



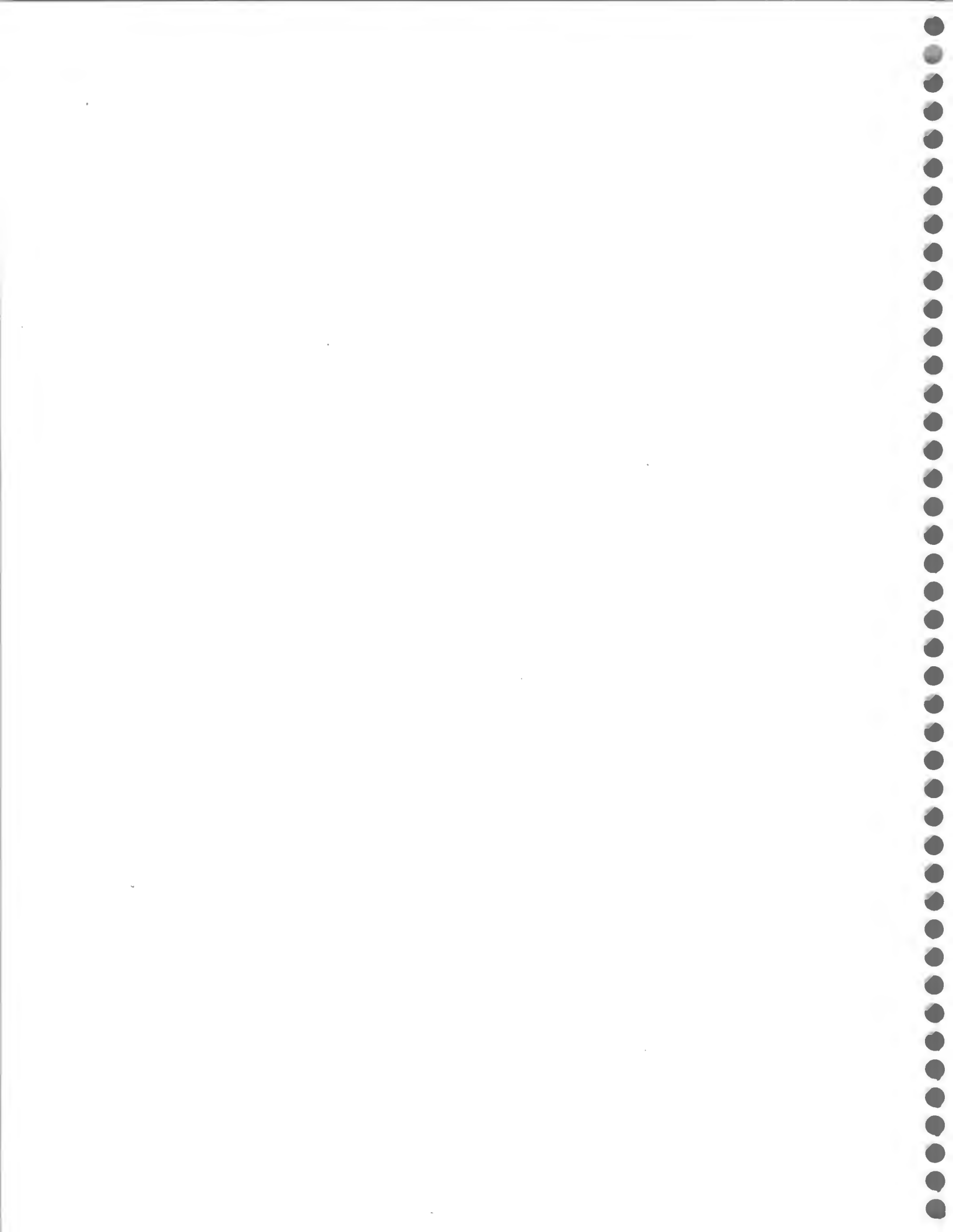
# **VIETNAM REMEMBERED**


**By**

**Thomas W. Stewart**

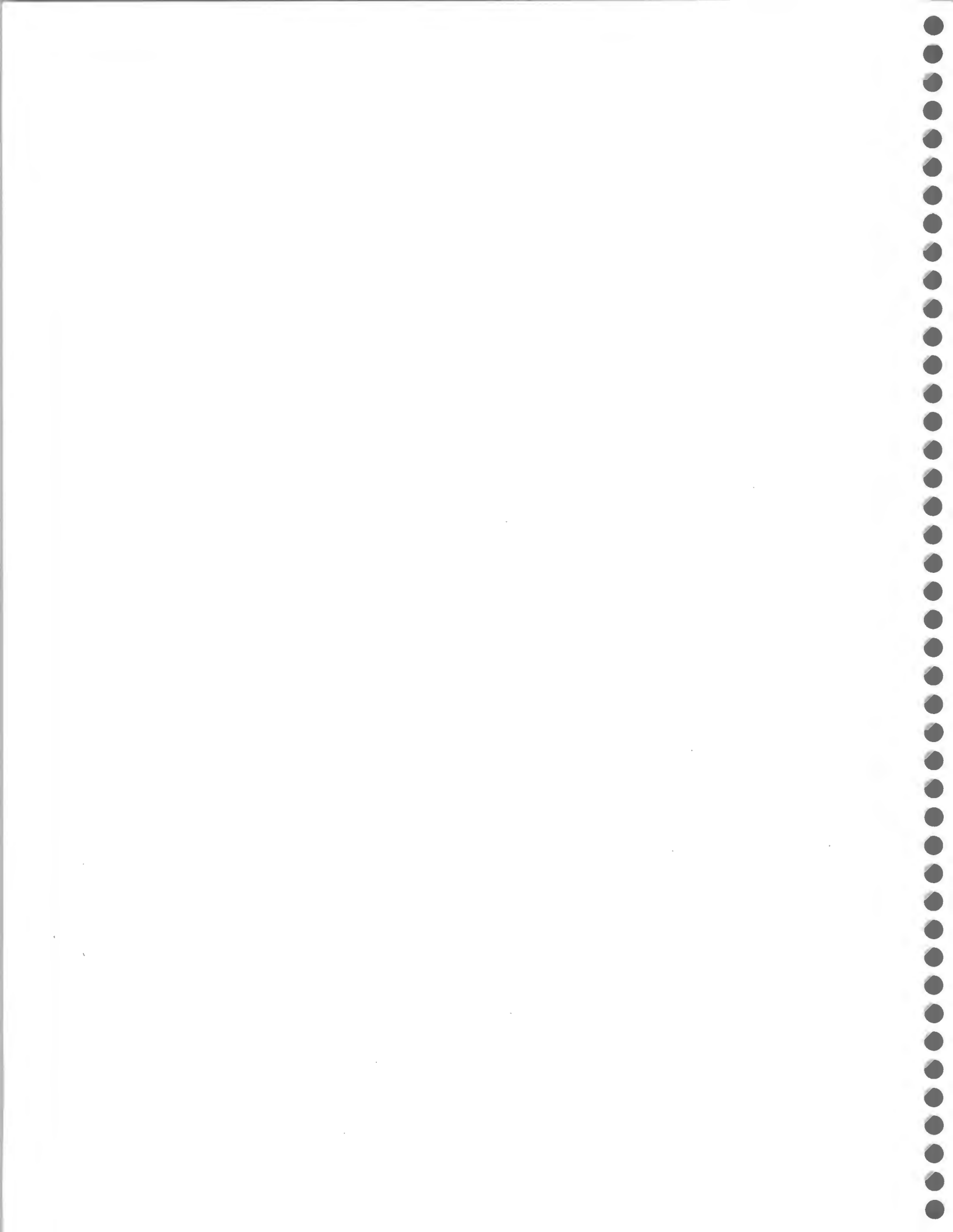
**Lieutenant Colonel**

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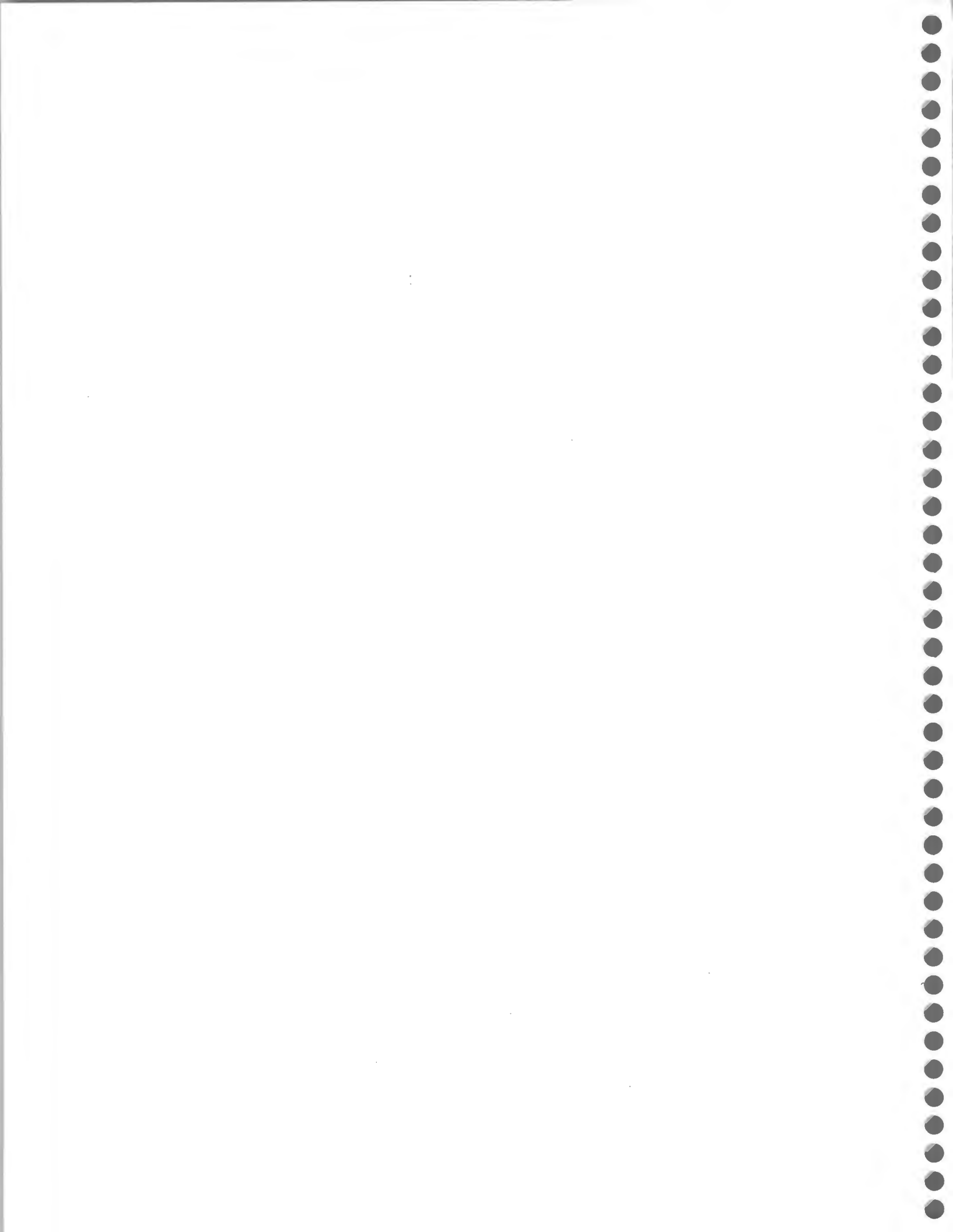


*This Memoir is dedicated to all those men and women who served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States and our allies during the Vietnam War era. May God bless them all for their service and sacrifices.*



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## PREFACE

I first thought about writing of my Vietnam War experiences when I returned after my first tour there in 1968. I believed that the experiences I had would make interesting reading about how Armor Advisors lived, fought and sometimes died. At that time, the bi-monthly *Armor Magazine*, published by the U.S. Army Armor Association, carried numerous I was there, this is how we did it type articles. As I recall now, I decided against writing anything because so many of the articles that I saw published were self-aggrandizing, which was never my style.

Later, after my second tour in Vietnam and after assignment to Fort Knox, I attended the Command and General Staff College in 1973-74. While there, the Armor School sent a team of writers throughout the Army to collect narratives of individuals' armor experiences, as a prelude to the writing and publication of armor's official history of that conflict. I put my name on the list and was duly interviewed. By 1979 I had totally forgotten about that interview when I encountered Major George Crocker, a friend from both my language school and Armor Advanced Course, who at that time was an Aide to General Donn A. Starry. GEN Starry had just published the official history, "Mounted Combat in Vietnam". George told me that my name was mentioned in it, so I asked him to get me a copy, which he did (in fact he sent me two copies, one of which was autographed by GEN Starry). I was quoted in that book about my experiences during the Dewey Canyon II/Lam Son 719 Operation.

In 1984 as I retired from the Army and was settling down in Washington State, I read an ad requesting information from participants in Lam Son 719. (I never knew that operation by any other name – what the hell is Dewey Canyon II?) I responded to the request and was soon contacted by Keith William Nolan, a young historian, who asked me to describe my relationship to that operation. I sent him about five pages of thoughts, he called me and asked some specific questions, and then sent me copies of the pages in his work that quoted me. A short time later, Nolan's book, "Into Laos" was published. I bought it and read it and agreed with much but not all of what he wrote.

In 1987 I read about an initial reunion of people who had served in 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in Vietnam. I was able to attend the Saturday afternoon and evening events at that reunion in Fredericksburg, Virginia in June 1987. While there I met Colonel (retired) Michael D. Mahler, who had written a book titled "Ringed in Steel", about his Vietnam experiences, mainly with an unnamed armored cavalry squadron. I was really impressed with that book and could easily identify that his unit was the same 3/5 CAV. I also understood that since his book was written for publication, he did not name names in order to protect the people about whom he said some not very flattering things. Over the years since that reunion I have attended many more, to include the one at Louisville/Fort Knox Kentucky in 2003, after I started writing this document

In the autumn of 2002 I read a book about a soldier's experience in Vietnam that was markedly different than my own experiences. It was very disconcerting because of the differences, so much so that I could not get it off of my mind. After days of pondering this, I decided to write down my experiences to rebut the impression that all was bad with the US involvement there and with the Vietnamese people. Hopefully, at some time in the future when one of my children or their children wonder about what Vietnam was like and what it meant to me, they will have this narrative as a counter to the negative images left by others.

