

1973

The primary source materials for this year are: For H Troop, 10th Cav, a Yearbook titled "1972 Anson" which has ten significant pages. For H Troop, 17th Cav, nothing.

January 1973

On the 1st, the Eagle Battalion Operations Journal mentions SSG Dowan in H/10th Operations section. The log states that the Cav Pac launched at 0910 hours and returned with a mission release at 1145 hours except for one C&C bird and two guns on standby. At 1515 hours the Cav was given a mission release. At 1600 hours SSG Dowan reported H Troop only has two guns for tomorrow. AH-1G 117 (#68-15117) has a cockpit blown seal leak and 429 (#69-16429) has a crimped fuel line, so it needs a complete TI.

H/10th Cav operates dual missions from An Son and Xuan Loc/Phan Thiet

During the last few weeks, H/10 split its operation by sending about two thirds of the Troop to Xuan Loc. This was during the "landgrab" or "war of the flags" period when both sides attempted to occupy as much territory as possible in anticipation of the Cease-Fire being signed. H Troop helped keep this area in ARVN hands as the NVA attempted to seize it. The Eagle Battalion Operations Journal mention in H/10th Cav LOHs being sent to Phan Thiet rather frequently.

CPT Dave Cornelius recalls: I was the senior officer for the detachment H Troop sent south. We had two LOHs, two Hueys, and two Cobras. We were still working down there when the cease fire was declared. I remember talking with MAJ Lyons on the phone and asked, "Where do you want us to go?" He told us to come home to An Son.

According to the intelligence section of an H/10th Cav ORLL prepared by Lawrence R. Jackson, a Department of the Army Civilian with the duties of Binh Dinh Province Officer in Charge, 'INSERT THIS

On the 16th, the VHPA Helicopter database contains an accident and lost record for the last H/17th Cav aircraft in the database. H/17th Cav AH-1G #67-15626 flown by WO1 John R. Phillips, the AC, and 1LT Chris G Gallavan, the pilot, at grid AR782889. The accident summary reads:

After landing at POL, the AC exited the aircraft and began refueling. Upon reaching 1350 lbs., the AC released the handle on the refueling nozzle but it would not release. After attempting to release the handle to cut off the fuel flow, without success, the AC removed the nozzle from the aircraft, fuel was sucked and/or blown into the engine air inlet. The aircraft caught fire and was completely destroyed.

On the 18th according to an H/10th Cav ORLL, 'the Cav's flyable assets were split into two elements. Half was assigned to work for Binh Thuan Province with a base of operations at Phan Thiet and the other half was to remain in support of Binh Dinh Province. Both elements still continued to work in close cooperation with the United States government agency.'

On the 22nd, the Eagle Battalion Operations Journal states that SSG Dowan in H/10th Operations section reported one of their aircraft was down due to hostile fire at Phan Thiet. Later the log states it was Yellowscraf 326 (#67-16326). That is sustained battle damage to the control cables for the tail rotor. The aircraft flew back to Phan Thiet but was Red Xed. It had to be slung to the 604th TC Company.

For his actions on the 22nd, 1LT John Caruso of H/10th Cav received the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device via HQ 1st Avn Bde General Order 1255 dated 25 Feb 1973. An edited version of the citation reads: 1LT Caruso distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions while performing

a VR mission in a LOH north of Phan Thiet. After descending from altitude he began his reconnaissance of the area and found a large bunker and structure complex. Hovering at tree-top level, he started destroying the structures as he was departing the area, he came upon a company size base camp with cooking fires still burning and uniforms hanging on a line. As he began reconning by fire and marking the individual quarters, his aircraft came under semi automatic weapons fire resulting in damage to the tail rotor control tube. While continuing to control his crippled aircraft, he marked the enemy positions with smoke grenades, called in the cobra gunships and adjusted their fire. He then piloted his aircraft out of the area and back to the staging area without any further damage.

On the 23rd according to an H/10th Cav ORLL, 'in southern Binh Dinh Province, a Viet Cong battalion base of operations was located. Two Cobra gunships engaged the target with precision, expending their ammunition and rearming several times. Throughout the engagement intense ground fire was received and both aircraft sustained minor battle damage. H Troop was credited with 23 destroyed hooches and heavy although not confirmed KBAs. Subsequent intelligence reported that this expertly executed Cav mission rendered the enemy unable to launch a major attack in the southern Binh Dinh Province. The mission of the Cav team based at Phan Thiet was to perform VR operations in search of main force elements that had placed an eminent threat on the city. H/10th Cav performed this mission in the high standard of excellence and extraordinary valor for which it has long been distinguished.'

