in the area any more, airstrikes were hard to come by; so the only support these guys would have come from our Guns. The rest of the unpublished practice went something like this - no matter what happens on the ground, we had to get that American out! There was a very strong dictate against Americans being on the ground during this period. We knew we would have more than a little hell to pay for "bending" that rule if knowledge of our practice got to some higher headquarters. To no one's big surprise, we didn't insert the ARP nearly as frequently as we did when we had American Blues. I'd guess we put them in about twice a week and most of these were little more than stepped up training exercises. I'd say we would only have three or four "real" insertions during an average month. The absence of American Blues did effect the way we flew. However, I'd say the Scouts and Guns were still very aggressive; but more "demands" were placed on the C&C to get any downed crews out and to provide support faster. Near the later part of the year the Phan Rang CO asked us to do first and last night VRs especially in the "alleys" where the bad guys fired mortars and 122s. That was even an interesting situation. Phan Rang wasn't bothered all that much with mortars and rockets but in other areas we suggested to higher that we mount night operations (incremental to the Nighthawks we would later fly) to try to catch these guys. These requests were all denied because of the risk factor. Even around Phan Rang the enemy seemed to be waiting for the Americans to leave. So long as our first and last light VRs stayed within a certain area, Phan Rang was rarely hit. A few times we'd send our teams deeper into the hills to the west and at evening we would get a rocket or two. Their favorite target was the O Club on top of a small hill

within the camp. To the best of my knowledge no one was hurt and there was no major equipment damage from any of these attacks. Interesting times when you think about it.

On the 15th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'in the vicinity of Pleiku, grid AR991681, observed approximately 46 personnel in green uniforms. Gunships received fire and returned fire with results of 6 KBA's.'

On the 18th, the VHPA database has a KIA record for **SP4 Steven Jeffery Minkler** who is a helicopter crew member serving with D/7/17th Cav at grid BR950268. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 7 Dec 1970 and MOS as 67N20. This MOS clearly is not consistent with the Delta Troop at the time but is consistent with the Air Cavalry Troop. Sadly there are no other records in the other VHPA databases that mention this soldier. Anyone who has details about this individual should contact Mike Law.

On the 29th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'worked in the vicinity of Phun Nhon, grid AR800061, elements received small arms fire, gunships engaged, results 1 KBA.'

CPT William J. Rand wrote: After making Captain in Nov 1970, I was made XO of HHT under CPT Bill Ginac. I was medevaced out in July, 1971. I've got all kinds of stuff from those times, but a quickie is Special Order number 164 dated 23 Jun 1971 from HQ 7/17 Cav PCS to Fort Devens, MA.

August 1971

Sometime during this month, MAJ Edward Brown assume command of C Troop replacing MAJ Warren Griffith.

Also sometime during this month, LTC Jack Anderson assumes command of the 7/17th Cav replacing LTC Ernie Smart.

On the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record for B Troop AH-1G #67-15626 flown by CPT W.J. Welsh as pilot and CPT R.W. Hess as observer. The Goldbook database indicates that the aircraft was repaired locally and continued to serve with B Troop. The accident summary states:

CPT Welsh had just taken off from runway 23R. While at approximately 50 feet AGL and 30-40 knots IAS, at a position near the perimeter wires, his aircraft RPM Audio Signal came on. He immediately checked his dual tachometer and noticed his engine RPM passing downward through 5900 RPM. Seeing a road to his left front, he entered autorotation, executed a 90 degree left turn (simultaneously making a May Day call to Holloway Tower on UHF) and landed on the road immediately outside the Camp Holloway perimeter. At approximately 10 feet AGL the aircraft went IFR in dust. The aircraft touched down and skidded approximately 40 feet along the road and then spun 90 degrees to the right and stopped, still on the road, perpendicular to the direction of vehicular traffic. CPT Welsh turned off the fuel and the battery and he and CPT Hess exited the aircraft.

On the 2nd, A Troop responded to contact by a recon company at FSB Nora. Two teams of Guns fired on what was thought to be the 40th NVA Bn. Later they were credited with 25 confirmed kills and two secondary explosions believed to be the ammo for the 82mm mortars. One Cobra was hit by fire but there were no casualties.

Also on the 2nd, the VHPA Helicopter database has an AVDAC record for A Troop AH-1G #67-15603. The record states this was Combat Incident Damage caused by other combat by ground fire less than .50 cal in size while on an Armed Escort mission. There were no casualties. Search and rescue operations were not required. The helicopter was recovered.

On the 11th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'in the vicinity of Kontum, coordinates YA834035, received ground to air fire. One OH-6A was hit and went down. The pilot and observer were rescued and sustained minor injuries from the crash. Enemy results were unknown.'

Also on the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07782. The Goldbook database confirms that this aircraft was lost to inventory in Aug 1971.

WO1 Ron Logan provides the following: I remember this day well because it was my first day flying by myself in the AO. Because I was a new guy, they assigned SSG Wheeler, maybe the most experienced Scout, to be my Observer. I was flying wing on Bob Stevens. In fact I joked with him that I was only following his orders when we got shot down. /Additional material to insert here/

On the 15th, WO1 Don Purser, a Scout pilot for C Troop, provides the following:

That day, I believe it was about August, 1971, we were flying recon starting in a valley and working up a mountainside in an area known, to the best of my recollection, as Happy Valley - many VC were known to be located in that area. I was Red 17 and was flying 67-16113. I can not remember my observer's name but I have a picture of us taken that day. We were tracking a trail through the jungle. I was following it to see if it led to any enemy camps or other places of hiding, resupply, etc. We had previously discovered many enemy locations all through that valley - to include field hospitals built from bamboo and straw. Tracking a trail through the jungle from a helicopter is difficult but still much faster than doing it on foot. It was obvious the trail was recently and heavily used. We learned all the things to look for to determine those kinds of things. To follow a trail and, hopefully, avoid getting shot down required frequent passes and turns over an area, looking down through the jungle, hoping to have enough daylight penetrate to pick up another glimpse of its direction. So we were constantly flying, turning, looking, watching, always avoiding a predictable flight path so as to minimize the risk of being fired upon. As we tracked the path up the mountain there were openings where we could easily see heavy prints on the trail - a sure sign of recent use. We also saw some recently used campfire pits. The hair on the back of my neck began to stand because I knew from instinct and experience that we were in a hot area. As we followed the trail it broke out into an open area on the top of the mountain. I was surprised that we had not yet taken fire or discovered other signs of enemy activity. On the top of the ridge, there was a steep drop-off to the west and three bunkers covering an area 50 to 75 feet across. These appeared to be something built and abandoned by US troops. Then something caught my eye. There on the ground, lying between two of the bunkers was a bright-blue, shiny, obviously new, Russian RPG. How did I know it was Russian? It wasn't OD green, so I assumed it wasn't ours. I then made a serious Scout pilot mistake. In order to get a closer look at this unusual sight, I came to a hover about 1 to 2 feet above the RPG and fixed my eyes upon it. I was on the radio calling in my spot report of our findings, describing the bunkers, the area and especially the RPG. As I did, a VC jumped up from the southern most bunker, about 5 feet in front of us. He had his AK-47 on full automatic and let go with a full burst across the front of our LOH. I never saw him. I only heard the shots, felt the impact against the aircraft and then felt my helmet try to leap off my head. It was as though someone tried to suspend me from the chin strap. I was immediately on the radio screaming, "Taking fire!" "I've been hit!" I dived westward off of the ridge. I could feel heavy vibrations in the aircraft and the thought raced in my head, in my heart, in my whole being that I had been shot in the head by an RPG. As we descended off the ridge in a steep dive, I could hear my observer/gunner firing his M-60, hear the minigun from my wingman's LOH shooting up the area we had just left and then moments later, rockets from our Cobra's flying over-head were exploding behind me. As we dove away, still flying and no longer taking fire, my thoughts turned to my head. Gingerly I placed my gloved hand to my head, fully expecting to pull it away and see blood and brains on it. When I didn't see any, I pulled my glove off and again felt around carefully for the damage. I could feel where my helmet had been hit, grateful again to see no blood or brains. I turned to my observer and asked him to take a look. The look on his face as the blood drained, gave me another scare. He said, "You've been shot but I don't see a wound." Although taking comfort in his words, his look gave me concern. Major understatement!! With the vibration in the pedals and in the cyclic, I knew we had

taken many hits. However the sweet little bird flew. I was reluctant to attempt a flight all the way back to our staging area because of the vibrations. We could see the broken chin bubbles, a hole in the transmission insulation behind us and, of course, my helmet. Later we learned it had blade damage, a round in the transmission housing, one through the fuel cell and some other fuselage damage - not to mention the chin bubble and greenhouse, but no engine damage. However I decided to fly back to our staging area, maintaining enough altitude to allow a safe landing in the event of any further mechanical problems but not so high that we would be open to other ground fire. We flew back to LZ English, the area from which we had staged. The pictures you see of me, my helmet and my aircraft were taken there. The aircraft was slung out under a Huey and returned for repair of the seven bullet holes we took that day. The helmet? Well I tried to send it home but it never made it. However, I did. By the Grace of God I am here today to tell this story and to recall those days of extreme adrenaline rushes followed with the exhilaration of cheating death - again.