There are a few factors that must be understood when reading about Vietnam. The first is where, when and what unit the individual served in. Every area of VN was different from every

other area in terms of geography, vegetation, population, and the presence and type of both friendly and enemy forces. The time period changed the face of battle significantly, from the early advisor effort to the big buildup prior to Tet 1968 to the reduction of forces period after that (the "Vietnamization" period). Likewise, different units of the same type – infantry, cavalry, artillery, support units – could be operating next to each other and their experiences could be totally different based upon the quality of leadership provided by the commanders. In effect, VN was a bunch of small, different battles, that when put together equaled the whole.

Secondly is the impact of the individual's place on the flagpole – or rank and position. The individual rifleman normally only saw the other riflemen on his right or left, or front or back, did not know where he was geographically on a map and did not know what the surroundings held beyond his own vision – what could be seen through the brush and trees at eye level while standing or at ground level when prone. His hearing was also limited to the immediate vicinity, so he had no contact to the outside world. Compare that with a Captain company commander (in my case with armored units) where much more could be seen from the top of an armored vehicle, where the current location was or should have been known to within 10 meters on a map that also described the terrain and vegetation, and communication was maintained with subordinate elements as much as 3 kilometers away and with higher headquarters even further away or in many cases in a helicopter circling overhead, and with supporting artillery, helicopter gunships, aircraft, and other ground tactical units. Although the "fog of war" (the term used to explain the uncertainties and unknowns on the battlefield, including the physical presence of smoke and explosions) was always present and impacted upon a leader's decision making and reporting, it was certainly less terrifying than knowing nothing like the rifleman.

The third factor was the individual's mindset or background when sent to VN. Was he draftee or volunteer, did he have a family background of service in war or peace, how educated was he and what preparation was made, both in professional training and personal studying of the war? The draftee who went to VN one step ahead of the law, or who used or abused illegal drugs before going, or who's planned life activities were interrupted by the war, etc. all presented a different frame of reference than a professional, educated and well prepared soldier. Consequently, every story about VN is different.



## CHAPTER 1: TANK TROOP ADVISOR

### Preparation

My first knowledge of VN came when I was a senior at the University of Wyoming in the autumn of 1962. I was in the fourth year of Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and at the start of the school year I met a new Captain on the cadre, CPT Pressley, who had just returned from a tour in VN. I do not remember ever discussing VN with him but I was aware that the US then had an advisor effort there. Nine months later during the first session of summer school, I took a survey class on the History of the Far East. In that class we spent not more than a day or two discussing the French acquisition of its Indo-China empire and the resulting withdrawal there as a result of the battle of Dien Bien Phu. That school year included the Cuban Missile Crisis in which patriotism ran high among those of us who would soon be commissioned Army officers and, after graduation and commissioning in August, the September 1963 overthrow and assassination of the VN leader, Ngo Dinh Diem. My overall impression was such that, when I submitted my initial Officer Preference Statement ("Dream Sheet"), I entered VN as my first choice for an overseas short tour. When I received my initial active duty assignment after Officer Basic Course, I was assigned to my real first choice – Germany – to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry.

In Germany in 1964 I learned of the Gulf of Tonkin incident and the Congressional Resolution that resulted in large increases to the military presence in VN. My main sources of information on VN after that were the Stars and Stripes daily newspaper (published for the armed forces by the armed forces), Armed Forces Network (AFN) radio news, Time magazine, and the weekly Army Times, a non-official newspaper dedicated to Army affairs. In the summer of 1965, Sue Ellen and I decided to have a child. I don't think VN was uppermost in our minds, but if it was, we faced the familiar problem encountered by Americans before every war in the Twentieth Century – have a child (or get married) before going off to war or not. My/our decision was to do so.

Things really heated up in VN in the last half of 1965. Major Army and Marine units were deployed there, including the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile). In November, the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav fought the first really big battle there, in the Ia Drang valley along the Cambodian border west of Pleiku. As a direct result of this "big" battle, the government (i.e. President Johnson, Secretary of Defense MacNamara, and Congress which passed enabling funding measures) decided to further increase the force in VN. The result of this decision was felt in Germany in early 1966 when individual officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) began receiving orders for stateside units, primarily to replace equivalent people there who received orders to VN, or to Fort Riley, Kansas, where the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (and 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry) was being formed. I immediately wrote to the Armor Officer Assignment office in Washington, D.C., and informed them that my wife was pregnant, with a delivery date in July. They soon responded that I would not be transferred until at least six weeks after the child was delivered.

In March, 1966, I had to make a decision: did I want to wait until I received orders to a stateside post to a semi-meaningless position (as many of the officers in my Squadron were receiving), fulfill my remaining years' obligation and then either be released from active duty and do whatever with my life or then be assigned to VN before being released from active duty, or did I want to go to VN on my terms as a volunteer and while there make a career decision to stay in the Army. I chose the latter and submitted a Form 1049 Request for Assignment

requesting transfer directly to VN from my Germany assignment. Within about six weeks, I received orders to Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) as an advisor, something I had not contemplated, with training at Fort Bragg, North Carolina (Military Assistance Training Advisor-MATA- course taught by the Special Forces) and Language training at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. Both courses would follow 45 days leave. I had already begun studying everything I could get my hands on about VN. The only two books that I remember now were both by Bernard Fall, ("Hell in a Small Place", about the French at Dien Bien Phu, and "Street Without Joy", about the French along the coast in Quang Tri Province and also about an armored operation in the Mang Yang Pass on the road from the coast to Pleiku).

In May I met Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Charles Greene who was going to be our new Squadron Commander. LTC Marcum, the outgoing commander, introduced him to Sue Ellen and me in the Officers Club on a Saturday afternoon. As I recall, LTC Marcum introduced me by saying "This is the Lieutenant who volunteered for VN". LTC Greene immediately said that he would like me to consider changing my request to be effective upon completion of my normal tour. I said I would consider it. After he became commander, LTC Greene asked me again and I agreed to do so. The formal request was prepared, signed and sent that same day, even though I thought it would not make a difference. It didn't. In six weeks I was notified that my normal tour was curtailed to 30 months and therefore my original orders stood. The lesson I learned from this was to agree to a personnel type request from my boss and it would pay off later. Sure enough, days later LTC Greene asked me to become commander of C Troop, leaving my position of three months as S4 Supply Officer. Reluctantly I agreed. Two weeks later I saw a copy of my Officer Efficiency Report (OER) as S4 and was stunned at how low it was. I immediately called LTC Greene and after some discussion, the report was changed to a much higher rating. And, after three mediocre months as C Troop Commander, I received a very decent OER to include a warm personal endorsement from the Brigadier General who was LTC Greene's boss.

Tim was born on July 22, 1966, and the next two months were extremely hectic. Trips to the field, gunnery training and a Grafenwohr Gunnery session, conducted with too few soldiers, NCOs and only one of four authorized lieutenants, combined with a trip to Munich to get Tim entered on Sue Ellen's passport and a trip to Bremerhaven to turn the car in for shipment home, all combined to make that period blurry. Departure day came and our official auto transport didn't come, so someone else took us to Nuremberg to the train station. A train trip to Frankfurt, a night in the Air Force Hotel, and a long air flight ensued. At McGuire Air Force Base/Fort Dix New Jersey we rented a car and drove to New York City, ultimately backtracking to New Jersey to find a motel. The next day we drove back to McGuire and got a motel room for the weekend. On Monday, I rode a bus to Newark and after waiting all day, I got our car hot off the boat and drove back to the motel. What a way to return to the US after 30 months abroad!

We drove to Wyoming via a short stop at Fort Knox, Kentucky, to see our friends the Nelkas. The thirty plus days at home (Laramie and Glenrock) went well (I was promoted to Captain during this period and pinned on my own bars) and then it was back on the road to Fort Bragg. Another friend from Germany, CPT Don Massey, was stationed there and had found us a trailer to rent for four weeks. The MATA course (we called it Mill Around Till Ambushed) consisted of an introduction to VN - its people, geography, organization of the government and armed forces - and refresher training on the small arms and equipment that the US provided to the Vietnamese. I say refresher training because that equipment was the previous version of what our active Army had - i.e. the M1 rifle instead of the newer M14. This was stuff that I had trained on during ROTC four years before. That course ended and we trekked back to Wyoming

for Christmas, then through Las Vegas to end up in Pacific Grove, California where we had rented a furnished apartment.

The twelve-week Vietnamese Language Course was a quick introduction to a complicated, singsong sounding language that was totally beyond my grasp. Although I passed the course and could communicate some of the basic needs, I never felt comfortable with it. It was not until much later in life that I realized that I was nearly tone-deaf with a voice range between Baritone and Bass – in reality Monotone. That makes it difficult to learn a language in which the same word can have up to seven different meanings depending upon the pronunciation indicated by various accent marks. The weeks passed rapidly by and before long the training was over. My mother flew to California to drive home with Sue Ellen and Tim – that's another story. We left Pacific Grove and spent the night in a motel in Oakland. The next day, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1967, as I recall, they drove me to Travis Air Force Base north of San Francisco, and said our goodbyes. I was as much concerned about the family's drive home to Wyoming as I was about my assignment to VN. I was not afraid but looked forward with some trepidation. The six hours I had to wait before takeoff was spent in the Officer's Club with CPT Herm Schmidt, who had attended the Psychological Warfare Course at Fort Bragg when I was at MATA, and had been in my class at Language School. We were well prepared by liftoff.

#### **Advisor Duty**

The flight to VN from California took about 18 hours, depending upon whether or not intermediate stops were required. In all, I made three round trips with two round trips from VN to Hawaii, so I don't remember each one individually. What I do remember, the common denominator was that they were long and tiring, boring, and all had the same landing pattern at the end – sharp and short descent into either Tan Son Nhut airfield in Saigon or the air base at Cam Ran Bay. On this, my first trip, what is indelibly etched in my memory is a combination of the heat and humidity in Saigon and the odor. I think that all of East Asia must smell the same, caused by both the use of human waste to fertilize the fields and the decaying vegetation caused by the heat and humidity. It was a distinct, unpleasant odor that was further "enhanced" around US military sites by the burning of the GI's excrement in sawed in half 55-gallon drums partially filled with diesel fuel. March was the end of the rainy season in Saigon so I did not have to contend with that. Upon arrival, Herm and I and the others with orders to Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MAC-V) were loaded in a separate bus and driven to Koepler Compound in the center of Saigon. The bus had no glass in the windows, just heavy mesh screens to stop any grenades or bombs that might be thrown at us. The ride gave us our first taste of the utter confusion of traffic in Saigon and our first sight of the filth in the streets, the large number of beggars, and the sandbag protected security posts in front of all military related establishments.

Koepler Compound was the in/out processing facility for all MACV advisors. It consisted of four multi-story buildings, one for administration and classes, one for supply and two for billets. I know it had a dining facility and a small club where drinks could be obtained, but I have absolutely no recollection of them. As it was late in the afternoon when we arrived, we were assigned rooms, dropped off our baggage, and then assembled for a class on the immediately important things such as only leave the compound in groups of two or more, report anything that looked suspicious, etc. A schedule was posted for the next few days' activities and we were then

released to eat and settle in. Herm and I shared a two-bunk room with the stereotypical slow turning fan on the ceiling. I think the room had a sink with tepid running water, but the main toilet/washroom was a few doors down the outdoor walkway. We settled in for the evening amidst the foreign sounds within and without the compound.

In-processing consisted first of submission of our local "Dream Sheet". I asked for an armor assignment in priority of I Corps, IV Corps, III Corps, and lastly, II Corps. VN was divided militarily and politically into four Corps areas, numbered as I through IV starting in the north. I Corps contained four provinces, with Quang Tri Province being the northern most and abutting the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Next was II Corps, the central highlands and coastal provinces, then III Corps surrounding and to the north and east of Saigon, and finally IV Corps, the Mekong Delta and southern part of the country. My selection for assignment was based upon what little I knew of enemy activity in the recent past (from least to most). Further indoctrination was provided on the country itself, more than half of which I had already learned at MATA. I was one of the few (far less than half) advisors to be who had received the MATA and language training - most just got orders to VN and ended up in MACV. After about two days of this training we received our assignments. Herm was assigned to the PsyOps School/District PsyOps team just north of Saigon, and I was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN - pronounced like a name - Arvin) Cavalry Regiment in Pleiku, II Corps. The next morning we drew our supplies of field gear and weapons (advisors were assigned their choice of just about any type weapon available, shotguns, Thompson submachine guns, rifles or pistols). I selected the normal officer's sidearm, the .45 caliber M1911 Colt automatic pistol. Herm was picked up in a ¼ ton truck (Jeep) almost immediately but I had to wait another day for a flight to Pleiku.

The next morning I was bussed to Tan Son Nhut and caught a flight to Pleiku in the cargo hold of an Air Force C130 plane.