On the 26th, the VHPA Helicopter database contains a battle damage and lost with injuries record for the last H/10th Cav aircraft in the database. H/10th Cav OH-6A #66-07918 flown by WO1 MacPherson, the pilot, and **SP4 Robert Lee Frakes**, the observer, at grid ZT183209. The Goldbook database shows this LOH as serving with H/17th Cav in December 1972 and was not part of the H/10th Cav aircraft inventory. The Wall database gives his tour start date as 19 Jun 1972 and his MOS as 67V20.

Dave Wallace recalls: At 1030 hours, the aircraft was shot down after extracting two Vietnamese rangers. WO1 MacPherson was the pilot. Aircraft burned on impact. SP4 Frakes, the gunner/observer, was alive but trapped inside. WO1 McPheason tried to pull Frakes out, but the fire was too intense. WO1 McPheason and both Vietnamese Rangers were wounded but survived. I was Cobra Lead covering WO1 MacPherson and SP4 Frakes when they were shot down. Submitted to the VHPA July 1995.

Also on the 26th according to an H/10th Cav ORLL, 'the Cav team was to extract the LRRPs that they had inserted previously due to the heavy enemy activity in the area. After establishing communications with the LRRP team, it was determined that the team had been severed after making contact with the enemy. All attempts to directed to pick up the one element consisting of three persons and the LOH pilot valiantly volunteered to extract the smaller element despite its being surrounded and in heavy contact with superior hostile forces. Upon lift-off from the extraction, the observation aircraft came under intense enemy ground fire, burst into flames and crashed into a densely wooded area. The aerial observer was killed on impact but the pilot and the two LRRPs escaped with minor injuries. The pilot valorously tried to clear the AO's body from the wreckage but the heat of the flames and the exploding ordinance prevented extended efforts. The command and control aircraft immediately descended and came to about a 100 foot hover and lowered a Maguire rig through the dense vegetation for the timely evacuation of the crash survivors. Throughout this time the Cobra gunships were unhesitatingly delivering a merciless volume of effective, suppressive fire on the enemy forces that prevented them from reaching their crash-site destination before the downed crew could be extracted. The chase ship immediately returned to Phan Thiet with the LRRPs extracted earlier and picked up an ARVN ready reaction force. The ARVNs under the direction of a United States Army intelligence NCO, were then inserted into the nearest available landing zone to the crash site and moved to the wreckage to recover the body of the crew member killed in the crash. Due to the increasingly copious activity of the enemy, the utmost skill and bravery was required of the pilots to maintain the safety of the aircraft and personnel within. Their further recovery of the reaction force personnel required perfect coordination

and command of all available assets as the hostile ground troops had been closing rapidly and attacking with vigorous determination. The entire operation was exemplary of the valor of the men of H/10th Cav and their firm grasp of the tactical situation. Epitomizing, the determination, ultimate skill and extraordinary heroism of H/10th Cav proved to be the deciding factor in the successful outcome of efforts to squelch the attempts of the Communists to capture the lands and people of Military Region II in the Republic of Vietnam.'

SP4 Dick Philip provides the following concerning H/10th Cav:

I joined H Troop sometime during August or September 1972. Since I had prior service with C/17th Infantry, I was assigned to the 1st Squad in the Blues. I hadn't been there too long when I was told by one of the senior NCOs that there was a vacancy in the Scout Platoon and that there was no duty for members of that platoon. I really couldn't stand all the duty assignments they were handing out in those days, so I volunteer for the Scouts. I was a pretty good Infantry weapons and considered myself to be a pretty good shot. Besides I thought that firing an M-60 from a LOH would be good fun. I was accepted and had about a two week OJT. I remember the Soup (CPT Louis R. Goeltzenleuchter) was our maintenance officer. The hardest thing I had to learn was not throwing up while flying in the LOH. No body liked you if you did that! Flying in the front was better - you could see more and had a better idea of what the pilot was going to do. During my time flying Scouts we flew in one LOH and two Cobras configuration. I can only remember one mission, a POW Rescue attempt in January where we flew with two LOHs and two Cobras. I remember H Troop moving part of its air operations frequently. I was at Phan Thiet and Kontum for one or two weeks at a time, some times we'd be there for just two or three days. We were at Phu Cat in December. I was in An Son on December 25th. The Army started to crack down on our dogs, cats, and other pets because of a concern about disease. I remember seeing guys who didn't want to see their pets killed getting CH-47 crews to take them to another camp where maybe the rules weren't so strict. Immediately after Christmas, about half the troop went to Pleiku. For excitement, some of the Scouts would get into CS wars with the EM from other units then we would watch the rockets go overhead on their way to the Air Force side of the base. I never minded going to Pleiku because they had the best supply sergeant there. In An Son they were really strict - flying crews were only allowed one flight suit; but the guy would give you anything you wanted at Pleiku. I even got a brand-new M-60 from him. I believe we stayed at Pleiku for about two weeks that time because I was back at An Son on January 15th. We flew missions northwest of Bong Song during the rest of January, then back into Happy Valley outside of An Khe. I remember SP4 Robert Lee Frakes dying in his LOH. Everyone was upset. He died about 10 in the morning and, I think, about noon there was a cease-fire. He was pinned in the LOH and died. On 17 February I left the Troop and caught a flight from Qui Nhon to Saigon. It was difficult to get around in Vietnam in those days unless we were in our own aircraft. Not long after I returned to the States I got to spending time with Mike Lynch of H/17th Cav. I ended up marrying his sister - small world, huh?