From the 17th for the rest of the month, A Troop staged from Bao Loc to provide security during the upcoming Vietnamese elections. This operation consisted mainly of a road recon from Dalat to Bao Loc. The ARP remained at the Bao Loc strip on standby with American advisors and ground forces as a reaction force.

On the 18th according to the 17th CAG ORLL dated 15 Nov 1971, C Troop was previously tasked to fly last light, early morning VR and air escort for the 173d Inf Bde Roll-up Force (RUF) at LZ English. On this date C Troop flew air escort during the move of the RUF from LZ English to Cha Rang Valley. When the 173d closed at Cha Rang Valley, they became OPCON to the 17th CAG.

On the 22nd according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'while working in the vicinity of Camp Enari, coordinates BN200405, engaged 3 personnel wearing green kahki uniforms and carrying AK47's. Results possible 1 KBA.'

On the 27th, MAJ Jack Turecek assumed command of A Troop replacing MAJ George D. Fuller.

On the 28th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft accident record with a fatality for B Troop OH-6A #67-16240 flown by **WO1 Dennis Bucklew** and SGT S. Cooksey. The Wall database states that Bucklew's tour start date was 15 June 1971. Apparently WO1 Bucklew died from crash injuries while SGT Cooksey survived. The record indicates that CPT C.R. Hartley was a passenger on this aircraft; but in reality he was the investigation officer. The accident summary states:

WO1 Bucklew departed Holloway Army Airfield at 1815 hours in a flight of three consisting of two OH-6's and one AH-1G. He was the wingman for the lead OH-6A. Their mission was to perform a last light visual reconnaissance for the defense of Camp Holloway in a period of increasing enemy activity. After arriving in the area of operations the OH-6As dropped low-level to begin their recon. After approximately 10-20 minutes of actual reconnaissance, WO1 Bucklew's aircraft struck a tree, went out of control and crashed in the trees at approximately 1845 hours.

WO1 John Shafer recalls: INSERT FROM TAPE RECORDING

Also on the 28th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'while worked in the vicinity of Phu Nhon, coordinates ZA043543, engaged 20 personnel in the open. Results 7 KBA's.'

CPT Bob Nichols recalls: Sometime during August, Don Purser took a picture of C Troop OH-6A #67-16113 and his observer, name unknown at this time. Later he took a picture of 'The Helmet' that was posted on the C Troop website in late 2000. He provides:

That day, I believe it was about August, 1971, we were flying recon starting in a valley and working up a mountainside in an area known, to the best of my recollection, as Happy Valley - many VC were known to be located in that area. I was Red 17 and was flying 67-16113. I can not remember my observer's name but I have a picture of us taken that day. We were tracking a trail through the

jungle. I was following it to see if it led to any enemy camps or other places of hiding, resupply, etc. We had previously discovered many enemy locations all through that valley - to include field hospitals built from bamboo and straw. Tracking a trail through the jungle from a helicopter is difficult but still much faster than doing it on foot. It was obvious the trail was recently and heavily used. We learned all the things to look for to determine those kinds of things. To follow a trail and, hopefully, avoid getting shot down required frequent passes and turns over an area, looking down through the jungle, hoping to have enough daylight penetrate to pick up another glimpse of it's direction. So we were constantly flying, turning, looking, watching, always avoiding a predictable flight path so as to minimize the risk of being fired upon. As we tracked the path up the mountain there were openings where we could easily see heavy prints on the trail - a sure sign of recent use. We also saw some recently used campfire pits. The hair on the back of my neck began to stand because I knew from instinct and experience that we were in a hot area. As we followed the trail it broke out into an open area on the top of the mountain. I was surprised that we had not yet taken fire or discovered other signs of enemy activity. On the top of the ridge, there was a steep drop-off to the west and 3 bunkers covering an area 50 to 75 feet across. These appeared to be something built and abandoned by US troops. Then something caught my eye. There on the ground, lying between two of the bunkers was a bright-blue, shiny, obviously new, Russian RPG. How did I know it was Russian? It wasn't OD green, so I assumed it wasn't ours. I then made a serious Scout pilot mistake. In order to get a closer look at this unusual sight, I came to a hover about 1 to 2 feet above the RPG and fixed my eyes upon it. I was on the radio calling in my spot report of our findings, describing the bunkers, the area and especially the RPG. As I did, a VC jumped up from the southern most bunker, about 5 feet in front of us. He had his AK-47 on full automatic and let go with a full burst across the front of our LOH. I never saw him. I only heard the shots, felt the impact against the aircraft and then felt my helmet try to leap off my head. It was as though someone tried to suspend me from the chin strap. I was immediately on the radio screaming, "Taking fire!" "I've been hit!" I dived westward off of the ridge. I could feel heavy vibrations in the aircraft and the thought raced in my head, in my heart, in my whole being that I had been shot in the head by an RPG. As we descended off the ridge in a steep dive, I could hear my observer/gunner firing his M-60, hear the minigun from my wingman's LOH shooting up the area we had just left and then moments later, rockets from our Cobra's flying over-head were exploding behind me. As we dove away, still flying and no longer taking fire, my thoughts turned to my head. Gingerly I placed my gloved hand to my head, fully expecting to pull it away and see blood and brains on it. When I didn't see any, I pulled my glove off and again felt around carefully for the damage. I could feel where my helmet had been hit, grateful again to see no blood or brains. I turned to my observer and asked him to take a look. The look on his face as the blood drained, gave me another scare. He said, "you've been shot but I don't see a wound." Although taking comfort in his words, his look gave me concern. Major understatement!! With the vibration in the pedals and in the cyclic, I knew we had taken many hits. However the sweet little bird flew. I was reluctant to attempt a flight all the way back to our staging area because of the vibrations. We could see the broken chin bubbles, a hole in the transmission insulation behind us and of course my helmet. Later we learned it had blade damage, a round in the transmission housing, one through the fuel cell and some other fuselage damage - not to mention the chin bubble and greenhouse, but no engine damage. However I decided to fly back to our staging area, maintaining enough altitude to allow a safe landing in the event of any further mechanical problems but not so high that we would be open to other ground fire. We flew back to LZ English, the area from which we had staged. The pictures you see of me, my helmet and my aircraft were taken there. The aircraft was slung out under a Huey and returned for repair of the 7 bullet holes we took that day. The helmet? Well I tried to send it home but it never made it. However, I did. By the Grace of God I am here today to tell this story and to recall those days of extreme adrenaline rushes followed with the exhilaration of cheating death - again.

The following article, provided by WO Steve Shepard, titled "Mutt and Jeff" by SP4 Jim Woolsey appeared in Summer-Fall 1971 issue Hawk, the official newsletter of the 1st Aviation Brigade. The color cover photo is C Troop's only 20-mm Cobra named The Pale Horse.

It would've been a beautiful day for a picnic: a huge resort area 40 miles northwest of Qui Nhon, garbed in a sensuous green dress and supervised by a fat, smiling sun. The bomb craters looked as if they'd make ideal barbecue pits. Instead of the traditional ants for that certain amount of discomfort, there were two battalions of North Vietnamese regulars. This was the Sue Tre Valley. The mountains on either side completed the image of lascivious enchantress, the siren who required men to die before accepting them as lovers. On this particular day, 2,700 men came courting. Twenty-two companies of infantry were to spend two weeks in this pleasure palace. Helicopter slicks carried the men to various LZs. This is the chopper's main function. But specialized aircraft, geared for finding and destroying the enemy, were needed. Two types of helicopter applied for and got the job. Standing side by side, they make one think of Mutt and Jeff, although the VC and NVA hardly regard them as comical. These are the Cayuse, a LOH, and its big brother and protector, the Cobra. "They're tied together thicker than man and wife or mother and child," said LTC Ernest A. Smart, commander of the 7/17th Air Cavalry, one of many units which participated in the Soui Tre offensive. The basic team consists of two LOHs, two gunships, four slicks, a command-and-control ship to call air strikes and rifle platoons for ground reconnaissance, should the need arise. An arrangement of fewer aircraft is referred to as a 'pink team' and is used only when necessary. LOHs skimming the treetops, Cobras grinning satanically above them and the C&C (charlie-charlie) bird pasted against the sky. A pattern of rings as the basic team works from the peaks to the lowland. A scheme of movement that would almost be delicate were it not for the overtones of the mission at hand. The gunships, or 'snakes,' are armed with 20- and 40mm cannon, 2.75-inch rockets and 7.62 minigun. These men fly for 1 ½ hours at a time, being relieved by an identical team. They look for one thing-the enemy. Muzzle flashes are excellent indicators of location. So, when a team enters an area suspected of containing enemy troops, the LOHs move in as low as possible, hoping an inexperienced guerilla will have dreams of valor and begin firing. The rockets and 20mm are pylon-mounted; the other weapons are in the snake's flexible nose turret. Nestled in the back seat, the pilot is able to fire all of his aircraft's weapons. The task of the man in the front seat is primarily observation. Inside the Cobra's leering face, the man has an excellent view of his area of operation. A high gunship is the navigator for the team. Beneath him is his partner, guns ready should the low-flying LOHs be molested. And the chances they will be are great. Each LOH carries two men in the front: a pilot and an aerial observer, armed with either an M-16 or M-60. The lead LOH is the basic team's eyeball. His twin, called the trail or wing, makes orbits around the observation craft, his weapons poised for firing.