### **Pleiku**

The flight to Pleiku was about two hours long. When we arrived at the US Air Force base, I was met by Sergeant First Class (SFC) Campos and was driven by jeep (a Japanese version of the standard US ¼ ton truck) to the advisors' compound. That compound was co-located with the airbase, a US Army field hospital, and the ARVN II Corps headquarters. Each of these activities was responsible for their own external security. The advisors' compound consisted of a number of one-story open-air screened buildings housing the II Corps, 3 ACR and Ranger Regiment advisor teams. Our official title was Advisory Team 21. We had a dining facility and officers and enlisted clubs, and across a street were a small Post Exchange (PX) and an Air Force officers club. After being assigned a room, I was briefed by SFC Campos on the Regiment and other pertinent facts about the area and was told that I would be flown to the field in a couple of days to join the Tank Company and Regimental Headquarters which were on an operation along the Cambodian border:

Pleiku was the headquarters for II Corps and also had, in a separate compound downtown, the Pleiku Province (county) and Pleiku District (city) headquarters with their advisory teams. The Corps area had two ARVN Infantry Divisions assigned, each with its own Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR), and a separate Infantry Regiment at Kontum, approximately 40 miles north of Pleiku. All of these units had advisors, down to battalion level. The Ranger Regiment and the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR were under direct control of the Corps Commander,

Lieutenant General Vinh Loc, and the Corps G3 (Operations) section. The official Senior Advisor to the Corps Commander was the three star US general who commanded US forces in the comparable area known as 1<sup>st</sup> Field Force, with headquarters in the coastal city of Nha Trang. The day-to-day advisor was an Army Brigadier General located in Pleiku with the rest of the Corps advisors. One of the assistant G3 advisors was CPT Gary Roderick, who had been in the 2/4 Cavalry in Germany with me. The senior VN officials were all appointed based upon their trustworthiness and loyalty to the current Republic of Viet Nam (RVN) leadership. Most of them, including those in the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR, were northerners – Catholics who emigrated south after the 1954 partition.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR was stationed at a compound on the far side of town from the Advisors Compound. The Regiment consisted of a headquarters, commanded by a Colonel, a headquarters troop with support elements such as supply and maintenance similar to a US battalion/squadron, and four line troops. First Troop (13, the troop's designation and radio call-sign) was the tank troop, with 17 M41 light tanks of Korean War vintage. These were armed with 76mm cannons and had two machine guns of various types. The M41 was a gas powered, air cooled vehicle that had been out of use in the active US Army for a number of years. Even so, I had received familiarization on that tank in the officer basic course in December 1963. Second Troop (23) was a scout car unit equipped with a variety of outdated US and French armored cars. It later received the new US V100 Armored Scout and Police Vehicle, which was only used by Military Police in our Army. Third and Fourth Troops (33 and 43) were a combination of armored cavalry and mechanized infantry units. Each had a headquarters section of two or three M113 Armored Personnel Carrier (APCs), three recon platoons with four APCs that mounted a variety of machine guns, both forward and side oriented, and a weapons platoon with two APCs with internally jury-rigged 81mm mortars, and two with 75mm recoilless rifles tied to the top back deck of the vehicles. These could fire forward to the appropriate side of the vehicle with only minimal right or left deflection available, and were mounted in such a way as to direct the significant back-blast to the rear. The officers and soldiers in the Regiment were all professionals – there were no two years and out types in ARVN. A significant motivating factor was that armor assignments were voluntary, and those who did not perform well, both officer and enlisted, were transferred out to the infantry. For the most part, they were good people to work with.

The Senior Advisor to the Regiment was Major (MAJ) Fred Raines. His assistants were the Staff Advisor, CPT (promotable) Bob Altier, Sergeant Major Fleming, and SFC Campos, the Maintenance Advisor. The Tank Troop advisor, who I would replace, was CPT James Patterson, who had been with the troop for about four or five months. His assistant was SFC Johnson, who was in the US on re-enlistment or extension leave. (The normal tour of duty was one year, unfortunately. If an enlisted man re-enlisted during that year he received a free 30-day leave in the states. If anyone, officer or enlisted, extended their tour for six months, they received a free 30-day leave anywhere in the world.) I would be joined in the field by Specialist Fifth Class (SP5) Josephus McCoy, a young soldier whose prior experience was as a tanker in an armor battalion in Germany. Second Troop was not authorized an advisor. The Third Troop advisor was CPT Howard Bachman with SGT Chittum and SFC Chris Everett as his assistants. Third Troop was currently assigned to duty on the coast in Binh Dinh Province. Fourth Troop was advised by a Captain Francis Pate, assisted by SFC Norm Jackson. The officers were all career oriented (even though Bob Altier would resign after he left VN) and the NCOs were either on second tours or extensions in VN or would extend later (except for McCoy).

The Regimental HQs normally did not go to the field on operations. Prior to the operation they were on when I joined, they had not been to the field since November 1965 when they participated as an entire Regiment in the relief of the Plei Me Special Forces Camp. That battle was the prelude to the US Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Air Cav Divisions' battles in the Ia Drang valley – an engagement recently made into the movie "We Were Soldiers Once". Tank Troop was normally only used for security of the II Corps HQs and locally around Pleiku. (They were unofficially known as the Coup Troop because of their availability to ensure LTG Vinh Loc's safety in the event of an attempt to overthrow the government.) Tank Troop had also not been to the field since Plei Me. Second Troop was used primarily for security of the Regimental HQs and barracks area. Third and Fourth Troops alternated between working with other ARVN units on the coast and conducting local operations in the vicinity of Pleiku. In effect, the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR was the Corps Commander's personal security force and heavy reaction force.

Pleiku City was in the middle of Pleiku Province in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. There were some large areas of relatively flat and open areas where the indigenous population could conduct "slash and burn" farming, but the terrain was mostly steep, high mountains covered in dense, triple-canopy forests. The seasons in Vietnam were essentially like in the US but with significant differences due to the Monsoon's, the term for the immense rainfall in Southeast Asia, and because it is situated in the Equatorial Zone, south of the Tropic of Cancer. March to October was hot and humid and the area was inundated with the east moving monsoons, while November to February was drier and much cooler, especially at night. Both the terrain and weather were not friendly to either westerners or to the natives. Ethnic Vietnamese mainly populated the cities and towns, while the remainder of the populace was native tribal types, termed Montagnards – French for Mountain People.

### **Tank Troop Advisor**

It took a few days to settle in at the advisor compound in Pleiku. Part of this time was spent going downtown with SFC Campos to purchase a black beret, the headgear of ARVN armor personnel, and having the company-grade insignia sewn on it. I also had the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR unit patch sewn on the upper left breast pocket of my jungle fatigues. Then, after receiving the normal administrative in-processing, McCoy and I were flown by helicopter to the Regiment's field location near the Special Forces Camp at Du Co. The SF actually commanded their forces as opposed to advising them. Their forces were called Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG), comprised of local Montagnard tribesmen led by ARVN SF officers. Du Co was positioned on the Cambodian border to block or slow down enemy infiltration into the Ia Drang valley and towards the center of II Corps. The 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR's mission was to conduct reconnaissance in the vicinity of Du Co and provide assistance in the event of a suspected enemy movement into that area. The Command Post (CP) was established on a wide plateau near Du Co, and the Tank Troop's CP was a few hundred meters away. At Regiment, I met MAJ Raines and CPT Altier, was introduced to the Regimental Commander and various staff officers, and was then escorted to the Tank Company CP. There I met CPT Patterson, the Tank Troop Commander, CPT (Dai Uy) Hoang, LT (Trung Uy) Khoa, the executive officer, and the other unit officers.

Patterson briefed me on the troop and its operations and discussed how I fit into the picture. A unit advisor's primary official duty was to ensure that the military equipment provided by the US to ARVN was utilized correctly. However, the real duty was to provide combat support from US forces (artillery, helicopter and Air Force direct support, and Medevac –

helicopter evacuation of casualties). We also reported activities up the chain of command in advisor channels, including monthly assessments of the readiness and capabilities of our units. In return, the unit provided food for us—we ate the same things they ate, prepared by their cooks who doubled in that capacity from their normal duties as tank gunner, loader or whatever. The bad part about this was that we were taking food from their mouths, as they did not receive any additional rations to provide for us. I don't recall now what Patterson had done to help them out, but in the future we made it a habit of "scrounging" cases of C rations from US units and then giving them to the VN to in turn support us. We were also provided a tent to sleep in and cots to sleep on while in the CP. The tent leaked and Patterson did not leave me with that vital piece of equipment known as a "mosquito screen". Since the mosquito vied with the common house fly to be the national bird of VN, I slept fitfully, at best. Patterson was anxious to get out of the field, so he departed first thing the next morning. (Patterson was the Tank Troop Advisor for about six months and had not seen any combat action.)

There McCoy and I were, a hundred miles from civilization (such as Pleiku was), a few hundred meters away from another American, within a mile or two of Cambodia and the Ho Chi Minh trail, with seventeen VN tanks and their crews, and only two officers who spoke English — CPT Hoang marginally and LT Khoa fairly well. Fortunately, we did not go away from the CP for a day or two so Mac and I were able to get to know each other and to become acclimated with our surroundings. With acclimation came the awareness that war, as seen by an armor advisor (and later in a US armor unit), consisted of extreme boredom for many days and weeks, interrupted by short periods of extreme terror when we actually experienced combat. In the two weeks on this operation, we only went out on mounted reconnaissance three or four times before the last days, and these were totally uneventful even though the potential for enemy contact was always there. Daily activity followed the same pattern. Get up in the morning and take care of the bodily functions, eat a small breakfast of rice and something, do nothing or move out to an area (normally heavily forested) set up a perimeter, send out small foot patrols which came back shortly, cook and eat a bigger meal of rice and something, then, after a mid-day siesta, return to the base camp. In the evening we would eat another small meal of rice and something and then sit around doing nothing until bedtime. When we went on Recons and stopped at the prescribed location, everyone dismounted the vehicles. Try as I might, I could never get the tankers to leave one man on the tank manning the machine gun. That was scary!

Advising the commander was also scary—advisors rode on top of the tank, sitting in the bustle (storage) rack, totally exposed not only to the enemy but also when moving through trees and brush we were subjected to being knocked about by tree limbs and potentially knocked completely off of the tank. and being run over by the following tank. It was quite difficult to hold on to a part of the tank while simultaneously trying to follow the unit's movement on a map, while also holding on to the portable radio handset in order to listen for radio calls from either Mac or the Regimental advisors. The portable radio (PRC 25 battery powered) was normally tied to the bustle rack but it had to be watched to ensure it did not come loose and fall off the tank. Mac had it better because his radio had earphones on a cable with a push-to-speak switch on the cable. That allowed him to concentrate on holding on.

The vegetation in this area was almost like a rain forest. Every bush had sharp thorns and fire ants and other stinging, biting insects covered every tree and bush. In addition to the mosquitoes the area was infested with a particularly vicious stinging bee that was a constant irritation. The only out of the ordinary sighting during these recons was an 8 by 12 sign written

in both English and Korean announcing that at that site in November 1966 a Korean unit had destroyed an enemy unit and killed and buried on that spot hundreds of the enemy soldiers.

On the second or third rest day I was invited to the Regimental CP to eat lunch with the commander and advisors. Conversation was pleasant and interesting, and I noticed a small dog playing around the vehicles. GIs are the same in every Army, I thought, always adopting mascots and taking them with them wherever they go. The day before the last operation my counterpart (the term used for the VN commander I advised) and I went to a tactical operation briefing at the Regimental CP to discuss what we would be doing the next day. The plan was to take the tanks into the Ia Drang valley and set up a blocking position to stop any enemy being pushed in that direction by a VN Ranger battalion that would move through the valley towards us. To get a better perspective on where we would be going, we took an aerial reconnaissance in a HUEY Helicopter over the valley and along the Cambodian border. While in flight, the pilot executed a sudden, sharp turn to the east just as we observed and heard the crackling sound of an enemy machinegun firing at us from Cambodia. Fortunately, they missed us. Back on the ground, I was introduced to a US First Lieutenant artillery officer, Bill Lawson, who would be going with us the next day. After the meeting I was again invited to eat lunch there and was served rice and the vilest meat I had ever eaten. It was all I could do to keep from gagging and throwing up. Soon somebody asked me what I thought of the dog meat I was eating. I was tactful and said that it was ok but I vowed never to eat strange things again. Afterwards, Bill Lawson and I went back to the Tank Troop CP and got to know each other a little. He was assigned to an artillery unit in the US 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at a Fire Base a few miles away but within supporting range of us. He was supposed to leave VN within 10 days so he should have been taken out of the field, but he volunteered to stay one more day for the Ia Drang operation.

We also talked over the next day's operation with CPT Hoang. I had learned in classes on dismounted patrolling that you should never use the same route coming back from a patrol as was used going. If circumstances dictated that you could not find a different route, then you should leave people along the way at the critical point(s) in order to provide security against ambushes. Although I did not recall learning similar doctrine concerning mounted operations, it seemed to me to be applicable in this instance, as we would have to return from the valley on the same road we used to enter it. I discussed this with CPT Hoang, who was not concerned because on the way out we would have the Ranger battalion to provide dismounted security to the front and sides. This seemed like a reasonable solution in that we really did not have adequate forces in the Tank Company to leave any along the way. After agreeing on possible artillery targets to preplan, we called it day. I was concerned about the operation, given the past history of the valley and the proximity to Cambodia, but thought we had a good plan and were well prepared.

The next day, April 20, 1967, started like the previous days. After breakfast, we mounted up and moved out, with McCoy riding on the lead platoon leader's tank, me on the troop commander's tank next in column, and Bill Lawson on another platoon leader's tank behind me. The move to the north rim of the valley was uneventful (it was only a few kilometers from our camp), as was the descent into the valley. The trail down the approximately 50 to 100 meter difference in elevation was about one kilometer long. When we reached the valley floor, which was level, it appeared to me that at one time agricultural activities had taken place there, as the trees were far apart and the undergrowth was not too tall. We continued eastward for a short while when all of a sudden I heard rifle shots from close by and then my tank came to a sudden stop, causing the rear end to rise and almost catapulting me forward. I looked at CPT Hoang who broke out laughing and pointed to the road in front of us. There, the tank driver had dismounted



and was running straight ahead, firing his rifle from the hip. It took a moment before I saw that he was shooting at an iguana that ran across the trail in front of us. The driver veered off and chased the lizard about a hundred feet until they both were out of sight. Shortly, he came walking back, dragging the dead iguana, which he tied to the top of the front fender, climbed back into the tank, and off we went again.

Without a map to refer to, and over the 35 years that have elapsed, I'm not sure how far we actually went that day. It seems like we only went about one kilometer to the east and then headed south for about the same distance. We actually went a little further until we reached the Ia Drang river, but then turned around and went back a ways. We stopped at what appeared to be the ruins of a small building and, per usual, everyone jumped off of their tanks and started building the fires to cook lunch. About this time, an Air Force Observation plane called me on the radio and said he had a delivery to make. The pilot, an aerial observer, was CPT Patterson's roommate at Pleiku, and periodically flew out and dropped off, from an altitude of about 50 feet, a couple of sandbags filled with beer and ice. What a pleasant and welcome surprise that was. We recovered the goods and put them in a mermite can (an insulated container used by Army cooks to send hot or cold food to the field) that we had loaded on the XO's APC. It took well over an hour for the iguana to be skinned, put on a spit, and roasted on the cooking fire. I had already made up my mind that I was not hungry, when LT Khoa, the XO, came over and asked if I was going to eat that reptile. I said no, I didn't think so, and asked if he was. With a sly grin he allowed as how he wasn't going to eat it either.

During the meal, the Ranger battalion linked up with us. They had started a few days earlier somewhere to the east, probably at the Plei Me Special Forces base. As the battalion approached, their senior advisor walked up to the APC that I was in, drinking a cold beer. We greeted each other and I asked him if he wanted a cold beer. Naturally he said yes so I gave him four, two for him and two for his assistant advisor. He moved on a short distance to the battalion CP where the rangers began preparing the meal. In May 1969, on the first day of attending the Armored Officer Advance Class (AOAC), an unknown officer walked up to me and introduced himself as CPT Jim Ranallo, the same ranger advisor. Jim expressed his extreme pleasure in the two cold ones he had received from me back in the Ia Drang.