On the 22nd, the Eagle Battalion Operations Journal mentions SSG Dowan in H/10th Operations section. The log states that

The 28th was the ending period for H Troop 10th Cav's Valorous Unit Award (VUA). In 1979 via DA General Order #9, H Troop was awarded the VUA the period 10 Sep 1972 to 28 Jan 1973.

February 1973

On the 6th, the Eagle Battalion Operations Journal mentions H/10th Cav for the last time. The log states that H Troop's vehicle number H20 returned to Lane with CPT Hemilch, SGT Hueyndller, Co Stin. Carrisle, Middlebrook Zapata, W Right, Morrison, Mahan, and Brown. Finally at 1735 H Troop reported catching three ROK soldiers taking fans and requested an interpreter. During this period of time the journal items mainly concern convoys reports plus courier and other flight following reports.

Earlier in the month the journals mention retrograding aircraft. For example, a CH-47 is given a mission to fly some supplies to Pleiku on one day with a statement that it must be a retrograde aircraft because it will fly from Pleiku to Saigon the next day and be turned in. Two and three Cobras are also retrograded from Lane about every two days.

For H Troop, 17th Cav, CPT John Parker remembers: As mentioned earlier, I joined H/17th Cav in August 1972 after F/79th ARA 1st Cav stood down. I served as the Gun Platoon leader, then the XO and finally the Acting CO during much of H Troop's stand down processing.

1LT Barry R. 'Dick' Hudson provides: During the Oct/Nov period I still lived at Lane but was assigned to the Eagle Battalion as an Assistant S-3 and the Signal Officer. I also ran the MARS station that was located in the officer's quarters. I have a special patch we made up for guys who worked in the MARS station. I remember CPT Tyler T. Tugwell was the S-1. He had an unusual name for sure. I remember 1LT Price also came with me to the battalion from H Troop. He had flown a LOH when the last EM was killed. I remember a typhoon came through the area about the time I moved to the battalion. It ripped the roof off part of the barracks I was living in, so we moved out of that building. It also collapsed part of an aircraft hanger that had a Cobra stored inside. I was working the radios that day the ceasefire was declared. For a few days prior to that the battalion had instructed all the aviation units not to do anything aggressive while flying and we were not allowed to shoot back if fired upon. I don't think H Troop was even allowed to fly their gunships at all. I remember one aircraft took fire that day and we very upset when they couldn't shoot back. I remember helping code the KY28 boxes in the aircraft. We were told that when a ship went into maintenance the box had to be removed. The aircrews had to check a box out at the beginning of each day and if they ROned someplace other than Lane; they had to remove the box. The CH-47 guys were forever leaving the security boxes in their aircraft. The Eagle Battalion was also responsible for the ATC guys at Ninh Hoa and Nha Trang. I believe I was the last American to leave Lane at the end of February 1973. I was in a jeep, drove out and locked the chain that secured the front gate. There must have been a hundred or more Vietnamese waiting outside the gate. They knew we were leaving. As we drove away, they rushed to the gate, cut the chain and poured in to start looting the place. I drove down to Qui Nhon and got on a flight for Cam Ranh Bay.

H Troop, 10th Cavalry Departs Vietnam

H Troop, 17th Cavalry Departs Vietnam

On the 26th, both H Troops stood down and departed Vietnam. Several of their pilots went on to fly for the Joint Military Commission (JMC) for the next couple months until all American troops were withdrawn.

By way of a post-script, for 5 July 1973 the VHPA Helicopter database has a loss record for UH-1H #69-15059 at grid ZQ821070. H/17th Cav flew this UH-1H for several months including January 1973. The Goldbook database indicates this aircraft was removed from US Army inventory after January 1973. These database records might indicate that this UH-1H was given to VNAF or the JMC when H/17th Cav departed Camp Holloway. Anyone with more insight on this subject this encouraged to contact Mike Law.