But this is seldom the case. WO1 Don Purser, a LOH pilot with C/7/17, explained, "The old cadre of the VC and NVA know if they shoot they'll be spotted and hit, so they stay quiet until they think we've found them. Usually we have to go in 'hot,' start the shooting ourselves. Then they don't hesitate about throwing lead, and we can get a definite location on them." When the LOHs first move in, the Cobras pull into position, waiting only for a precise marking. Said WO1 William Best, Cobra pilot for C/7/17, "The LOHs get right down on the target. This gives us a chance to set up for a perfect dive." Coordination and interdependence among the choppers, in evidence before the throughout the mission, now peak. As soon as enemy guns begin to roar, the LOHs move out, away from deadly small arms fire. Then the sounds of war-rockets bursting, machineguns bickering, men shouting-are forced through Soui Tre's lungs. In moments it is over, and as the slicks move in with their human cargo, Mutt and Jeff give the area a final screening before moving farther down the mountain-side to repeat their clearing action. These are the essential moves made by a LOH-Cobra team. Always covering the high ground first. Wing LOH orbiting his twin, always keeping him at his left door. Hoping the enemy will fire first, but if he doesn't, you're more than willing. Then both

LOHs breaking for a safer scrap of ozone as the Cobras strike. The job cannot be described as boring. Flying five feet above the treetops at a relatively slow speed in enemy territory makes for a long 90 minutes. What does it take to drive a LOH? "The will to fly the little devils" is the major characteristic, according to WO1 Michel Devaux, another LOH pilot for C/7/17. Pilots of other types of aircraft-especially Cobras, who work with them daily-put it another way: "Guts!" By the same token, the LOH pilots have no ill words for the men who push the snakes through the air. Working closely with each other under the tension and risks of combat has welded them into powerful allies. "The people in the LOH are our own," said CW2 William Willette, Cobra pilot for C/7/17. "We know how they operate." This means knowing two personalities in one body-the man and the pilot. Is he easily excited? Does he hang on until the last minute before breaking for cover? Personal quirks such as these are quickly picked up by the men in the companion birds. They know how to react when they receive radio calls from certain pilots. CW2 Willette tells of one LOH pilot who was extremely reticent. The pilot radioed in that he had spotted some people in an open field. "Well?" CW2 Willette asked, "What are they doing?" "They're shooting at me," the LOHman replied calmly.

September 1971

No activities were recorded in A Troop's unit history for this month. Also the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971 makes no mention of B Troop during this month.

On the 4th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16027 at grid BS649188 flown by an un-named crew with no other details. The Goldbook database confirms that this aircraft was lost to inventory in Sep 1971.

WO1 Michel Devaux provides: SGT "Pewee" Snead was flying with me that day as the lead Scout with WO Wendell Moore as our wing. WO1 Bill Best and Dave Nelson in the Cobras for our rotation. Pewee was a very small man – maybe 100 lbs soaking wet but he was a great soldier. He'd served two tours in Vietnam as a tunnel rat in III Corps. Because of his skills we both survived that day even though he was badly burned. As I recall the tractic situation, C Troop had been pushing these NVA and VC units rather hard for the last 10 days to two weeks in an area NW of LZ English. We started working the place where we'd eventually crash early in the morning. We found some serious trails and could smell them so we knew we were over a base camp of some sort but we couldn't see them. The morning light wasn't doing us any favors so the Cobras just marked that place on their maps and we moved off. It was about 3 pm, we were just about finished with our rotation and were heading back as we passed over the area again. Bill called me on the radio and suggested that I look over the area again because the light had changed. We went down and almost immediately found these long hooches with a kitchen area. We started marking things with smoke when this guy walks out of a building with an AK and opens fire. Several of his friends joined in. We took a hit in the tail rotor and started to spin. Even though we were spinning I hadn't lost control of the aircraft yet so I tried to climb out and away from the base camp. I hit a dead snag that I hadn't seen before and crashed into one of the hooches. I remember watching one of our WP grenades go off and was actually burned by some of that explosion. When I came to I was in the mud in a pig pen under one of the hooches. One of the pigs was trying to feed on me. I had a sucking chest weapon and burns. I recall that I'd lost some of my nomex flight suit. I could smell JP4 on me. Maybe I'd removed some of flight suit because it was on fire. I wasn't too far from the aircraft and I don't know how I got out of the aircraft or into the pig pen. I remember thinking the Cobras were going to start firing the place up and I was see that stuff in the aircraft was starting to cook off, so I grabbed a stick, forced an opening in the pig pen and crawled about 30 yards from the LOH to some rocks. I hadn't been there long with SGT Snead came walking up though his legs had been burned to the place where I could see exposed muscles and bone. He was carrying an M16 with a 203 under it. Luckily I still had my chicken plate on because about that time I was hit again.

The plate took the hit. I'd seen the muzzle flash from a bunker and put a grenade from the 203 in it. Luckily that was the last we heard from that bunker. We decided we needed to move further away from the village. Together we went about 75 to 100 yards to a rock ridge. SGT Snead was determined to get me up that ridge hoping that we could be rescued from there. I knew there was no way he could help me get up those rocks so I told him that the only way we could be rescued was for him to get out and tell someone where I was. He agreed and gave me his 45. I later learned that he moved into a corn field and that WO Wendell Moore picked him up in a LOH. I'd guess it was about this time that things got real quiet because the helicopters left. I saw lots of NVA regulars coming out of bunkers and knew they were searching for us. Literally I watched this one guy follow my blood trail and killed him when he got near me. Later his guy came at me armed with an SKS. He stabbed at me, I rolled on the weapon and killed him. I also remember throwing a knife at a guy. I hit him in the back of the head with the butt end of the knife. I heard him scream and either jumped or fell off the rock, but I never saw him again. It is strange but I never heard the helicopters return. I do remember knowing a firefight was going on around me when I saw this ARVN trooper approaching. I believe I shot at him and may have hit him. Anyway these ARVNs came up to me and put me on a stretcher. A Huey arrived overhead and lowered ropes that attached to the stretcher. On the way up I tangled with a tree and fell out. My leg caught on the stretcher and ropes. They moved me over and landed me on a sand bar, then got out and threw me in with all the ropes. I'd guess the total elapsed time was about three and a half hours from the time we'd crashed. They took me to Qui Nhon and I remember telling the docs that if they had to take my leg off that I didn't want to wake up. I stayed in Qui Nhon awhile and then went through a series of hospitals until I got to Ft. Dix. Because my wife really took such good care of me, changing my dressings and making sure I got food and exercise, I left the hospital for good in early January and the Army discharged me in July. I took all sort of science classes with my GI bill and eventually retired as a middle school science teacher in New York.

On the 20th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record C Troop OH-6A #68-17141 at grid BR842743 flown by an un-named crew. The record provides no other details. The Goldbook database indicates the aircraft was destroyed and lost to inventory in Oct. 1971. Anyone who can provide details about this incident should contact Mike Law.