Sometime around two or three o'clock, I heard a couple of explosions and machinegun fire off to the west in the direction from which we had entered the valley. The tankers immediately started scrambling to get their gear and themselves onto their tanks. I got on the CO's tank and asked him what was going on. He said that two APCs from Regiment had been coming into the valley on the same road we had taken, and had triggered the back of an enemy ambush that was spread across the road to attack us when we left the valley. What he didn't tell me at the time was that some of his tanks had not filled up on fuel before we left our base camp, and that he had called Regiment to ask them to deliver some gas to us. Regiment, without informing their advisors, had loaded two hundred gallon blivets (rubber inflatable containers normally used for helicopter transport of fuel) into two APCs and sent them unescorted towards us. There was a lot of yelling and radio chatter as we moved back towards the ambush site. We stopped after about a kilometer and all seemed quiet ahead of us. (The APCs from Regiment had immediately turned and returned to their base.) I received a radio call from Bill Lawson, who was a tank behind me, saying that in the commotion of mounting up his map was left behind. Since his platoon was moving forward, I told him to stop his tank next to mine and I would give him my map. I could use the CO's map and Bill needed one in order to accurately call in artillery.

fire. His tank stopped before moving past me, I threw him the map, and, with a big grin and a thumbs up sign, they moved forward.

As we all then moved forward, we were led by the platoon with Lawson, followed by the platoon with McCoy, followed by the Troop HQ with me, and the other tank platoon brought up the rear. The rangers were dismounted, and running along on both sides of us. Within minutes all hell broke loose. Enemy rocket propelled grenades (RPGs that were actually anti-tank rocket launchers), tank cannon fire, and numerous machineguns and rifles created a terrible noise. I was on the radio to MAJ Raines trying to keep him informed of what little I knew, Lawson was, so I presumed, on another radio net to call for artillery, CPT Altier was on another radio calling for helicopter gunship and Air Force bomb support, and I was back on my net trying to contact both Lawson and McCoy. Although I did not personally see any enemy, they were there firing at us, my tank included. I could hear rounds cracking past my head and in fact saw some tracers (enemy tracer rounds for the AK-47 rifle burned with a green color as opposed to red for our weapons) go past as I was hunkered down for protection behind the CO's open hatch. I received very little information out of the CO so when the firing was heaviest I went headfirst into the tank's loaders hatch. I only stayed inside for a few minutes, because I was in the way of the loader who was busy loading ammunition, and because I couldn't communicate or see what was happening.

After about fifteen minutes or so, I tapped the CO's shoulder enough to get his attention, and told him I was not in contact with either McCoy or Lawson so I needed him to tell me what was going on and did he want fire support, and if so, where. He said yes, pointed to his map where he wanted fires, and told me that McCoy was alright, his radio had been hit, but Lawson was missing. His tank had taken an RPG hit and Lawson was knocked off the vehicle. The CO also said he needed Medevac support because his troop had a number of dead and wounded. By this time, Raines and Altier had obtained helicopter gunships for us so I began directing their fires. I also updated MAJ Raines on our situation so he and Altier began calling for artillery fires into the enemy's rear without getting it too close to our action. After the helicopters I received Air Force support, slow-moving but highly accurate planes with plenty of bombs. It was now about five o'clock, darkness would soon be upon us, and the fire slackened off completely. The ranger advisor called and said he was behind me in an open area and would call in the Medevac, so I told the CO to get the wounded to the rear. Soon thereafter, two tanks passed us going to the rear. Both had a number of dead and wounded soldiers on them – one was a platoon leader's tank. The platoon leader was still in the commander's hatch but his whole face had been torn open by a bullet. I learned later that he died.

As darkness closed in McCoy joined me on the CO's tank. His radio had not been damaged but rather, the shooting at his tank was so heavy and close that a bullet had severed the cord from the radio to his headset. McCoy said that all he could do then was to shoot his rifle in the general area of where the enemy fire was coming from – he too had not seen any enemy. He stayed with me on the CO's tank that night and we took turns calling Lawson on the radio – hoping against all odds that we would hear from him. Sometime after dark, CPT Hoang told me that his soldiers had gone forward and brought back the damaged tank but could not find Lawson. Around midnight something keyed a radio on our net, off and on for a minute or two. Other than that the night was uneventful. The next morning, after the normal morning activities, we moved forward to the site of the main ambush. We found Bill Lawson lying in the approximate position where he was knocked off of the tank. He had been shot in the chest and apparently died immediately. His radio and rifle were gone, indicating that the enemy had

"policed" the battlefield, but they had not taken his wallet or classified signal instructions. We evacuated his remains and then departed the valley and started for Pleiku directly. Later that day I was told by CPT Hoang that they had found 30 dead enemy soldiers a short distance from the battlefield, but had not found any weapons. Since I had not seen anything, I could only report the enemy casualties as estimated.

About halfway to Pleiku at about noon, we stopped to eat lunch and rest. After the rest we continued to stay along the road. I asked CPT Hoang what was going on and he replied that the tank engines were overheated so we had to wait until they cooled off. I was stunned, as these were air-cooled engines and would cool themselves if they were moving. Later, LT Khoa told me that CPT Hoang wanted to wait long enough so that his girl friend and wife (at separate locations, I presume) would be on the road to see the troop return and wave at the CO. We ultimately moved on and arrived at the Regiment's base camp in Pleiku at about four in the afternoon. SFC Campos was at the tank park to pickup McCoy and me and take us to the Advisor's Compound.

During the next few days I made my displeasure at CPT Hoang known to MAJ Raines. I was disturbed for a number of reasons but was not in a position to do anything about it with the VN. The first problem was that they had not refueled all vehicles before going into the Ia Drang. That was basic leadership – you always ensure that your vehicles are completely ready to go before departing on an operation. Secondly, I was upset that he had not told me about the resupply attempt. Although the early triggering of the ambush worked in our favor, I, as the troop advisor, should have been kept informed. Next was the way we responded to the ambush. It seemed to me that after the ambush was triggered and the refuel vehicles withdrew, we should have advanced toward the ambush site after artillery preparation and in a deliberate, planned attack. As it was, it seemed that the VN objective became one of getting there in a hurry to be able to kill the waiting enemy. A slower, more deliberate approach, I felt, would have saved lives and enabled us to win the battlefield, not the enemy. My fourth complaint was the VN failure to find and return Bill Lawson at the time they recovered the tank after nightfall. I was very uneasy about the same thing happening to me in a future action. Finally, I couldn't object to delaying the return of the troop to Pleiku – after all, it was CPT Hoang's troop to move as he directed, but to tell me about "cooling" the engines was either a lie or in fact he didn't know what he was talking about.

Three final things wrapped up the Ia Drang battle. Since neither MAJ Raines nor CPT Altier had experienced combat before, they did not recognize the penetration hole in the tank that was hit. I was directed to write up a short "study" about what I thought it was. I didn't spend a whole lot of time doing so, as it was apparent to all of the tankers that it was an RPG hole. It didn't matter what size or version of that weapon it was, only that it was from an RPG. The next thing was an award ceremony at Regimental at which McCoy and I received the Viet Nam Cross of Gallantry with Bronze Star (the lowest level). Later, I would receive a US Bronze Star with "V" for valor and McCoy would go to Saigon and receive a Silver Star, pinned on by General Creighton Abrams, the Deputy MAC-V Commander. When McCoy was taken into GEN Abrams office, he was invited to sit down, and GEN Abrams began talking to him about the armor battalion Mac had served in Germany, the 37<sup>th</sup> Armor. That had been the General's battalion during World War II, but it reflected well on Abrams because he had looked at Mac's records before the meeting. The actual award was presented at the start of the HQs' daily briefing, and Mac was introduced to GEN Westmoreland and all of the senior staff officers. The third event gave me even greater joy. Whether through my complaints, or the Regimental CO's observation,

or just regular reassignment, CPT Hoang left command and left Pleiku. His XO, LT Khoa assumed command of the troop.

The day after I arrived back in Pleiku started a 3-month period of absolute uselessness. With the exception of a few occurrences that I will discuss, the days and weeks during this period were sheer boredom. Mondays through Fridays and Saturday mornings, I would get up, eat breakfast and then about nine o'clock, drive with McCoy and SFC Johnson (who returned by the end of April) from the compound to the Troop's base, co-located with but separate from the Regimental HQ and other troops, on the far side of Pleiku. (The Vietnamese soldiers lived in concrete floored, metal siding buildings and the office buildings were constructed the same. The only electricity was provided by small generators that operated only at specified times.) There, we would visit with the CO to see if there was anything we could do for them, maybe have a cup of tea with the CO or XO or invite them to our office for a cup of coffee, then walk through the motor pool and talk with the soldiers if they were there (which was seldom), and then sit around our office playing cards or chess or just talking and listening to AFN radio, or reading one of hundreds of paperback novels that were available. Around eleven we returned to the compound for lunch. Afterward, one or all of us would return to the troop area for another couple of hours doing the same things and then back home by about three. Dinner was served from five to six and before and/or after I would go to the club and have a few beers. Movies were frequently available as were infrequent Special Service shows, but I rarely went, preferring to read instead. Saturdays were the same in the morning and then we were off until Monday. Of course, we had to be ready to go off with the troop if it was called to action, but that never happened. The Troop normally sent one platoon to Corps HQ every night but that was their only activity. Some nights we had alerts such as when the enemy fired rockets at us or the nearby facilities, and on a couple of occasions we had to drive across town at night. That led the Senior Advisor to develop plans to build us an advisor compound within the perimeter of the Regiment.

The first out of the ordinary event happened in early May. CPT Francis Pate departed and would be replaced by CPT Eugene Livermore who didn't arrive for a few weeks after CPT Pate left. I asked to be reassigned to 43 but was told to wait until the next Cav Troop opening as MAJ Raines wanted more continuity with 13. However, a two-day mission came up for 43 to open the road south to Ban My Thuet and to escort a VN convoy along that road, if needed. I was asked to accompany 43 as the Troop Advisor. I gladly agreed to do so. The actual operation was easy. We departed Pleiku in mid-morning and traveled south about 40 or 50 miles to Phu Nhon District HQs, which was adjacent to the highway. There we set up a perimeter and waited. For lunch we went to a small roadside "café" and had Chinese soup, which I found to be quite tasty. Nothing out of the ordinary occurred that night or the next morning, when we marched back to Pleiku without incident.

The best part of the operation was the opportunity to get to know SFC Norm Jackson and the 43 commander, 1LT Nguyen Van Dem. Jack was from Detroit, had been in the Army since just before the Korean War, and had made a combat parachute jump with a US Airborne unit in Korea. He was on at least a first extension in VN, and would still be there when I left the following March. Dem was an outstanding officer. He was born and raised in the Saigon area and was probably a Buddhist, if he followed any religion. He had been in ARVN for about five years, including a four-month tour at Fort Knox to attend the Armor Officer Basic Course. He spoke English exceptionally well, and told me after my few initial attempts to speak Vietnamese with him "Since only 30 million people in the world speak Vietnamese and billions speak English, it is better for us to speak English so I (Dem) can learn to speak English better". I

wholeheartedly agreed with him. He was a good looking young officer who patterned himself after the then VN leader, Nguyen Cao Ky, a flashy air force officer.

Later in May the next different event happened, when I was appointed Summary Court Officer to complete the shipment of personal effects for Captain John K. Adams, the previous 33 advisor. He was with his troop in early March, then stationed near the coast in Binh Dinh Province, when an enemy mortar round landed inside the command APC. CPT Adams was killed, as were the other occupants. CPT Bachman was sent up to the advisor team from the Saigon area. He had arrived in country in November as the XO of a separate US Armored Cavalry Troop, then became available when he was promoted to CPT. The team had no previous experience dealing with a casualty like this, so they packed CPT Adams' gear and sent it to Saigon. About the time we came back from the Ia Drang, MAJ Raines received a letter from Mrs. Adams inquiring about those personal effects and especially his college and wedding rings. Therefore, I was appointed to follow up on the situation.

I first took a flight to Saigon, checked in at Koepler Compound for guidance, and then got a Hotel room at the Victoria Hotel, a place used by the Army for transients. I called Herm Schmidt, who was assigned to the MACV PsyOps School in Gio Linh, just north of Saigon, and made arrangements for him to come see me. The next day I went somewhere in Saigon to a large warehouse, found a large crate with CPT Adams' gear in it. I inventoried his belongings and signed off on the required paperwork that would allow the Army to ship those things home. (I guess it had always been Army policy to search belongings of deceased soldiers to remove anything that might have been embarrassing to the next of kin. I did not find anything of that sort in this instance.) The rings were not recovered, which meant that I would have to search further. That afternoon I met Herm and we had a few beers and told war stories. He was unhappy with his job because, although it was important to design and distribute pamphlets to "win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese", it wasn't a very challenging assignment. I caught a flight back to Pleiku the next day, discussed the situation with MAJ Altier, and determined that I would have to fly to the Graves Registration facility in Binh Dinh Province and also question the soldiers of Third Troop.

A few days later I was able to catch a roundabout flight that ultimately got me to Qui Non. I was met by SFC Chris Everett, who drove me to the Graves Registration area. There I learned how deceased remains were processed and determined that the rings were most likely not with CPT Adams when he arrived there. So, Chris drove me north to the vicinity of Phu Cat Air Base where 33 was on an operation. I met Howie Bachman and the Troop CO, discussed with them the situation, and further learned that either the rings were lost in the explosion, or were stripped off and kept by a VN soldier. In either case, they were permanently missing. That certainly created a sense of unease in me when I thought about what might happen to any advisor's personal effects in the event of being wounded or killed in the field. I spent the night at the airbase and then caught a flight back to Pleiku the next day. I then wrote a letter to Mrs. Adams stating that her husband's personal gear had been shipped to her and I said that the rings must have been destroyed by the explosion. Thus ended a sad episode but it had gotten me out of the dull routine at Pleiku for a few days.