On the 23rd, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record HHT OH-58 #68-16928 flown by CW2 A.G. Barklage as pilot and MAJ W.G. Ginac and 1LT S.G. Singh as passengers. [It seems likely that MAJ Ginac was the accident investigation officer.] The Goldbook database indicates the aircraft was repaired locally and continued to serve with HHT. The accident summary states:

CW2 Barklage, pilot of OH-58A #68-16928 belonging to HHT/7/17th Cav, was flying a Command & Control mission for the 538th Eng (land clearing) Company. CW2 Barklage had flown this particular mission before and was thoroughly familiar with the requirements of the mission. At approximately 1315 hours CW2 Barklage received a radio call from PSG (E7) Charles A. Geier, located at a field site at BR 909-964 about 5 miles south of LZ English. PSG Geier told CW2 Barklage that a bulldozer driver had been stung by bees and needed to be medivaced for treatment. CW2 Barklage rogered the transmission and started for the work site. Presently, 1LT Sher G. Singh, of the 538th Eng CO was a passenger in the aircraft. CW2 Barklage had pulled a recent medivac of another injured man, with approximately 90 bee stings, who was unconscious and in shock by the time he had taken him back to Phu Cat AFB. CW2 Barklage thought this might be an urgent mission and proceeded as such. Upon reaching the site, he started his approach to the area landing SE as dictated by the terrain. PSG Geier was at the site and acting as a ground guide. He was not a school trained guide, but he had been working with aircraft for quite awhile, and in the past three months had landed CW2 Barklage to many field sites without any problems. As PSG Geier saw the landing area, there were numerous piles of rocks, dirt, and tree stumps in the area, but nothing that

would be of any difficulty to the aircraft. CW2 Barklage approach was normal in all respects. At about 10-15 feet above the ground CW2 Barklage experienced some turbulence and decided that the original touchdown point to be unsuitable because it was unlevel in the pilot's judgement. At this point CW2 Barklage proceeded to move his aircraft forward and left toward a suitable site. At approximately 3 feet above the ground the tail rotor then hit a pile of dirt and rocks that a dozer had pushed up. The aircraft lost tail rotor control and made a 360 degree spin to the right and moved 15 meters to the left and forward. The pilot then entered a hovering autorotation bringing the aircraft to rest in an upright position. There were no personnel injuries incurred in the accident.

Concerning B Troop, Jon E. Mitchell wrote: My recollection is that CPT Mike Trees took over as Scout Platoon Leader after I started flying with the Weapons Platoon. I could be wrong on this but I think that is how the sequence went. The Troop stayed at Holloway the whole year I was there. All US combat units had been pulled out so we supported MR II (the Jon Paul Vann era). There was an ARVN Regiment in Tan Canh (Dak To II) and another at The Oasis. I did not see the name of CPT John W. Crosby as Weapons Platoon Leader. He was Undertaker Lead when I arrived and think remained in that slot till he left. We pretty well called our own shots out in the TAOR as we never could fully rely on our reaction force. We were very careful about committing our Blues except for downed aircraft. There was still some US Artillery left over by signal hill which we could call plus we had developed an excellent relationship with the USAF FAC's and used air strikes on just about any significant contact. The routine was first light VR, move to staging area, RTB when complete, last light VR, hit the bar to wash down the trail dust. I've got a few good stories to relate but this is probably not the appropriate forum. Lots of good laughs. I DEROSed in September 1971 and had a great job my last few weeks in country. We needed to ferry our Cobras to Vung Tau where they went through the MWO that moved the trail rotor to the other side. At Holloway we'd strip all the weapons systems off the Cobra, remove all the ammo, etc. Basically we were turning in the aircraft because after the MWO, which took about five days to complete, there was no guarantee this ship would come back to us. I remember that to keep the ship within CG we actually put sandbags in the front seat since we'd fly the ship to Vung Tau solo. That was special! Load it up with fuel and take off. I remember doing 190 knots which was VNE for the AH-1G most of the way to Vung Tau. What fun!!

Concerning C Troop, CW2 Ron McNutt recalls: After flight school I was stationed at Ft. Bragg for six months and then went to Vietnam. When I was in the Replacement Battalion near Saigon, I met this lieutenant who had an air conditioner. I bought it from him on the spot and carried it with me to C Troop. I must say that I didn't have a problem finding a roommate – there were lots of volunteers. I joined C Troop as a WO1 in late June 1971. The first part of my tour was pretty boring. We still had our own Blues. I don't think we lost them until about January if I remember correctly. I started keeping a diary in October. I recorded a few things that we did while flying out of Lane Army Heliport. We flew up to LZ Crystal and LZ English operating mostly in that area. Occasionally we flew into the Soui Ca Valley. It seemed that every time we went in there we lost a helicopter. I got to fly C&C occasionally at the beginning. What we would do is fly the high bird over the Scouts and Cobras, watch them work, and if something would happen we were the ones to go in and pick up the LOH crew. However, luckily I never had to do that. We flew out of An Khe. The one thing that I remember is that we had a UH-1 that often had compressor stalls. So it sounded like a machine-gun going off in the back of the helicopter. We would put it down, check it out, but nothing ever showed up. It finally got to the point that we told the maintenance officer that that was his bird – he could use it for any parts runs that he wanted. He started flying it. During a mission between Lane and Camp Holloway and right in the middle of the An Khe Pass he had a compressor stall, so he set it down on the road and that shook him up a little. When he got it back he said, "Gentlemen, it finally happened to me. I'll have the engine changed tomorrow." This, of course, is exactly what we wanted all along.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to C Troop OH-6A #67-16157. The Goldbook database states that after serving with C Troop since May 1971 for a total of 134 hours including 17 in Aug 1971; this aircraft is returned to CONUS for repairs for no known reason. The VHPA Helicopter database is silent about any battle damage or accident event during this period of time for this aircraft. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

October 1971

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

On the 5th, a team of one LOH and one Gun were assigned by A Troop to provide route security for a convoy from Phan Rang. The LOH experienced a tail rotor failure but no one was injured.

Also on the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an accident record A Troop OH-6A #68-17317 flown by WO1 S.M. Shupe as pilot and SP4 T.S. Reynolds as observer. The aircraft was recovered to Phan Rang. The Goldbook database indicates the aircraft was repaired locally and continued to serve with A Troop. The accident summary states:

At 0730 hours, Army aircraft OH-6A, serial number 68-17317, departed Phan Rang on a convoy cover mission. The pilot, WO1 Scott M. Shupe, set the aircraft down at Song Mao until the convoy was ready to pull out. At 0900 hours he took off for the mission. At approximately 0950 hrs he sighted armed personnel on the road ahead of the convoy and put the aircraft in a hard left bank to investigate. While in the turn he heard loud clanking noises from the rear of the aircraft and experienced severe vibrations. At the time he was at 50 feet AGL and indicating about 60 knots. The pilot immediately leveled the aircraft and began decreasing airspeed. As he did so the aircraft began a yaw to the right. To correct the condition WO1 Shupe applied left pedal, but this only caused the yaw to become more severe. He then reduced power to straighten the aircraft. At this time he was at 15 to 20 feet and at too slow an airspeed to maintain flight. He then used aft cyclic and a small amount of pitch to go over a mound of dirt and then rolled off power and used remaining pitch to cushion the aircraft in a running landing. The front of the left skid sank into the sand causing the front left skid strut to break which in turn caused the aircraft to pitch forward and the main rotor blades to strike the ground.

Also on the 5th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'worked for Kontum Province at AS785092, the scouts took fire, one OH6 was shot down by intense small arms and automatic weapons fire. The pilot and observer escaped with minor injuries, were treated at 14th Med and released the following day. Five enemy were killed by the gunship.'

Also on the 5th, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record B Troop OH-6A #67-16373 at grid AS785087 flown by an un-named crew. The record provides no other details. The Goldbook database indicates the aircraft was destroyed and lost to inventory in Oct. 1971. Anyone who can provide details about this incident should contact Mike Law.

On the 7th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'worked for Kontum Province at AS791135. The ARPs were inserted and the following was found: 2 houses with corn which were destroyed, 3 satchel charges, and boosters for B-40 rockets, 4 wrapped satchels, 6 B-40 rockets, 3 tubes of C-4, 1 case of C-4 (approx ¼ kilo), 3 kilos of TNT, 1 sack of blasting caps and 90 kilos of corn, 40 bunkers and 32 rounds of 82mm mortars.'

On the 12th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'worked for Kontum Province at AS795145, the scouts took fire, the gunships engaged with negative results. Troops were inserted, and 7 B-40 rockets were found.'

On the 13th, a Gun team from A Troop expended in support of an ARVN element in contact near Song Mao. After contact was broken, the ground force swept the area, found five dead and captured two weapons. Later in the day, A Troop sent some Guns to support the Recon Co of the 44th Regt that was in contact.

On the 16th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'worked for Kontum Province and inserted at AS106897. The unit made contact with an unknown size force. Results were 3 friendly lightly wounded, and 3 NVAs KIA. In the same vicinity a bunker complex was searched with the following results" 2 AK47 captured, 40 hand grenades, 1 B-40 rocket launcher, 1 VC flag, numerous articles of clothing (destroyed), documents, M-16 ammunition, 4 B-40 rockets, 6 82mm mortar rounds, 9 hand grenades, 1 AK magazine, 1 container of medicine, (penicillin glucose), and bandages. The entire complex was destroyed by burning.'

On the 25th according to the 52nd CAB ORLL dated 7 Nov 1971, B Troop 'worked for Kontum Province at AR992717, elements took fire. Troops were inserted, Tac Air was called and five air strikes utilized. The results were 72 NVA helmets, 68 NVA belts, 29 ruck sacks, over 300 lbs of rice and corn, medical supplies to support 2 companies for 6 months, destroyed 60 bunkers, 30-40 command bunkers, 40 small houses 10x20, 6 large houses 70x30. Estimate approximately 25 killed, actual count 17 KIA, 1 NVA flag, 3 VC flags and NVA money. Destroyed rice fields and vegetable garden, and 8 AK50, 2 LMG and 350 hand grenades captured.'

On the 26th, **SP5 Robert Allen Nickol**, who had served in HHT, died as a passenger in a 68th ASHC CH-47B that was observed flying into heavy rain en route to Cam Ranh Bay. The Chinook crashed with a total loss of life but the wreckage was never found. His official status is KIA-BNR (body not recovered). The Wall database indicates he started his tour in Vietnam on 1 Nov. 1970. This would support the idea that he was en route to Cam Ranh as part of his DEROS. Sadly, the Wall database does not provide an MOS for this man and we don't know what duties he had in the Squadron. Anywho who has more information about this soldier is asked to contact Mike Law.

1LT Ken Kendricks provided: I was a 1LT Armor officer at Camp Holloway, Pleiku. I got there in August 1971 and left in May 1972. I was the 3rd Platoon leader in D Troop. The 3rd Platoon had the gun jeeps. We had 50-cal heavy machineguns, a minigun, and a 106-mm recoilless rifle mounted on the jeeps. One of my secondary duties was Supply Officer. As such I kept the unit's Property Books. Later on I was the Executive Officer but still kept my job as the 3rd Platoon leader when it came to the day-to-day operations and running patrols. One of 3rd Platoon's major duties was escorting ammo and JP4 convoys to the forward staging areas. We did that not only for the aviation units still there at Camp Holloway but also for II Corps and other operations. I can remember once we supported a Special Forces insertion north of Kontum at Fire Base 5, I think. So we would escort usually two flatbeds full of ammo and either one but most of the time two 40 to 60 foot tankers of JP4 to Kontum, Qui Nhon, or Ban Me Thuot to name a few. We only went about 60 miles from Pleiku. We didn't escort ammo convoys that would resupply infantry or artillery units. Some of the staging areas were pretty primitive. We'd get map coordinates that the Pathfinders had cleared and our air cover would help us take the best route to the place. Most of the ammo trucks had a forklift that they could lower off the back to put the ammo on the ground. Normally we'd just drop the fuel tankers. As soon as we unloaded, we'd head back to base with the tractors and empty flatbeds. A day or two later, we're turn to get the fuel tankers and anything else they no longer needed at the staging area. So instead of using fuel blivots, they were refuel from the fuel tanker. Sometimes we established perimeter security at a staging area because the aircraft were constantly coming and going. A lot of times we'd carry one of the ¾ ton trucks that would have cokes, water, coffee, hot chocolate so the air crews could have a quick drink before they left. We supported the 361st Pink Panthers, the Pallbearers and Undertakers, the Gladiators. We didn't work with the Chinooks. Depending on where we went, we'd receive enemy fire. Almost every time we went to Qui Nhon

someone would try something – anywhere from a couple of random shoots to an RPG. I watched one RPG miss a tanker truck but about six inches. The kid that was riding observer in the cab later told me he felt the heat of the rocket going past. The Transportation Companies had those big gun trucks named Brutus and Led Zeppelin. One time I was talking to another 1LT who was with the Brutus truck when it stopped at Holloway. We started comparing notes about escorting convoys. I told him what we did to escort the ammo and JP4 convoys. He said the best thing to do is to use random speeds. Everyone thinks it is best just to haul ass at 50 MPH but that isn't it. You can travel fast for a couple of minutes then slow down to 25 MPH for 30 or 40 second, then speed up again. He said the enemy was rather crude in their leading estimates. Never run at a constant speed. We started doing this. It would cause an accordion effort for the vehicles. Of course it is easier for a jeep to change speed than for a heavily loaded tanker or flatbed. I'd guess we ran about three convoys a week. There were some weeks when we went every day. So we were busy all the time. Since D Troop only had one platoon with gun jeeps and it only had five of them, we did one convoy escort mission at a time. We never took the 106 on these missions because it was impossible to fire it on the run. So we had four 50-cal jeeps plus the one minigun jeep. No mortar vehicle as in the old days. We carried a 60mm chicom mortar with us but we had to stop and set it up to fire. If we knew from Intel or the locals that there was a good chance the convey would be attacked, we would have air cover – usually a couple of Cobras. They flew ahead of us. A couple of times I remember they found the road actually blocked and they would blow these up. When my platoon provided the escort, I was the convey commander. Being in the 3rd Platoon was considered good duty. Additionally those who stayed at Holloway pulled bunker duty and no one enjoyed that. Even the other two platoon leaders, LTs Ogren and Brookover, begged to go with me. They'd say things like: 'Sergeant so in so doesn't look well today. I'll take his place.' Most of the trips to and from Qui Nhon were done in one day. Only sometimes we would stay the night. We'd hit the road as soon as it got daylight about 6:30 a.m. and needed to be back before dark about 6:30 p.m. It was a long day! I can remember when the enemy closed the highway for some time. The only American Artillery was on a hill a few miles north of Pleiku. I remember Arclights along the highway to Qui Nhon but not that much Artillery. It was a 4 ½ to 5 hour run from Holloway to Ban Me Thuot. I know we didn't stay there very long at all. We only ran to the Ban Me Thuot City airfield. Delta Troop also had a 40mm Duster. It had twin guns on it and was a tracked vehicle. It was a perimeter vehicle. We got it from the American advisors to the ARVN Armored unit on a compound between Holloway and Pleiku City. We traded the ARVNs boots for the 40mm ammo.

The 52nd CAB ORLL for the period ending 31 Oct 1971 and dated 7 Nov 1971 is the youngest or last 52nd CAB document stored in the National Archives.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to C Troop OH-6A #67-16083. The Goldbook database states that after serving with C Troop since it came from the factory in Sep 1968 for a total of 1,886 hours including 30 in Sep 1971; this aircraft logs zero time in the last three months of 1971 and is turned into the 79th/608th TC DS Company in January, 1972 for CONUS repairs for no known reason. The VHPA Helicopter database is silent about any battle damage or loss event during this period of time for this aircraft. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

November 1971

During this month, C Troop again moved its operations base to Holloway and would stay there for the rest of the year.

C Troop Moves from Lane to Camp Holloway

On the 1st, the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record B Troop OH-6A #68-17233 at grid YA971475 flown by an un-named crew. The record provides no other details. The Goldbook database

incidents the aircraft was destroyed and lost to inventory in Nov. 1971. Anyone who can provide details about this incident should contact Mike Law.

On the 7th, A Troop was told to move to Pleiku for an undetermined period of time.

Jeff Anthony recalls: I was on my second tour in Vietnam. I was in maintenance and flew Scouts for A/3/17 Cav in 1967 and 1968. I joined A Troop in 1971 and flew guns for while then I went back to LOHs. A Troop was operating out of Camp Holloway during one of its 'temporary' posting there. On a day I can not date, we were working an AO that required a follow-up after an arlight. We were hovering, doing our WP thing through a hooch roof. Suddenly, a round entered between pedals, grazed my observer's chicken plate, broke his jaw and exited through his cheek. The round, along with bone fragments, blew out the overhead Plexiglas. We got him evac'd quickly and I know he lived. And darn if I can't remember his name. He is a fellow I would like to talk to again - given the intensity of the moment and the fact he probably still doesn't know the circumstances of his good fortune - several events came into play which ultimately turned a certain KIA into a wholly different outcome.

On the 11th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft accident record for C Troop OH-6A #67-16089 flown by CPT R.J. Middendorf as pilot and SP5 B.R. Jackson as CE. The aircraft was recovered to An Son. The accident summary record reads:

The pilot landed at LZ Crystal at 0900, parking the aircraft on a slight slope. When the pilot attempted to restart the aircraft at 1730 hours, the main rotor blade struck an engineer stake. The pilot shut down the aircraft. The OH-6A had slipped down the slope during the extended shut down period sufficiently to strike the engineer stake on restart. No injuries. Incidental damage to main rotor blade.