In June, shortly after CPT Livermore arrived, 43 road-marched to the coast and replaced 33, which returned to Pleiku after about a six-month absence. The only other thing that I remember about June was listening to the news reports on AFN radio about the Six Day War in the mid-east. SFC Johnson had spent some time in Lebanon, so he was able to tell us a lot about

that area and the problems that would always exist between the Israelis and the Palestinians/Arabs. We sided with Israel and were quite pleased that they won so handily.

One morning during this period I went to breakfast when the mess hall opened, got my food and sat down at an empty table. As I started to eat, two other people sat down opposite me. One was an unknown Army Major, who was the escort officer for the other individual, Jonathan Winters. We introduced ourselves and then began an hour of total delight. Winters regaled me (and a few other people who saw what was happening and moved to this table) with one impersonation after another, nonstop humor from one of the funniest comedians of that time. His escort officer played the fool, always bringing up a new topic whenever Winters slowed down. The main character in his routine was Maudy Frickett, a role Winters reverted to time after time. It was an absolutely hilarious event, one that I fondly recall to this day.

In July, I was tasked to fly to the coastal town of Nha Trang to attend a training event that was to be conducted north of there. Nha Trang was the HQs of the US II Field Force and also the HQs of the US Special Forces Group. The training event was to learn about a new US Army rifle firing technique known as Quick Fire. Under this concept people were trained to essentially fire their rifles accurately from the hip. I never found out exactly how it worked, because on the day of the training, the enemy had conducted an ambush on the road north out of Nha Trang, and the road was not open for traffic. The whole trip consisted of me spending three days on the beautiful beaches there and enjoying some great seafood (giant prawns and crab) taken from the South China Sea.

In August Gene Nelka, who had to spend the night in Pleiku on business, visited me. He was recently new in country and assigned as the Headquarters Commandant (Commander) of some activity in Nha Trang. It was a not too exciting job and Gene was anxious to get out of it. (He finally did, in early February, and was assigned to M Company, Third Squadron, 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Cavalry Regiment. This was at the start of the Tet Offensive. As I heard later, he was only in command for a day or two when his tank was hit by an RPG and Gene was severely wounded, never to completely recover physically or mentally.) This was the last time I saw Gene. A few days later, 13 took to the field at last, for a two-day operation just outside of Pleiku. On the first day the troop got eleven tanks stuck in a (not so) dry rice paddy. It took a few hours to pull them all free, during which time I was visited by MAJ Altier, who told me that Gene Livermore had to return to the States on emergency leave. Bob asked me if I still wanted to be a Cav Troop advisor and without hesitation, I said yes. Since both Johnson and McCoy were with me in the field, I turned my duties over to them and flew back to Pleiku to pack my bags. That evening, I briefed CPT Gary Roderick on 13 and he became the new tank troop advisor. I loaded up the gear I would take with me the next day and also bagged the remainder for easy movement to our new advisor's team house, which would be built in my absence.

## CHAPTER 2: CAVALRY TROOP ADVISOR

### Cavalry Troop Advisor

The next day I flew by helicopter with MAJ Altier to Tam Quan, also known as Landing Zone (LZ) Tom, in Binh Dinh Province. The flight time was about two hours. When we landed and went to a partially destroyed building near the west side of the base that the advisors were using, we received sniper fire from the east side of the base. I told MAJ Altier that I was then already halfway to earning a Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB-the criteria was be in an authorized position, as this job was, and come under enemy fire twice). Livermore was all packed and ready to go, so after a brief reintroduction to LT Dem, Altier and Livermore departed. At the time, only SFC Jackson was assigned as an assistant advisor, but over the next four months, both McCoy and Chris Everett would also be assisting me. The building that I thought was used by the advisors was in fact only used by Jackson – Livermore had stayed in a bunker near the center of the base. When I checked the bunker, I immediately decided that I could not stand to stay there, so I moved in with Jackson into the open-air building. This separation made me think something was wrong, so I asked Jack and Dem what was the matter. They both stated that Livermore had been absolutely scared to death the entire time the unit was there and had probably written his wife to have her find some rationale for him to get sent home. Livermore did not leave a good impression with the VN nor with Jack.

In addition to the building, there was a water tower (inoperable), enough area for a US artillery battery of six guns, and an ARVN infantry battalion stationed on the same base. Everything east and south of the camp was enemy territory. About two miles in that direction was what we called sniper island – definitely enemy held. The island was formed in what could be considered a delta of the local streams and inlets from the South China Sea. The terrain was primarily rice paddies, with elevated dikes between them and mounds upon which the VN had their huts and gardens. The Vietnamese constructed bunkers next to their huts to protect them from direct and indirect fire during any combat actions in their vicinity. No civilians were allowed to live in this area, but they could be there during the day to tend their crops. Most of the elevated areas had coconut palms and banana trees, and some sugar cane was grown. The weather was different in this coastal area because it received west moving monsoons during the November to March period. And, it was much hotter than Pleiku.

At Tam Quan we were only about five feet above sea level. The base was separated on the west side by QL 1 (Highway 1, the main north-south highway in VN) and directly south of the barbed wire was the actual village of Tam Quan. To the west of that were similar agricultural areas for a distance of about three miles, until the lowlands met a large chain of mountains. About 10 miles south of us along QL 1 was the town of Bong Son, directly west of which was a large US Fire Base, LZ English, which was home to elements of the US 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Division. South of that was the Bong Son River that ran from the west into the sea. Fifty miles further south was the Phu Cat airbase that I had visited in May. The whole are, from the sea to the mountains, was called the Bong Son Plain, on which numerous battles, large and small, occurred. Also at LZ English was the HQ of an ARVN Infantry Regiment to which 43 was attached.

The next four and a half months were completely different from my time in Pleiku in just about every way. This troop regularly went on short day and overnight operations, just as regularly encountered some enemy activity, and daily living took some time to accomplish, what with their being no running water, all meals eaten with the VN, and many other differences.

Because of our proximity to US forces we were able to keep supplied with the essentials, C-rations, beer and minimal PX supplies such as cigarettes. One of the first things I changed was to get a large tent sent to us, which we erected on sandbags with one central crossbeam. This was placed next to the commander's track so we were in immediate contact with him in the event of enemy activity. We were infrequently sniped at and mortared from the east, normally in the evenings. On one of the first nights there, I was aroused by a lot of activity from our troops. What happened was a squad of six infantrymen from the ARVN infantry battalion went on a night patrol to the east. However, instead of patrolling, they stopped at a partially destroyed building only about 200 meters away, built a fire to cook with, and completely dropped their guard. They were soon attacked and killed by an unknown number of enemy. All of the ARVN soldiers had their throats cut.

I should point out about the composition of the enemy we faced in VN. First were the local Viet Cong (VC), who were mainly villagers who went about their business as farmers or merchants during the day and then met in cells at night to strike against small ARVN units such as I just described or to coerce other villagers into professing a belief in the communist cause. Fulltime main force VC units were organized, trained, and fought in the various Provinces and Districts. These forces were augmented and ultimately over shadowed by infiltrated North Vietnamese Regulars (NVA). Who we fought depended on where (and when) we were. In the Ia Drang I'm sure we faced NVA who were able to infiltrate from Cambodia. In the Pleiku area there were few local force cells, but our intelligence units identified a couple of main force VC battalions operating from the hills around Pleiku. On the coast, we encountered all three varieties, with the NVA coming down the coastline from North Vietnam or from the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Cambodia and then through the mountains.

My first actual operation with 43 took place to the southeast of Tam Quan. We went out for about five days and, along with a company from the infantry, searched a wide area of paddies and deserted villages. Almost daily the soldiers discovered local VC hidden in holes or tunnels. The numbers weren't large but they added up and kept the enemy off balance. On one occasion we killed an enemy paymaster and his list of individuals who had been paid but unfortunately we did not capture any money (or if we did I wasn't told about it). On another day I was standing with Dem and a few soldiers at the confluence of drainage ditches when one of our soldiers began firing his rifle right at my feet. I jumped back and saw a hole about the size of a culvert (four feet in diameter) and after a few more shots and a hand grenade, our soldiers pulled a dead VC from the hole. Since the VC was armed with an AK-47 assault rifle, I considered myself lucky to be alive. On the way back to Tam Quan, I was riding on top of the APC along with LT Dem and the infantry company commander and his two radio operators when I was shaken by an explosion right next to the vehicle. The enemy had tied a hand grenade as a booby trap about five feet up the side of a tree. When we passed by, the grenade detonated, severely injuring one of the radio operators who had his feet dangling over the side of the APC. My ears rang for a week!

Over the next two months, we went on similar operations but rarely stayed overnight. All of the area east of QL 1 was, by government edict, off-limits to civilians, so anyone we saw on these operations were considered enemies. I maintained an abbreviated diary listing the specifics of each operation, but unfortunately I cannot find it now.

Daily living was, as I mentioned earlier, much different than it had been in Pleiku. On the base we had an outhouse for the advisors, which we or the VN burned the contents of periodically. We ate about half of our meals with the Troop Commander's crew, and often supplemented what they had with C-rations, which were easy to obtain from the US forces in the



area. (The VN also augmented their normal food supplies with items found while in the field-one day they found a hot pepper field and spent an hour picking them for later use.) C-rats were the mainstay for our other meals. For about a month there, a US artillery battery was stationed on the base and we were welcome to eat in their mess hall. As it turned out, the Captain Battery Commander had been in my brother Bob's artillery battery in Bamberg, Germany, before coming to VN so he was happy to provide us with support. It was ironic that on the day we returned from the field after the five day operation, during which time we ate rice and something every day, we went to the mess hall for dinner and had Chile and rice! On one occasion, Chris Everett and I were asked if we would like to eat some crab. We said yes and gave the troops some money to purchase crab later that day. In the meantime, we went to LZ English and begged a few pounds of butter from an American mess hall. The result was a delicious crab bake.

In our tent, we slept on military cots with air mattresses, usually on top of our sleeping bags, and were covered with mosquito nets to protect us from bites and the possibility of catching malaria. I took a weekly malaria pill on Sundays, which was followed by the same routine. By Monday, I had terrible diarrhea from the pill, so I drank about half a bottle of Pepto-Bismol, which in turn plugged me up until the end of the week when I would start the process all over again. Sunday was also the day that I used to track how many weeks I had left on my tour of duty, and also how many weeks were left until I would go on R & R (Rest and Relaxation leave) to Hawaii. We showered every three or four days, using a jury-rigged 55-gallon can on a tripod. We didn't have to heat the water until the weather cooled off in November. (I had left Pleiku in the middle of the Monsoon Season (rains) and on the coast it was the dry season.) I drank a lot of beer during this period as it and ice were readily available from LZ English, but the NCOs preferred hard liquor, which was only available at Phu Cat. So every three or four weeks one of them would drive there to buy liquor for the whole team. It was a mildly dangerous trip-I only went once.

We only received mail when a helicopter brought it to us from Pleiku, which was every ten days or so. Mail from the states was always looked forward to, but while on the coast, did cause some anguish. In early September, I received a letter from mother in which she alluded to a significant "decision and action" that she had taken that was discussed in her previous letter, which I had not received. I could not figure out what she was talking about and had to wait for two weeks to find out she had divorced my stepfather, Bob Boos.

The ARVN soldiers lived about like we did; only they slept in or around the APCs. (I also slept in the commander's APC when in the field.) As I stated earlier, they were in their Army for the duration, so they adapted themselves to it by not working very hard on days when they weren't on an operation and by not working at all on weekends. They regularly sent a few married soldiers back to Pleiku for a week or two on their resupply trucks. When the US artillery was still at Tam Quan, LT Dem asked for a favor. He had noticed that the artillerymen burned the wood ammo boxes that the artillery rounds came in. These were boxes made from a good grade lumber that were approximately 4 feet by 2 ½ feet by 1 foot. Dem asked me to see if he could have a couple of truck loads of those empty boxes as he had a carpenter in his troop back in Pleiku who could make furniture from the wood. The artillery CO said no problem, so on one of the troop resupply runs, we loaded a couple of hundred of the boxes on the trucks and sent them to Pleiku. I later saw the very nicely made wooden slat chairs that they built. The troop outfitted all of their facilities in Pleiku with that furniture and had enough left over to sell downtown. The resulting money was used by the troop to buy other things for the soldiers and their families. This was a bit of ingenuity that I was glad to support.

The villagers of Tam Quan lived like most rural VN did; a subsistence level existence. They made extra money by selling US imported things such as beer, soda and toiletries that were stolen from the American supply system or were bartered from American GIs for locally produced trinkets. They also took beer and soda cans, placed them on the roads to be flattened by the traffic, and connected them to make roofs and walls for their huts. Rice was their staple-it came from government sources or from what they could produce in paddies in authorized areas. The latter was often subject to confiscation by local VC who took it as a tax. Another staple was rau muong, the Vietnamese word for a spinach-type, leafy plant. (From what I saw, they ate any leafy type plant that was edible.) Because of their proximity to the coast, fish and other seafood were also staples. Most meals were enhanced with ngouc mamh, a combination sauce of fish oil, soy sauce, and hot peppers. We advisors would go to the village infrequently to eat in a roadside café, or to get a haircut at the local barbershop. We also had our laundry done in the village but had one of the soldiers take it in for us - that way he was able to get a cut of the fee. The villagers were generally politically neutral: friendly to us during daylight hours and somewhat friendly to the VC at night when they had to be.

In early October, the VN were going to have a national election, so to provide protection at a larger District HQs, 43 was sent south to the vicinity of Phu Cat. This was a semi-permanent move that actually lasted only about ten days. We moved our tent and reassembled it at the new site, but it wasn't the same. This District had large Chinook cargo helicopters bring in supplies daily and even though we were a hundred meters from the landing pad, the helicopter pilots tormented us by hovering over our tent. I'm sure they were laughing at our mad scrambling to hold the tent in place. Jackson and I went to visit the advisor team the day after we arrived. It was a hot day so we asked if they had any cold beer. They said sure, and **sold** some to us for a dollar a can! Compare this to my largess in the Ia Drang! We of course bought some cold ones but never went back there. We did not take part in any activities related to the election, and in fact did nothing but sit around all day. I suppose that our presence there was enough to keep the enemy away.