On the 15th, a suspected NVA Bn base camp west of Phu Nhon was taken under fire by airstrikes, artillery and A Troop's Guns. 23rd ARVN elements were inserted and immediately made contact. At 1100 the observer in an LOH was wounded and evaced to Pleiku. Later in the day, another Scout spotted 10-15 people sitting under a tree near some bunkers. Upon further investigation, they had disappeared. The Guns fired up the bunkers with unknown results.

On the 19th, A Troop's Scouts fired on two men walking and the Guns also fired with unknown results. The Scouts returned to the same location again that day and received fire. The Guns expended with unknown results.

On the 22nd, A Troop was told to move back to Phan Rang. CW2 Dave A. Caraker recalls:

Need to fix this/////

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07842 at YB837156 with no other details concerning this event. The Goldbook database confirms this aircraft was lost to inventory in Nov 1971. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft and this event should contact Mike Law.

On the 28th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-07938 at XD921231 with no other details concerning this event. The Goldbook database confirms this aircraft was lost to inventory in Nov 1971. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft and this event should contact Mike Law.

Also on the 28th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft loss record for B Troop OH-6A #66-17833 at YB838045 with no other details concerning this event. The Goldbook database confirms this aircraft was lost to inventory in Nov 1971. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft and this event should contact Mike Law.

CPT Charles Hartley recalls: I was assigned to B Troop in May 1971 for my second tour in Vietnam. This was near the end of MAJ Carr's tour as Troop Commander. MAJ Cassidy became the CO and I became the XO. I was a 1LT was the 5th Special Forces Group on my first tour – all of it in northern II Corps in 1967 and 1968. I was with A242 at Bak Pek, then A246 at Mang Buk, and finally at the B24 HQ at Kontum during Tet of 1968. I remember D Troop fighting their way into our compound during Tet, but that is another story. This was MAJ Cassidy's second tour was well. He was a Mohawk pilot on his first tour. It is my opinion that he was determine to prove to everyone that he could fly helicopters and command an Air Cavalry Troop in combat. Naturally he flew a lot in the C&C aircraft. He was also Cobra qualified, so he flew them as well. I recall that periodically he had a difficult time sleeping and he had sinus problems now and then. I flew C&C about two or three times a week during those times when he was grounded by his sinus. We had two Hueys configured as C&C ships with the extra radio consol behind the pilot's seats. I have vivid memories of the last part of November 1971, after Thanksgiving. We worked AOs to the west of FB 5 and FB 6. The intensity of the NVA fire and we could 'watch' the NVA build-up as they prepared to assault those bases. We lost three LOHs in two days and had a devil of a time getting the crews out. [Please provide details.] I left B Troop in December 1971 and finished my tour as an Assistant S-3 with the 52nd CAB.

SSG Bill Ryerson provides an insight into the Mortar Platoon of Delta Troop: I started my second tour in Vietnam in November, 1970 and was assigned to HHC 52nd CAB even though I was an 11D40, an armor MOS. There wasn't too much for me to do, so they put me in charge of the security police at the main gate. We lived in the guard shack there at the gate. It was not far from the 52nd headquarters. Sometime after Christmas, I was told that I would be the mortar platoon sergeant in Delta Troop. I believe I replaced a black NCO who returned to the States suddenly when his mother passed away. I am not very clear on these details, but I don't think he was a member of Delta Troop – rather he was part of HHC 52d CAB and assigned to that platoon. The mortar platoon had three 81mm tubes in pits not too far from the main gate. There were 12 to 14 of us in the platoon. We had our own hooch near the pits and really didn't have too much to do with the rest of Delta Troop. I can clearly remember the troop commander was CPT Arthur Trujillo. He was a fine man and we became good friends. He wrote me up for an award when I DEROSed on Dec 3, 1971 and wanted to send me to OCS. I accepted the award but declined on the OCS part. I don't remember any other troop commander or the First Sergeant. We did not have an officer platoon leader. My Assistant Platoon Sergeant was Rich Valentini. The platoon was just like a family. Basically we were on duty all night, every night. We fired every night without exception. We fired illumination rounds over the camp plus HE and WP in support of any ambush patrols outside the perimeter. We had a jeep and a ¾ ton truck. In the morning, we'd all drive up to the main Delta Troop area for the mandatory formation and then eat breakfast in the messhall. Because we were all up all night, we were off-duty during the day. Some of the guys would go back for lunch and most everyone for mail call, but we had our own frigs and stoves so some would just stayed home for lunch. When I arrived everyone was crowded in one large hooch. One day we heard that the Air Force wanted to get rid of a building, so we got two heavy folk lifts and a low-boy. We loaded the building on it and set it up at our place. We also built a shower from a jet's drop-tank. By the time I left, we had a rather comfortable place. I have lots of pictures of my platoon and one shows a CPT Father George Gudz who was the post chaplain. He is wearing a Ruthless Rider pocket patch, so maybe he had been assigned there from the Squadron. We all wore black berets. Duty was not too hard and we didn't have much of a drug problem. Like I said we didn't socialize much with the rest of D Troop. I don't recall any serious action other than incoming but most of the time that was directed at the helicopter revetments. I don't recall receiving small arms fire or even a serious enemy probe of our perimeter. I don't remember anyone being injured or killed while I was there. I've exchanged emails with several Delta Troopers who find it difficult to believe Delta Troop had a

mortar platoon because the original configuration had an 81mm mortar mounted in an B37B1 3/4 ton with each of the three platoons. There was a mortar section with each platoon but not a mortar platoon. During my tour we still had the three 81mm mortars but they were not mounted. It is possible that when Delta Troop was assigned to the 52d CAB that it was reorganized with a different TO&E.

1LT Dennis Brookover of Delta Troop recalls: I'd guess we did about 25 missions outside the fence at Holloway in 1971 and 1972. We had anywhere from eight to ten men on each mission. It was just a small detachment that would go out. All these missions came down from II Corps headquarters that they wanted boots on the ground in a certain area - small groups to see what was going on. We got there several ways. Some of the missions, the closer in missions, we would hump out for 3 or 4 clicks to a designated area. Set up some observation posts and stay there for a couple or three days and report any activity back to Corps headquarters which was also right there in Pleiku. Other missions were further out and we were lifted out with the slicks for those missions. Some of them we went into what could be considered a hot LZ although very few of them when we got in, there was only one that when we touched down did we have any fire coming in at the time. And CPT Trujillo was actually flying the lead aircraft on that particular mission as I recall. But those are the types of missions that we would do. And some of those missions would go up to 15 or 30 clicks out. The aircraft came from the support of the 52nd Aviation Battalion. None of the ACTs from the 7/17th Cav were involved to best of my knowledge. They were all aircraft operated by other attack and support units that were stationed right there at Camp Holloway. If we were lifted out, it was always in a Huey. Most of the time we ended up walked back into Holloway. There were times we were out far enough were we called in at a point we were picked up. A couple of times we were in a fire fight were we ended up having to have air support from the Air Force and from the Cobras for us too. Those kind of missions that you hear about especially in the Vietnam War. But there were only a couple of those that we encountered. I did enough to earn myself an Air Medal. So I took enough combat missions to earn the AM when I was out doing these things. The men that went on these missions were mostly volunteers. There was always an officer. There was one officer I'll never forget. He was from one of the military schools. He was a Captain and we called him CPT Snowflake because he got into a mission and panicked. And we were under fire and panicked and instead of maintaining his position, he got up and was running around the position. And from that point on, CPT Mike Harsh, one of the grounded pilots that served in our Troop and was the leader on that particular mission, tackled him to the ground and told him to stay where he was. When we did get aircraft in to take us out of the area, CPT Harsh put him on it and he never went on another mission. He just ran the wire (perimeter duty) every night. That's all he did was run wire because he couldn't be trusted to be on any other kind of combat mission. Let me tell you about the rest of the grounded pilots we had. 1LT Chatham was one. I wish I could remember his first name, was a cowboy from the word go. He was grounded because he tried to do a loop de loop with a Cobra and it didn't work. He crashed the Cobra. CPT Harsh had been told by the commanding officer of the 52nd Battalion that he had done a great job. He tried to do a wing over with his Huey as he came in but he lost it and it went down just across the road. I think it was just south of Camp Holloway. So they assigned him to us. Plus he was a short timer. So he had a short timer's calendar. But he was quit a guy. He volunteered for quite a few of the ground missions that we ran. We had enough confidence in him to be able to do that. But the others were grounded. We had a LT by the name of LT - I wish I had my book. This guy would drink a bottle of Jack Daniels in the morning and he wasn't a grounded pilot, he was a field commissioned officer from Korea. 1LT John Atkins was his name. He threatened to take a grease gun with his jeep and bust through the front gate at Camp Holloway and take off and go hold off the North Vietnamese up at some bridge that was under attack. And we don't know what happened to him because one day he was there and the next day he was gone. So they either took him out on an 88 or something. We were not quite sure what