When this period was over, we returned to Tam Quan. We continued to have one-day operations at various locations to the southeast. On one of these, an APC detonated what must have been 105mm artillery round that had rigged as an anti-tank mine. All but one of the crew were riding on top of the vehicle and were thrown off by the explosion, but the one crewman riding inside was severely wounded and lost a leg. Where the best place to ride on an APC was a subject of great differences in opinion. Those of us who operated in heavily mined and booby-trapped areas voted for riding on top of the vehicles as we thought it was better to be thrown off and maybe break a few bones than to be inside and suffer even worse damage. This was especially true considering that the ARVN had the early version of the M113 APC, which had a gas engine and volatile gas fuel tanks. Those who operated in areas where the main threat was enemy small arms fire opted to ride inside. On another operation, an overnight one, we went to the coast and spent the afternoon swimming in the sea. The next day we came across a built-up burial mound about 25 meters in diameter. The troops would not get close to it, so I asked Dem why, since I would have liked to see up close what it was like. Showing his intelligence and wit, Dem told me that South Vietnamese soldiers were generally Catholic or Buddhist and their religions kept them from possibly desecrating a burial sight. Then he said that the VC and NVA had no such reason for not using the site for their own purposes. He also asked, with a big grin, if I wanted to enter the site. I declined.

At one time in November, Jack and I went to LZ English and were able to "scrounge" two M16 rifles, with magazines and a case of ammunition. Later, on an operation southeast of Tam Quan, I let LT Dem shoot my weapon. He was a natural marksman, and proved it by shooting down coconuts without damaging them. He was so enamored of the M16 that I gave it to him as a gift. He really appreciated it and gained prestige from his soldiers because of it. Dem was also deadly with a pistol. One time I saw him shoot and kill a small sparrow type bird with his pistol at about 50 feet. Quite naturally, what remained of that bird was plucked and went into the pot for dinner.

During this period we conducted a one-day operation northwest of Tam Quan, the only time I was ever in that area. The stated purpose was to protect the farmers who were harvesting their rice crops, although I didn't observe any doing so. In the afternoon, Jack reported on the radio that his platoon had captured a wounded enemy soldier. I also got that information from LT Dem, so I called it in to the advisors at LZ English. After awhile, I called Jack and asked him what was going on with the prisoner. He said that the prisoner had died of his wounds. After we were back at the base, Jack told me that what actually happened was that the soldiers in his platoon had tried to interrogate the prisoner. When they were not able to get any information from him, they shot him. The next day I questioned Dem about the incident and he verified the facts of the matter. I told him that they should not have killed the enemy soldier, because if he had been turned over to the proper authorities, more information might have been obtained from him. In addition, I told Dem that my Army did not kill captured soldiers and I didn't approve of what had been done. Dem agreed to stop doing that in the future.

About November 20<sup>th</sup>, it was time for me to depart on R & R. A helicopter arrived from Pleiku with another advisor, probably McCoy, to keep at least two advisors present while I was gone. I flew back to Pleiku and was taken to our new team house. This consisted of two single story buildings in an L configuration, with a smaller bathroom/shower building at the angle of the L. One building contained the kitchen and rooms for the NCOs and the other had a long hallway along one side with rooms for the officers on the other side. It was located near the Regimental Commander's house and office, and, with a large electrical generator, we were able to provide enough electricity for our own needs and for the CO. The Regiment provided us with protection.

While I was gone there had been a number of personnel changes. After MAJ Raines departed and Bob Altier moved up to the Senior Advisor (SA) position, we received a new Captain (promotable), James B. (JB) Taylor, as the staff advisor. Howie Bachman had also departed, and Gary Roderick was reassigned from 13 to 33. Then Altier departed and JB moved up to be the SA. SFC Johnson was 13 advisor by himself until McCoy returned, but they would not get an officer assigned for over a month. The staff advisor position remained unfilled until I left in March. Also, SFC Chris Everett had extended his tour and was on thirty-day leave in Germany where his wife and family were. When he returned he was being reassigned, at his request, to an advisor position with the ARVN 8<sup>th</sup> ACR in Ban Me Thuet.

Over the next couple of days I nailed some plywood paneling on the walls and ceiling of my room, and unpacked my gear that had been moved over from the other compound. I also went to the Corps HQs where the Colonel G3 Advisor presented me with the Bronze Star from the Ia Drang battle. The few things that would be needed on R & R were then repacked, after my Khaki uniform was cleaned, pressed, and had my assembled awards pinned on. I had arrived in country eight months earlier wearing only the National Defense Service Ribbon and now had the

Bronze Star with "V" device for valor, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the VN Service Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. I had also received the CIB, which I wore above the ribbons.

On the prescribed day, I was taken to the Pleiku Air Base and caught a flight to Cam Ran Bay, where the R & R center was established for the lower half of the country. There, I confirmed my flight for the next day, and then just relaxed in the sun. This was Thanksgiving Day 1967. I remember eating the traditional meal in the Center's dining facility, and spending some time at the Officer' Club with an Army Captain who had flown there on the same flight with me. He was an Army Nurse (male) at the Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku and we were seatmates to and from Hawaii. The next day we departed early in the morning on about an eight to ten hour flight, with a stop for fuel at Midway Island. We arrived in Honolulu in the late afternoon and Sue Ellen, who had arrived the previous day, met me. We were bussed to the R & R Center at Fort DeRusey on Waikiki, where we were given an indoctrination on R & R, and then released.

Sue Ellen had made reservations for us at an off-beach hotel, The Pagoda, and had rented a car. We spent the next seven days catching up on what had happened at home and with me in VN, things that my infrequent letters hadn't said, eating a lot and sitting in the sun or shade at DeRusey, drinking Mai Tais. We did some sightseeing at the Water Park, drove around the eastern half of Oahu, and attended a Don Ho floorshow. We talked a lot about Tim and how he was growing, and I got to see a lot of recent pictures of him. Basically, we did a lot of the same things all soldiers did on R & R. Soldiers referred to it as I & I - Intoxication and Intercourse. As I recall, this was the best vacation I ever had, before or since. Unfortunately, the thought of returning to VN for another four months hung over us the entire time. How quickly time flies!

Departure day came, we kissed and said goodbye, and off I flew to complete my tour. The trip was the reverse of the previous one. On the way, I elicited a promise from the male nurse to get me a good hospital type bed when I got back to Pleiku from the coast. He agreed to do so. I arrived in Pleiku on December 5<sup>th</sup>, and we made arrangements for a helicopter for the next day. I took with me two new advisors, SFC Tanksley and a staff Sergeant whose name I have forgotten. Tanksley had just extended his tour - he had been assigned as an advisor to a ranger battalion then engaged in heavy fighting at Dak To, north of Kontum. He had known Norm Jackson, who convinced him to try being an advisor with the Cav because it was safer. We flew to Tam Quan and arrived in time to attend an operational briefing at LZ English with the Infantry Regiment's staff and advisors. While I had been in Hawaii, LT Dem had gone on leave and was temporarily replaced by LT Khoa from 13. The purpose of the next day's operation was to move east of Tam Quan to Sniper Island to attempt to recover a 500-pound bomb that the Air Force had dropped there the previous day. That island was a free fire zone, meaning that if the Air Force had unused ordnance on a homeward flight, they could drop it there to preclude having to land with the ordnance still on board. This wasn't the first time bombs had been dropped there but in this case the bomb had not exploded and it was felt to be a better risk to try to find it rather than to detonate it as a mine later on. The plan was quite simple. The troop and the ARVN infantry battalion stationed at Tam Quan would move east down the only road the next morning and go onto the island. The infantry would then search for the bomb. Recalling my experience in the Ia Drang, I told LT Khoa to coordinate with the infantry to leave some troops at the causeway we would take to go onto the island. He agreed to do so.

The next morning we moved out along the road east of our base. On the command track with me was the infantry battalion advisor and radioman and the battalion commander and radioman. Spread among 43's platoons were Jackson and Tanksley on one platoon leader's APC

and the assistant infantry advisor was with my new SSG on another platoon leader's APC. Along the way were a number of destroyed buildings and the traces of prior agricultural activities. There were trees along the road and scattered in the areas on both sides of us, and also patches of brush. An infantry company went onto the island first, followed by the rest of us. We stayed close to the water and circled about halfway around the island. From that position, the APCs all turned to their right flank, facing heavy woods and brush across the stream from us, a distance of about 20 meters. There we sat on the APCs while the infantry began their search.

About 11:00 o'clock were heard a lot of explosions and machinegun firing quite a distance from us to the southwest. What triggered the day's activities was an aerial scout team of helicopters flying low over the terrain about 10 kilometers from us when one of the scouts identified what looked to be a clothes line spread between two trees but was more likely an enemy radio antenna. Following the US Air Cav doctrine, helicopter gunships fired some rockets into the area and the Air Cav Troop landed a platoon of infantry to develop the situation. Develop it they did, as a large enemy force immediately heavily engaged them. Over the next hour, they fought hard to extricate themselves and turn responsibility for the area over to others. During this time, one of the scout helicopters was hit and made a crash landing just inland from the causeway to Sniper's Island. I saw the helicopter as it was going down so I asked LT Khoa to ask the infantry battalion commander to help secure the downed craft with the troops he left at the causeway. Khoa got on the radio and talked for a few minutes, and when he was done he looked very pale. He told me that the infantry had not left anyone at the causeway.

At this exact time, probably totally unrelated, we were attacked with a heavy volume of fire from across the stream. The main firing was at the vehicles to my left, although some fire came close to my APC but missed. Twice I saw RPGs fired from the other side and watched their slow movement towards APCs on the left. One missed and one hit a tree next to an APC, the explosion of which injured some of the troops aboard. I immediately called for artillery support, which was soon forthcoming. The infantry advisors at Regiment were told what we knew and they got us some helicopter gunships, but only a couple of sorties as they were still heavily engaged south of us. After about a half hour, the enemy fire slacked off, so Khoa sent two platoons of APCs across the water in front of us (they were capable of swimming) along with some infantrymen. Just after those elements were out of sight on the far side of the tree line, heavy firing broke out again. Jackson was with one of the platoons over there, and reported that they were in a broad field of waist high grass or reeds, and were surrounded by up to a hundred enemy soldiers. The multiple machineguns and individual rifle fire from the APCs and dismounted infantry killed or drove off the enemy. Although our soldiers did not dismount to make an actual count, they estimated at least 30 dead enemy. The forces all reassembled on the island at about 2:00 pm, and it was decided to start moving back towards base camp because we had a number of wounded and at least three dead, but we could not get a Medevac into that area.

As we started the move, the infantry led the way to provide us with close in support against enemy attack. After one company of infantry and the first platoon of APCs crossed the causeway, they were taken under fire from ground positions and from snipers tied up high in the trees. The first burst of fire hit the platoon leader's APC, instantly killing the platoon leader and SFC Tanksley, who were standing on either side of Jackson. They were able to fight through and establish a position to the west, from which they were able to shoot at the rear of the enemy forces. The remaining APCs and infantry were by then crossing the causeway, and we took heavy fire for about two hundred meters. I was crouched behind the vehicle cupola on the CO's APC when an RPG round exploded against a tree about two feet away. Simultaneously, the

infantry advisor Captain called me and said he was directly behind my track and had been hit in the shoulder. I got Khoa to stop the track and I opened the passenger door on the rear of the track. It took a minute or two for the wounded Captain to catch up. When he did, I pulled him inside and made room for the infantry commander and their radio operators and then gave Khoa the word to move forward. During this engagement, my new SSG was also wounded in the chest. Immediately after breaking through the enemy positions, Khoa sent the APCs with dead and wounded back to camp at a fast pace, and the remainder of us moved slowly back at the pace of the walking infantrymen. When we arrived at Tam Quan, Jack had already sent off our dead and wounded by Medevac. Our total combined casualties were one advisor killed in action (KIA), three advisors wounded in action (WIA), about ten ARVN KIA and another ten WIA.

At the base camp, we were all shaken up by the day's events. Nothing was said about what follow-up action would take place, so we relaxed and ate dinner. Khoa's cook had prepared a chicken VN style – gutted and plucked, but whole. He offered me the head, which they considered to be a delicacy, but I refused nicely and offered it instead to LT Khoa. When he ate it, bones and all, I asked him why he would eat that but wouldn't eat the iguana in the Ia Drang. He smiled and said because he knew what chicken tasted like. That evening I learned that a US Navy Destroyer was off the coast in our vicinity so I asked for fire support against Sniper Island. We were barely outside the ricochet safety zone, so they were able to shoot a number of big, 18-inch rounds at the island. A few landed on a too flat arch and ricocheted over our heads four kilometers away. That was awesome!

The next morning I sent Jack off in our jeep to go to LZ English in order to provide positive identification on SFC Tanksley. That was needed before the casualty people would process his remains further. Shortly after he left, 43 was alerted to move out immediately, towards the site of the American battle of the previous day. Since I was the only Cav advisor present, I told LT Khoa that I could not go with him but would join him later when Jack got back. This was the MACV rule, there always had to be at least two advisors present in the field with an ARVN unit. I didn't like not going, because it meant that the fire support that I could provide would be missing if there was enemy contact. The infantry battalion was also going and they were down to one NCO advisor, who opted to disregard the rule. I really didn't think there would be a problem because Jack was due back shortly, but as it turned out he didn't get back until late in the day when it was too late to fly out to the Troop.

The Troop had moved out on the morning of the 8<sup>th</sup>, along QL 1 south of Tam Quan about 5 miles (halfway to the Bong Son/LZ English area). There, they formed on line and started to move east, when they received enemy fire. There were no casualties, but the troops did not make any progress for whatever reason. They formed a circle (laager) that night, and received sporadic fire from the east. The next morning Jack and I got a helicopter to fly us to 43. The Troop and infantry then began to move east again. It was a slow movement and we only received sporadic sniper fire. Shortly after noon we arrived at an elevated mound, about one quarter of the size of a football field. There was not much vegetation on it but I couldn't tell what it was or what it had been. The flat area on top was about twenty feet higher than the surrounding area, which had sparse vegetation in the west from where we came, but the rest of the area surrounding us was heavily wooded with dense underbrush. As we occupied the mound, the infantry swept across it and the APCs spread out in a large circle. On this operation I never knew who was in charge. In US tactics, someone should always be in charge – it's called Unity of Command. With these units, the battalion CO was a Captain and Khoa a First Lieutenant, but the Cav Troop was too large and powerful to be under the command of the infantry Captain. What

should have happened was that the infantry Regimental Commander and his advisor should have been in the field, but they weren't. Apparently, Khoa and the Captain cooperated and coordinated.

Once the mound was secured, it was decided that the infantry would start to move north on line, into the heavily wooded area that was supposedly the scene of the previous day's US actions. As they started to descend the slope, all hell broke loose. The enemy fire was very intense, indicating we were facing something larger than the normal VC locals. The infantry backed off, discussions were held, and then a Cav platoon started to advance north, supported by dismounted infantry. Again the firing was heavy, this time including some RPGs aimed at the APCs. As before, everyone backed off. At this time LT Khoa directed his driver to move toward the north side of the mound. I was sitting on top of the vehicle towards the right rear, listening to my radio over a headset with about 10 feet of cable connecting it to the radio, which in this case was mounted in the APC. When I saw what we were doing I began to move towards the hatch to get into the vehicle but the APC was suddenly hit at the lower-left road wheels and track. The shock of impact rocked the vehicle, and as I was partially upright and not well balanced, I was thrown off the track and landed about five feet away. My head was jerked around when it reached the end of the headset cable, but the headset came off and I kept flying. I immediately got to my feet and hid behind the APC, thinking another RPG would hit us, but what the explosion turned out to be was a not too large land mine. The vehicle was easily repaired; nobody was injured except for a few bruises, and the day's offensive operations came to a halt.

We set up for the night by making a large circle around the top of the mound, with the Cav platoons spread out and infantry soldiers partially dug in between and behind the vehicles. Their holes were generally only deep enough to provide them with a small degree of protection when lying down. I called for artillery fires to be prepositioned in case we needed them. Khoa told me that an ARVN Airborne group that was coming to our assistance as a reaction force would replace us the next day. After eating, we settled in for the night as normal, except that this night, instead of just me and the CO sleeping inside the APC, all the crew but one was inside. We were all very tired so the cramped conditions did not bother anyone.

About 4:00 am we were awakened by a heavy barrage of enemy mortar and RPG fire. I called for the prepositioned artillery and the soldiers and APCs on the perimeter began firing all weapons. Before we opened the hatch on the crew compartment, we felt an explosion directly behind us and then shortly, another explosion in front of us. It was obvious that we were bracketed by enemy mortar fire and Khoa was screaming at the driver to get the APC moving backward. It was a tense few seconds until we moved, but then as we expected, another explosion occurred where we had just been. The firing from both sides continued for nearly an hour, although there were no reports of any enemy ground attacks. By then daylight was beginning to allow us to see what was happening, which caused the enemy to stop firing at us. My request for fire support brought us two US jet bombers, which I was able to direct onto possible targets to our north. Their bombing runs were probably worthless, however, as the real enemy positions were too close to us to be engaged by the bombs. In fact, we received at least one big chunk of shrapnel from a bomb dropped 600 meters away. When the Air Force pilots had expended their loads I received a request from them for a flyover – which I approved – and I told Khoa to tell everyone to get their cameras out if they had them. Everyone on the position was watching the aircraft, and we saw them make a big turn north of us and head for us. It was an awesome sight (and sound) as the two jets screamed overhead at four hundred miles per hour, upside down, at only 100 feet off the ground.

By this time it was total daylight, so we began to assess the damage we had sustained. The troop only had one slightly wounded soldier, the crewman from our APC who had to sleep outside. The infantry fared much worse. They suffered over 30 WIA with various degrees of injuries. It took at least two Medevac helicopters to remove them from our position, even though some were marched overland to the west to QL 1 where they were picked up. We then went through the normal morning routine, after which we just sat and waited. Apparently the decision was made at the highest level of the VN government to replace us with the airborne troops, as they were a national reaction force, not one normally available even to the Corps Commander. About mid-morning we saw a long column of soldiers approaching us from the south. These were obviously the ARVN airborne unit. I saw or heard no coordination taking place, although there must have been some. In the US Army, this sort of relief in place or passage of lines required a great deal of coordination. As the airborne force arrived, they just kept walking in single-file, through our lines on the south, across the mound, and down the slope to the north, from which they encountered no enemy fire. We were all set to move out, which we immediately did, returning to the base at Tam Quan.

That day, December 10<sup>th</sup>, and the next day were spent recovering from the previous few days of combat. We heard that the airborne unit had not found anything in the area of the mound and had therefore been withdrawn. On the 12<sup>th</sup>, about mid-morning we were alerted for immediate movement back to that area. Apparently, US scout helicopters had again spotted enemy activity in the exact same place. This time we moved to the scene and established a blocking line from north to south just to the east of QL 1, the same approximate area that the troop had occupied on December 9<sup>th</sup>. A US Mechanized Infantry Battalion had been deployed to the area of the mound from the south and was encountering the same sort of intense enemy fire that we had received. We only spent that day in that position and did not receive any fire, but were able to hear the sounds of the heavy fire taking place in the area of the mound.

During that afternoon I witnessed a tragedy that was indicative of things that had evolved in the US Army. I had the US infantry's radio frequency, so I switched to their net to monitor their actions. I didn't know their radio call signs (names) but could identify voices by positions held within the units just by the tone of voices used and the issuance of orders. At a point in the battle I heard the battalion commander talking to one of his infantry company commanders, directing him to attack regardless of the cost. A few minutes later, the battalion commander called again, first getting the company commander's radio operator (RTO), whom he ordered to get the commander on the air. The battalion commander asked for an update of the situation, and when told it was the same, screamed at the company commander to get moving and "make things happen". I don't know where the battalion commander was, but he certainly was not in the area of the fighting and did not know the intensity of enemy fire. After a few more minutes of silence on the radio, not enough time in my opinion for the company commander to have done much, the battalion commander again called the company. The RTO answered and was again ordered to get the company commander. This time the RTO said, "I can't sir, he was shot in the head and is dead". Without hesitation, the battalion commander screamed at the RTO to go find the next senior officer in the company and get him on the radio. I switched my radio off of that frequency then, I was so pissed off at what had happened. This was obviously a case of a battalion commander who was only going to get at most six months of command, and wanted to be very successful in that combat command, without regard to the cost!

We again returned to Tam Quan that evening and had no further operations until December 26<sup>th</sup>, the day we were to be relieved by 33 coming from Pleiku. The US mechanized



infantry battalion, augmented by some tanks from a US tank battalion, succeeded in defeating the enemy force in the area of the mound. That force turned out to be an NVA Regimental HQs and its heavy weapons company, which accounted for the intensity of fire we had received from them. After our early morning actions on the 10<sup>th</sup>, the enemy had apparently either went into caves that weren't found by the airborne soldiers, or they had completely evacuated the area until the airborne unit left and then immediately reoccupied their positions. I don't recall the total number of enemy actually counted as KIA, but a significant number of weapons were found. Many of these were placed on an ARVN truck and were paraded up and down QL 1 for a couple of days, intending to propagandize the local villagers.

We spent the next few days relaxing and talking over the combat actions we had participated in. Everyone was happy that we had been successful, however that was defined, but saddened at the losses we had sustained. I had learned a lot about the VN soldiers and a lot about myself. I gained self-confidence from my experiences; especially in the area of calling for and using US fire support. We, Jack and me as advisors, and the VN officers and men, definitely had a better attitude than I had experienced after the Ia Drang battle. The officers and advisors had a celebration one afternoon at a local café, at which, Officer Aspirant Luong, whom we called Mickey because he looked like the famous mouse, entertained us with his guitar and singing his favorite American song "House of the Rising Sun". It was a fun way to relax and anticipate our return to Pleiku.

On December 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Day, a truce was agreed on by both sides in the war, as was usual for Christian and Vietnamese holidays. We relaxed and drank a little more than usual, but retained a fair degree of alertness. One of the APCs was festooned with Christmas decorations and Platoon Sergeant Sang dressed up as Santa. They went into Tam Quan village and distributed some gifts that the Troop had obtained and some things like C-rations that Jack and I provided. That evening the soldiers fired off many aerial flares of various colors. The main activity that day was to prepare to depart on the following day.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, 33 left Pleiku before daylight and made the approximately 120-mile trip in six hours. We immediately departed, after only a few words between 33's advisors, SFC Chittum and the Captain who had replaced Gary Roderick and us. Our route of march was south on QL 1 to the intersection with QL 19, the east-west highway from just north of Qui Nonh to Pleiku. QL 1 was kept open to traffic by various RF/PF forces, and QL 19 had outposts first by a Republic of Korea (ROK) unit and then by the US 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Division, whose HQs was at An Khe, about 30 miles west of QL 1. Jack and I rode in our jeep, and LT Khoa rode in his, until we approached the Mang Yang Pass, the name of the area where QL 19 crossed over the high mountain chain that separated the coastal are from the central highlands. There, Khoa and I mounted his APC and continued on. At the west end of the pass was a stone memorial with a metal plate commemorating the spot where "French Mobilier 100", a French mounted force, had been ambushed and defeated by the Viet Minh at about the same time as the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The continuation of the trip was as uneventful as the start had been. We arrived at dark, dismounted, unpacked, and I sighed in relief at the end of another stage of my tour in VN.

We did not conduct any operations until after the New Year's Day truce. On my first day back, I went to the Evac Hospital, looked up my nurse friend, and obtained a hospital bed with mattress. I really enjoyed that luxury for the remaining nights that I slept at the team house. On New Year's Eve, some of the advisors went to the MACV compound to celebrate but I stayed home and had a few drinks. On New Year's Day, as was the Army custom, JB Taylor, our new

Second Lieutenant advisor to the tank troop and I attended the Deputy Corps Advisor's reception at the MAC-V compound. As JB shook the Brigadier General's hand I heard the general say something about JB's mustache. JB was part American Indian and had a very sparse mustache – a few scraggly whiskers on each side. When it was my turn to greet the general, I received the same uncomplimentary type comment – “What would your wife think of that mustache, Captain?” In my case I had been growing it for about three months and spent a lot of time waxing my short handlebars. I retorted, “Sir, I just saw her a few weeks ago and she really liked it!” That got me a grunt in return. Later that afternoon JB told me that the Chief of Staff had ordered him to shave his off and to tell me to do likewise. I reluctantly complied the next day.

With three months left on my tour, I had already decided to stay in the Army. I had talked to MAJ Raines in detail about an Army program he was in - the Foreign Area Specialist Program (FAS). His specialty was Russia, which I was also interested in. If I was accepted into the program, I would return to the States in March, attend the Armor Officer Advanced Course (AOAC), then in sequence, attend a university for a degree in Russia studies, attend the Russian language course for one year in Monterrey, California, where I had studied Vietnamese, and then study at an Army school in Garmisch, Germany for two more years. This training would then be finalized with a one-year tour in the Soviet Union or an Eastern European country. Afterwards, I would alternate assignments between armor duty and FAS duty. This really sounded like an outstanding program that would definitely lead to a second career when I retired from the Army. It is scary to think back on that idea. Whatever made me think that I could learn to speak Russian? In any event, I had to take the GRE to be considered, so I was scheduled to do so in Saigon later in January. I had submitted my application for the FAS program and then I wrote to the Armor Officer Assignment office to tell them what I had done, and to ask about my assignment after leaving VN.

I don't recall whether I received my reassignment orders in January 1968 or later in February, but whenever it was, I was stunned. After commanding an armored cavalry troop in Germany for three months and now completing a full year of “command equivalency”, I was told that I was being reassigned to Fort Knox Kentucky to the Training Center to be a training company commander. I couldn't believe it and was really steamed up about it. I wrote back and strongly complained. The response I got back was “Every officer should seek every opportunity to command”. To slightly mitigate this position, however, they did say that they would call Fort Knox and attempt to get me assigned to a real armor unit.

About the second week in January, 43 was assigned highway protection duty on QL 14, the road north of Pleiku to Kontum. We were only responsible for about the first 10 or 12 miles, so we were close enough to return to the team house every other day or so to shower and eat an American meal. LT Dem had returned from leave and stated that as a result of the combat deaths we had sustained, he had lifted his ban on killing any enemy soldiers that we might capture. Although I didn't agree with him, I could understand his position. There was no enemy activity along the road in our area, but further north in another unit's area, truck convoys were attacked every few days. So life was back to a dull routine.

When time permitted I attempted to get the Second Lieutenant (2LT) promoted because he was overdue. Finally I was told to butt out – the 2LT had committed some grievous sin on his first assignment at Fort Knox (apparently he had been caught messing around with another officer's wife) and would not be promoted, now or ever. The guy really should not have been retained in the Army! One later afternoon when I was returning to the field for the night, I stopped at the Regiment's CP to see JB. He told me that he had submitted Silver Star

recommendations for the Bong Song battles for both Jackson and me, but the G3 advisor, with the words "You Cav advisors are getting too many awards, so I'm only going to approve one", kicked them back. Without hesitation I told him to can mine and submit Jackson's as he definitely deserved it more than I.

In the last week of January, 43 was pulled back to Pleiku to be a reaction force there during the upcoming TET Lunar New Year Holidays. Intelligence reports had been received that indicated the enemy might violate the truce. On Wednesday of that week I caught a C-130 flight to Saigon and checked into the Hotel Victoria again. I saw Herm Schmidt on both of the next two days because he was now stationed and billeted in Saigon. On Saturday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, I packed my bags and took a taxi to the Vietnamese American Club Compound in downtown Saigon, where I took the GRE. Afterwards, I got a ride to the airbase and waited for a flight back to Pleiku. Nothing came along so I went back to town and stayed at an Army Hotel because I was broke and could not pay for anything else. The next morning I returned to the airbase and was able to catch another C-130 flight back to Pleiku. I arrived at the team house late in the afternoon, got up to date on what was happening (we were on alert status on the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR base), stayed up awhile and went to bed about 10:00 pm.

At midnight of January 30/31<sup>st</sup> (the official start of the TET truce), the phone rang in our building—a call from the Regimental Commander who told us the enemy was attacking "downtown" Pleiku. The Commander in his jeep picked up JB and LT Dem picked up Jack and me. We followed JB and the Colonel into downtown Pleiku and stopped outside of LTG Vinh Loc's villa, a high walled compound in the center of town. We dismounted and stood there, three American advisors and two VN officers and only one rifle between us. A VN town without much electricity at night was a spooky place to be, although there was a floodlight outside the villa. From a block away, we heard heavy firing at the Province/District compound, which was where the attack started. As we kept low profiles behind the minimum cover provided by the two jeeps, two V-100 Scout cars from 23 came down the street towards us. They were directed by the Colonel to turn the corner at the villa, advance south about a hundred feet, and set up an outpost to protect that side of the villa. Dem's APCs were just arriving when the scout cars moved out. Before we had time to mount the APCs, a huge explosion occurred out of our sight, in the vicinity of where the scout cars had gone. One of the scout cars had been hit by an RPR and exploded. Dem was ordered to take 43 east about six blocks and then turn south. I think the plan was to surround whatever enemy that had infiltrated into town.