happened to him but he was goofy. He was from Kentucky and was a funny guy. But the officers especially were very dedicated officers in my unit. SSG Allen, an E6 as I recall, was my platoon sergeant. He was a very dedicated man. SSG Jim Littlejohn - I think he was an E6 but he might have been an E7. They were people you could really rely on to be there when you needed them. Unfortunately there was a lot of drugs in Vietnam. And we had our share just like I'm sure a lot of other units did of guys trying to get the drugs in and utilizing the drugs. They were of very, very little use to us. In the case where we found a drug user where he was out of it – like a couple of times we found them and they still had the needle in their arm. These guys were identified long before we found them like that. This just happened we were doing a barracks walk through and we would find them in their particular area. Couple of situations like that. One Sunday Kenricks and I with Okeefe decided that we would set up. We knew were some of the drugs were coming through the wire on the main road. And so there was an old guard post that was there. And nobody was ever in that guard post. So Kenricks and I got up at the crack of dawn. Went up into this guard post. Took some C rations and some water with us and we sat there all day waiting for an exchange of drugs that we could document. And we finally caught one guy. And he was a crewman, either a crew chief or a gunner with one of the aviation units. And we followed through with his court marshal and getting him out of country because he was dangerous. And that was the only one were we had anything more than reporting the name, the incident, and letting JAG or whomever would take over after that. We would call the MP down at the front gate and they were gone. Some of them came back within a few days within a couple of days. But some of them were gone and they were off our roster from that point on because they were multiple. They had been caught multiple times doing this. So with the wisdom of the commanding senior officers they would see to it that these guys. They just were totally unreliable. You never knew. They might start shooting up their own bunker for all we knew. It's dangerous to put a M60 machine gun in the hands of one of those guys when he is flying high as a kite. We had none killed in D Troop during my time but we did have some wounded. I don't know about Purple Hearts but I put some guys in for accommodations. But I had one guy that, and it wasn't through an enemy round or a mortar or a booby trap or anything like that, a guy that when we were on a mission that busted up his leg pretty good. And we medevaced him out right away. Of course the mission was scrapped at that time and we medevaced him out. I took him over to the hospital unit in Pleiku. We landed right there and they took care of him. He came back but I put him in for accommodation on another mission but I don't know if Trujillo every put him through for a Purple Heart in that case but I doubt if he did because I don't think it would be appropriate because I wasn't thinking about it. Myself, I didn't get any wounds. I got a little bit of shrapnel here and there but I never reported it. I don't know why I got it but on one mission we were having some real problems getting a LZ set up where we could get the hell out of there because we were not equipped to fight the size of the unit that we were facing. We didn't lose any guys but I was in charge of that mission and I was loading guys onto the choppers as they came in with our equipment. I'll never forget we had CPT Father George Gudz, who was the chaplain had come with us on that particular patrol and why and how he ever got permission to do that I don't recall but he was on it. And I wanted to make sure he was going to be okay. So we got him on there and then I looked around and the chopper was gone and I was the only guy left. And it got a little quiet. And that's when Trujillo came back and picked me up and Trujillo for whatever reason decided that he would put me through for a Bronze Star and a Cross of Gallantry for that particular mission. I was awarded surprisingly the Bronze Star and the Cross of Gallantry for that particular mission. I still have those citations. Nobody has mentioned Roger Ogren. He was our free spirit, a LT. He was anxious to get out of the service but he did his duty. He really did and he became a buddy. I don't see him as much as I do Kenricks or Okeefe. We're the four that keep together. But it would be good to get his perspective because I'm sure he would have a different perspective of things than any of us would that were in that unit at the time.

SGT Luis A. Rodriguez "Pancho" recalls: I landed in Vietnam 31 March 1971 in Cam Ranh Bay with a 11B/11C MOS. 11C is a mortar man. I didn't have a home so I was sent up to Da Nang then Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, Phu Bai and then I was sent to Pleiku, Camp Holloway. At that time it was the 52nd Security. It was then converted and attached to the D Troop 7/17th Cav a couple of months after I got there. I was with the mortar platoon. My duties were with the Fire Direction Center (FDC). We supported the ground troops and the perimeter on the base. I got to Camp Holloway I would guess somewhere around May. DEROSed - I believe I left sometime in February 1972. We had three guns and probably 12 people in the mortar platoon. Initially I was the Radio Operator. We used the FDC the meetings and briefings. We'd learn where the friendly ground troops were located and they would give you a run down of the scouting reports and the military intelligence. We fired every night. We got the call and sometimes we had our illuminations rounds. We also used white phosphorus - they call it Whiskey Peter or WP. Of course we had Hotel Echo - high explosive. We would fire HE every night. These were 81mm mortars. Basically we had to be trained. Took basic training in Ft Dicks, and then went to Ft Poke for Eleven Charlie and was trained as Eleven Bravo as well. So we were trained in two subjects. I was comfortable with training. When I left the States I was kind of shaky and afraid. Not knowing that when you hear the wind blowing, you hope this rocket wouldn't land on you. There was one time even with those 81's. They have charges that have to be set correctly. I was in the bunker. One of the rounds had gotten wet and landed right next to the bunker when I was on guard with another soldier. We were given lots of bad jobs - lots of details. Everybody got along together and worked together. I was the only Hispanic in the mortar platoon. I felt comfortable with the guys and they made me feel welcome. We shared duties - even the crap burning details - everybody took their turns. The actual firing missions were kind of interesting. The crew sergeants timed ever task and help you become more knowledgeable, more expert. For example when I was in the FDC - from the time I got the coordinates to sending the instructions to the gun - 16 seconds. It's hard to believe but we got the mission off in 16 seconds. You also learned easy tricks. For example, when the Forward Observer (FO) wanted to have the rounds go out a little further, instead of inputting the data on the site all we had to do was lower the tripod. By lowering the tripod, the round would go farther. If you want the round shorter, we would just bring the tripod closer to the base plate. That's how you adjust. If the FO wants you to shot, travel left or right, all we had to do was lift up the tripod and we just moved it. You didn't have to waste time imputing the data and the site. You would get the mission done quickly. You depend on the FO there and you depend on the information he provides you and then you go ahead and make your adjustment and give it to the gun sergeant and he will make the quick decision. Sixteen seconds we got one mission. We had the planning board, planned the information on the planning board and then we had a book that gave you the range and the deflection to notify the guns to input the information on the site. We were supposed to have ear plugs but there is no time because you have to answer the phone so for ear plugs we used were the tips of our fingers. You would put your fingers in your ears and cover your ears. Our Fire Missions were at night and usually I would say from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. in the morning. We also maintained our own guns. There were no problems with breakdown. You had to keep the barrel clean. So you do the maintenance and no problem. You had to be prepared in case one of those mortars got stuck in the barrel. Make sure you know what to do with it. It did not happen very much. You had to be careful with the charges on the 81's, because they can get wet during the rainy season. You had to be extremely careful in the rain. There is no way to cover the guns because you had to fire. But we keep the mortars in boxes in caskets away from the rain. We also had regular Guard Duty at times. There was one time we had intelligence that the NVA were going to attack us because we were right by the air strip where the Hueys and Cobras and some jets were located. We were right outside the front gate, almost on the perimeter of the field. We did that for 10 months. Sometimes I also went out in a field on patrols. I was an 11 Bravo with them. They had more experience. In the mortar platoon we had SGT Keymock. He was a very knowledgeable person. He taught me a lot especially my duties in the

FDC. When we switched to Delta Troop – it was just the name. Our job was exactly the same as before. They were still doing the same job when I left in Feb 1972. I had a friend who was a cook in one of the units. He was interested in the mortars. He used to come over and I'd show him the mortars and he used to give us eggs and that's what we had for dinner at night, scrambled eggs. We didn't particularly like to eat in the Mess Hall. We had one of those electric fry pans and bacon and eggs we use to have there most of the time. One of the crew members was Harvercheck and Wickens. Sadly I haven't stayed in touch with anybody except for Bill Roareson. He was my first platoon sergeant. Then before I left we had SSG Jim Littlejohn. And there was another SGT Richard Rollentine. I was happy was everybody, got along. My nickname was Pancho. Actually the Troop commander, CPT Trujillo, gave me that name. He flew the LOH. One thing I remember that he use to get on the phone and we would talk in Spanish. I remember the Chaplain - I think his name was CPT Gates or something like that. I stayed on Active duty and retired in 2006.

December 1971

For the first few days, A Troop worked around Phan Rang as an ACT. The rest of the month was spent working the area between Dalat and Bao Loc. With the stand down of the 92nd and the 192nd AHCs, A Troop picked up their gun support and resupply missions. For example, two Guns were sent to Bao Loc for security of the surrounding engineer camps and two to Dong Ba Thin for the security of the Cam Ranh Bay area.

Ron Logan describes what was going on with B Troop: December was a not a good month for being a Scout and especially bad for Scout Platoon Leaders. CPT Mike Trees had been our leader for several months. He got shot down and "shaken up" pretty good, so they made him the Opns Officer. Next a LT Sullivan was the leader for a few days until he was evaced after his LOH was destroyed by a tree mine. Then a CPT from C Troop came over as the leader for a few days. He too was shot down and evaced with a broken tailbone plus he had a finger shot off. Finally, CPT Melvin Finch took over the platoon. Needless to say but the NVA were getting stronger and stronger in the Kontum / Dak To area!! As more and more aviation units stood down, things got less and less organized. I certainly believe that about this time the Troop's name was just B/17th Cav. I saw Troop orders cut during this period with just B/17 versus the old name B/7/17.

Gerry Gaines adds some more about B Troop: I was a Warrant Officer and joined B Troop in mid-June 1971. I would DEROS in April 1972. For the first two months or so after joining B Troop I didn't fly very much because five new pilots were selected for Scout training just before I reported. I remember flying some admin runs and in the C&C a few times. Finally I started flying with the Scout Platoon Leader, CPT Mike Trees. I don't recall any formal OH-6A transition training – just learning OJT from the more experienced Scout pilots. Besides just picking up ideas and techniques, Mike told me to 'keep your eyes open and your head turning' which proved to be good advice indeed. Eventually I started flying the wing ship as Scalphunter 14. Even back then I recognized that being a Scout for one year was not a wise idea, so after about four months (six months with the Troop), I moved to the Lift Platoon. While I got a lot of time in the Huey, I don't recall being an AC. I only remember inserting B Troop's GI Blues once because they were assigned base camp perimeter security duty on a permanent basis. We inserted them a few clicks out from Holloway to patrol back to the camp. As I recall, they made contact and the higher headquarter's people had the ARVNs go deal with the contact, so we went back out and extracted the Blues. I do remember inserting our ARVN Blues a few times. /QUESTION – did you guys have a nickname of the ARVN Blues? If so, what was it?/ They were very slow when leaving the aircraft in the LZ during an insert. It seemed that we were in the LZ 'a long time' most everytime we inserted them. One incident sticks in my mind. The insertion LZ was covered with small trees and brush so we had to come to a hover a few feet above the ground. The ARVNs would drop their rucks and gear to the ground, climb out and swing from the skids with their hands before dropping to the ground. The guys in

back called that we were clear. We left the LZ and they shut the large cargo doors once we had climbed to altitude. Pretty soon I hear this banging on the door and a few seconds later more banging. The CE or gunner opened the cargo door and there was the scared ARVN trooper holding on for dear life. He had lost his helmet and other things in the wind, but we landed him safely back in the LZ.

1LT Dennis Brookover, a platoon leader in Delta Troop, recalls: The incident that we are most notorious for happened on Christmas Eve. I believe it was 1971. We had pretty much stood down during the Christmas holidays like that 'cause Charlie laid off of us and we laid off of them. But it was very early morning Christmas morning that the sirens went off and we reported over to the headquarters bunker. And there was activity in the wire. Seemed that a sapper unit was trying to infiltrate Camp Holloway and we engaged them at that time and were able to stop them from completely infiltrating the wire. One thing though that was tragic was we caught an AWOL and I believe he was navy man that was a member of the sapper group and the Charlie and the Vietcong that were trying to get in to the compound. This man was a traitor to America. We held him captive. Of course we were all very, very upset at him. There wasn't one guy I think in the unit that didn't want to do him in right there and done. But we held him captive for about 24 hours until Air America came in took him off our hands. I don't really know what happened to him after that with the exception of the CO at the time was CPT Ray O'Keefe and I heard later that he got called to Washington for a court martial was taking place over this individual that had gone AWOL and was helping Charlie out. So that was an incident that stood out greatly. I don't remember the name of the individual that got caught. Things run together. [Editor's Note: Details of the two known American military defectors during the Vietnam War do not match these details. Anyone with any more details about this incident or the individual involved is encouraged to contact Mike Law.]

On the 27th, the VHPA Helicopter database has an aircraft loss record for B Troop OH-6A #67-16386 at AR922592 with no other details concerning this event. The Goldbook database confirms this aircraft was lost to inventory in Dec 1971. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft and this event should contact Mike Law.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to A Troop UH-1H #69-15289. The Goldbook database states that after serving with A Troop since it came from the factory in May, 1970 for a total of 1,004 hours including 79 in November, 1971; this aircraft logs zero time in December, 1971 and is turned into the 608th TC DS Company in January, 1972 for no known reason. The VHPA Helicopter database is silent about any battle damage or loss event during this period of time for this aircraft. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to B Troop UH-1H #70-15760. The Goldbook database states that after serving with B Troop since it came from the factory in May, 1971 for a total of 255 hours including 22 in November, 1971; this aircraft was dropped from the Army's inventory in Dec 1971 for no known reason. The VHPA Helicopter database is silent about any battle damage or loss event during this period of time for this aircraft. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to B Troop UH-1H #70-15762. The Goldbook database states that after serving with B Troop since it came from the factory in May, 1971 for a total of 274 hours including 11 in November, 1971; this aircraft was dropped from the Army's inventory in Dec 1971 for no known reason. The VHPA Helicopter database is silent about any battle damage or loss event during this period of time for this aircraft. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law.

During this month it is possible that there was an undocumented event relating to C Troop UH-1H #70-15782. The Goldbook database states that after serving with C Troop since it came from the factory in May, 1971 for a total of 429 hours including 2 in November, 1971; this aircraft was dropped from the Army's inventory in Dec 1971 for no known reason. The VHPA Helicopter database is silent about any battle damage or loss event during this period of time for this aircraft. Anyone who can provide details about this aircraft during this period of time should contact Mike Law. The VHPA Helicopter database shows a VNAF loss record for this aircraft on 15 Jun 1973, therefore we can assume C Troop gave this aircraft to VNAF in Dec 1971.

Editor's Note: To the best of my knowledge there is no clear date when the GI Blues were removed from the ATCs. It is also possible that the disposition of B Troop's Blues was different from C Troop's Blues because of their locations. Since B Troop was at Camp Holloway and was colocated with Delta Troop, in an emergency maybe they could have used them. C Troop was at Lane but had a good working relationship with other combat units such as the Koreans. We know C Troop still had their GI Blues when they returned from I Corps in early 1971 but from that point on things are not clear at all. Because of this uncertainty, I often ask veterans from this era what they know about their Blues. WO1 LD 'Al' Varner and WO1 Larry Richards both joined C Troop in September 1971. They provided: "C Troop had Blues when we arrived but they took them away from us within about two months. They were certainly gone by the 1st of January 1972. Then we started getting ARVNs with a guy named SSG Britt [Charles Jackson Britt would be KIAed on 30 March 1972 while working with B Troop (H/17th Cav)]. He was great! He should have had about a hundred CMHs! He was an E-6. He was C Troop's Blue Platoon Sergeant while we still had American Blues. Now who had his pay records is open for discussion. He had four or five tours in RVN. He was everywhere. He sort of became the mobile II Corps infantry sergeant. He had a PRC-77 on his back and about a 6'3" follower. He could run the mountains with the Yards because he'd done it many times. He ran operations with the Yards and we covered them. He may have been a squadron asset. It seemed like whenever there was going to be a fight, Sergeant Britt would show up with the force that would be the Blues. They could have been Koreans, Nung, Yards or even ARVN. He spoke Vietnamese, Nung, and some Yard languages. I don't know what all he did but he ran with everyone. He was just super. He was in the American Rifleman Association magazine about a year ago."

Year End Summary - The Squadron HQ and HHT were at Qui Nhon for half the year and at Lane for the rest and basically functioned as a CAB versus an ACS. For most of the year, A Troop was assigned to the 10th CAB and cooperated with the program to minimize American losses while supporting the ARVN. They also had the opportunity to move between Phan Rang and Pleiku several times. B Troop was assigned to the 52th CAB, was based at Holloway the entire year, and spent the majority of their time working the familiar AOs in the Dak To / Kontum areas. The fact that they had five LOHs destroyed during the first six months and eight LOHs destroyed during the last six months of the year is indicative of some serious fighting. C Troop spent about three months in MR I supporting Lam Son 719, returned to Lane for two months, was in Kontum for the month of June, was at Lane until November when it moved to Holloway again. When C Troop was at Lane, they received their missions from the Squadron; but when they operated from bases other than Lane, they received missions for other headquarters. D Troop was assigned to the 52nd CAB and was used for convoy escort and the security of Holloway.