We started our move eastward, with one platoon leading and the troop HQs following. The other platoons followed us. As we were starting, 13's tanks arrived, minus the five-tank platoon that was guarding Corps HQs. With only Jack and I spread among 18 APCs, I cannot say for sure what exactly happened next or which vehicles went where. We went to the designated street and turned south, moving about two miles an hour, with all guns manned but not firing. I had never seen this part of town so I had absolutely no knowledge of where we were. On a dark night, with just a flashlight, in a moving vehicle, trying to read a map that was too small of a scale to use in a city all tended to keep me in the dark! We moved south about two blocks, still following the lead platoon, when we came adjacent to a school building with a large playground area to our right, and a series of flimsy houses to our left.

About 15 feet to our front was the XO's APC, which was suddenly hit by an RPG that was fired from the front of one of the houses. The RPG had fired; the round flew through about 20 feet of space and hit the side of the APC, all in a split second. I had been looking elsewhere but saw the initial flash out of the corner of my eye and turned my eyes to follow the path of the

round. When it hit I saw bodies flying off of the APC in all directions. The machineguns on our track and those on the track ahead of the XO's immediately opened fire, spraying everything in sight on our left side. Somebody from the XO's track crawled back to ours and got on board, and then we started backing away from the damaged vehicle. The platoons behind us pulled into the schoolyard about 75 meters away, we followed in the HQ APC, and the lead platoon followed us, after picking up all of the crew members of the burning APC. Miraculously, only one soldier was injured, and that was not very serious. As we sat there trying to figure out what to do next, the burning APC blew up in a gigantic fireball, the result of its gas tanks exploding. The next day we saw the remains – a hole about 8 feet deep and small pieces of metal spread all over the place, the largest piece of which was only about two feet by two feet in size.

As we sat in the schoolyard we could see aerial flares and artillery illumination rounds in the sky over Pleiku, and we heard continuing rifle fire and explosions in the same direction. Dem was ordered to take 43 and conduct a mounted patrol along the north-south street in front of the school. After we started to do this, I told Dem that we should not continue to move about in the darkness like that, as it was too dark to see any enemy activity; if there were any more enemy there they could see us and shoot first like they had done with the XO's APC, and we could not fire our weapons indiscriminately (called reconnaissance by fire) because we would inflict casualties on the civilians who lived in this area. After awhile, we did stop the movement and took up a laager position about a mile due south of the school.

The enemy plan had been to first occupy and fortify positions in the center of town, and then to attack various facilities such as the Province/District compound. The attack by a VC Main Force battalion was supposed to have been supported by another attack, which was delayed due the enemy's confusion over what day/night to begin the fight. We found this out later but the same foul-up in timing occurred all over VN. By the time we had stopped and formed a laager, an ARVN ranger battalion had moved into town and started a building-by-building search and destroy operation. Meanwhile the Regimental HQs with both 13 and 23 remained downtown and assisted the rangers, and also supported in the Province/District defense.

At daybreak, some of 43's platoons began the mounted patrolling again, and the troop HQs moved back to the schoolyard and faced west, forming a blocking force against which the rangers would drive any escaping enemy. Enroute there, we stopped to see what the scene of action was like where the APC was destroyed. The enemy "force" that had attacked us consisted of two VC hidden in a 55-gallon topless metal drum – their bodies were still there with numerous bullet holes from our return fire.

During the day, the rangers made good progress. Far down the east-west street we could see the darting figures of the rangers as they went from house to house. In the afternoon they were supported by helicopter gunships, which made their firing passes against the enemy by flying over our heads. On the second pass, the initial machinegun fire started directly over us and landed near our forward elements. I got on the radio immediately and told JB to contact the aircraft and caution them about our locations. Because we were not on a pre-planned operation, we did not have radio frequencies and call signs of these supporting units, so communications were not instantaneous. On the next firing pass, the machineguns began firing even earlier, with the initial burst landing behind the commander's APC and closer in front of it than before. I was hit in the back by shrapnel or gravel that had been kicked up, and was extremely upset by the helicopters' disregard for us. I contacted JB and told him what had happened and told him to tell the pilots that if they got any closer to us, they would be shot down in self-defense by 43's weapons. Either the message finally got through to the pilots or they ran out of ammunition,

because they did not come over us again. I had a VN medic look at my back. He rapidly cleaned the very slight wounds. JB called me and said he would start the paperwork for the award of a Purple Heart.

By late afternoon the battle was over - the rangers had cleared the town of enemy. Much to my surprise, Dem told me that he and I were going to attend an officer's party with the other Regimental officers and officer advisors. Dem left one officer in charge and I left Jackson with the troop, and Dem and I drove into town to the ARVN Officer's Club. There, we had a sumptuous feast. The main entrée was elk meat; from an elk the Regimental Commander had shot from a helicopter the previous week. It was an elegant affair - the officers had their wives or girl friends there, or in a couple of cases, both! Afterwards, we rejoined the troop and occupied a different position for the night.

The next morning, February 1<sup>st</sup>, we returned to the base for the day and prepared to go out again that evening. After cleaning up and eating, many of us went into town that afternoon to see the delayed TET celebration and to view the results of our combat. In the center of town the 70+ bodies of the enemy dead were stacked up, next to which was a display of a significant number of captured weapons. We were quite jubilant that once again we had been successful on the battlefield.

In the early evening, we moved out to occupy a night position in a wooded and brushy area about a mile to the southwest of our base. Our maps did not show that the selected area had been converted to a garbage dump. As we entered the area, a dense cloud of flies blackened the sky, and as we stopped, they settled back on top of us. It was really gross - I had to put my hand over my mouth and nose to keep the flies out. We had to sit there for about an hour, after it had turned completely dark, because Corps had assigned the position to us and only Corps could approve a move. Finally, at about 9:00 pm, we received instructions to move south about half a mile. We moved out quickly and came upon a large open space in which we laagered. Our position was about 50 feet north of some destroyed buildings. After setting up, Dem said to me "Let's sleep on the ground tonight". I agreed because I had only had a couple of hours' sleep in the last two nights. We blew up the air mattresses, stretched out, and got a good night's sleep.

In the morning, we only heated coffee because the plan was to return to base early and eat breakfast there. We packed up and moved out about 8:00 am, going south first, past the destroyed buildings, then headed east a short distance and then north toward the road that ran in front of our base. We were making a big square from where we started the night before. As we drove north down the road, we passed a new village on our left that had recently been erected. It consisted of about 200 huts built of an adobe type material with thatched roofs. The huts were evenly spaced about 15 feet apart, in neat rows, making a square of 10 huts in one direction and 20 huts in the other. The civilians were all up and moving about, many already on our road heading in the same direction as we were. I remember thinking about how industrious these people were, being up so early and heading for town. We passed them and then turned on the road to our base (QL 19). Jackson and I got off at the Regimental HQ area where the team house was, and 43 continued to the entrance to their part of the base. I think we ate breakfast and then I went to the bathhouse and started to shower. Just as I stepped into the water, Jackson yelled in the door that 43 was moving out. Figuring that I would only be a few more minutes, I told him to move out with them and I would catch up shortly.

I cut my shower short, got dressed, and went out to get in the jeep. I only drove as far as the front gate to the Regiment's area, where I met JB and the CO, plus some radio operators. I asked where I was supposed to go and was told it was too late, 43 was already engaged with the

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enemy. Over the course of the day we figured out what happened; a VC battalion had moved towards Pleiku two days later than they were supposed to (or the other unit we fought on the 31<sup>st</sup> moved two days early). The night before, they were taking a break in the destroyed buildings next to where we laagered, before going to their assigned positions. When we arrived it forced them to stay later than they were planning on – they couldn't move until well after we settled down. When they did move, they only got as far as the new village and then began digging in. Their presence was what had caused so many of the civilians to be up and moving when we passed the village. In fact, the civilians anticipated what was going to happen and were fleeing the area. While I was finishing eating breakfast, a youngster from the village came to the HQs and told the commander about the VC's presence. Trusting that information, the commander immediately dispatched 43 to the area. When 43 arrived they were taken under fire.

What occurred that day was like shooting ducks at a shooting gallery. The APC's went on line from west to east and attacked south into the village. Over the course of the day, 13's tanks blocked to the east, a ranger company was brought in to block to the west, and a US tank platoon was available and was used to block to the south. This area was too close to Pleiku to use artillery, but helicopter gunships were available from nearby Camp Holloway, and they made numerous gun runs. All was not gravy, however, as one helicopter was hit by enemy fire and crashed down on the street in front of the gate where I was. A Medevac immediately arrived to carry off the injured personnel, and a recovery helicopter came and removed the damaged one. I spent the next few hours acting as JB's RTO and helping coordinate the movements and activities of the supporting units.

SFC Johnson had not gone out either. He was quick-witted though, and went to his room with his radio and tape-recorded about three hours of the action. He later gave me a copy, which I had for some time, but it somehow got damaged and I threw it away.

The actual battle progressed slowly but thoroughly. The APCs kept a steady flow of machinegun fire throughout the village while individual soldiers dismounted and went from hole to hole, killing any enemy soldiers that were still alive. One of the soldiers from Dem's track was especially valorous. Jackson watched and reported on that soldier's actions in one of the final trenches to be taken. The soldier jumped into the trench and shot two VC, and when he either ran out of ammunition or his weapon jammed, he pulled his bayonet and killed a third. Afterwards, we wrote a US Bronze Star recommendation on him – unfortunately I left VN before it was acted upon.

The battle was over by about 3:00 pm. Dem's soldiers did a very thorough job of "policing" the battlefield. The results were amazing! One of the 170 enemy KIA was the VC battalion commander. A notebook was found on him that contained the status of his battalion on the previous day. When compared with what 43 had done on the battlefield, there was essentially no more battalion. Every officer was killed and every crew-served weapon (machinegun or RPG) and radio was captured. In addition to the 170 KIA, our supporting forces captured 35 enemy soldiers as they tried to flee from the action. According to the VC commander's notes, he had started with 220 men, so we got all but 15 of them. This was a tremendous victory for ARVN in general and the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR and 43 in particular. The next day we advisors went over the battlefield and the 13 advisor took pictures of the scene. He said he would give me copies after he got them developed, which probably wouldn't be until after he returned to the states.

I later learned from other advisors and from US officers that, with the exception of Hue and the Cholon District of Saigon, the same magnitude of results occurred throughout VN. The enemy battle plan called for all levels of their forces to attack throughout the country, which they

assumed would cause an uprising among the civilians. It didn't happen that way. By the end of February 1968, the infrastructure of the Viet Cong was ruined. From then on, the vast majority of enemy forces were NVA regulars infiltrated from the north. Unfortunately, the fact that ARVN expected the attacks, as did US forces, was not given much credence in the press, because the magnitude of the attacks had not been thought possible. Consequently, this major battlefield victory became a political disaster in terms of support for the war.

For the next five or six weeks we had a relatively quiet time. We did go out to various positions around Pleiku most nights but only one night did we see any action. That one night action consisted of a two-man RPG attack against 43's compound. It was quickly defeated by the rear detachment - by the time the troops in the field reacted and got there, the action was all over. Dem told me that this attack was aimed at him personally, as they had heard on enemy radio broadcasts that there was a bounty on Dem.

SFC Everett came to Pleiku from his new assignment in Ban My Thuet to visit. His Cav Troop had seen action the first night of TET also, but was not so lucky. They had taken quite a few more casualties than we did. Also, Everett had dismounted with the Captain Troop Advisor to conduct reconnaissance along one of that city's broad, tree-lined avenues. The Captain got too far away from the vehicles, was taken under enemy fire, and was killed. One of the purposes of Everett's visit was to sell his .357 Magnum revolver. He had had the weapon for some time, but decided to sell it. Our tank troop LT advisor bought the pistol from him.

During this period, as my tour was ending, I started another long-range personnel action. Since I had decided to stay on active duty, I wanted to apply for a Regular Army commission. The benefits to being "RA" as opposed to being a Reservist were, in my opinion, significant. Some of those benefits were; being able to stay beyond twenty years of service, being "more" eligible for future command and schooling opportunities, and being insulated from the anticipated reduction of the size of the Army when the VN war was over. I asked JB for advice and he concurred with me. He also told me he thought an RA application with a general officer's recommendation would more likely be considered favorably. He agreed to ask Brigadier General Barnes, the current Deputy Corps Advisor, for a recommendation for me. I began filling out the RA application and made an appointment at the Evac Hospital for a physical exam for the 18<sup>th</sup>.

By March 6<sup>th</sup> I was not a short-timer, I was next! The unofficial rule was that the last ten days of an individual's tour would be spent in the safety of the rear area. I even had my transfer orders and my ticket for a flight out of Saigon on the 18<sup>th</sup>! I did not have a replacement yet, but when I awoke on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 43 was still doing local nighttime security missions. However, that morning 43 was ordered to move out immediately and take over highway security on QL 14 north towards Kontum. JB told me I would have to go, but he would do everything he could to get my replacement assigned. I jokingly told him that I would hold him personally responsible if anything happened to me. I actually didn't think anything bad would happen in a few days, but I had second thoughts when we could not replace the US security force on the 6<sup>th</sup> because they were in enemy contact. We stopped a few miles short of where we would be setting up the 43 HQs and spent the night peacefully.

The next morning after breakfast, Dem and I were standing on the APC, listening to gunfire to the north of us. Suddenly, a shot rang out and I was knocked off of my feet. Dem also was crumpled up next to me. Either a sniper had shot us both or Dem, who had his pistol in his hand, had inadvertently pulled the trigger and shot us both with one round. I had been hit in the rear of my left leg and Dem was shot in the foot. I called Jackson and told him that we were wounded and to call a Medevac, which he did. He said that he was on the way to my position and

would be there momentarily to guide in the Medevac, but the Medevac helicopter arrived first and I guided it in by radio, just as Jack arrived.

Among the advisors, we had always said that if one of the ARVN officers was wounded, we would do everything possible to get that officer evacuated to an American facility. This was because of the vast difference in sanitary conditions between the two countries' hospitals. As the helicopter lifted off, I told the crew chief that I wanted Dem to go with me. I was told they couldn't do that so I began yelling at them that they had to. Finally, the crew chief said okay. It was a short flight back to the Medevac Hospital in Pleiku. When we got there, I was unloaded first and when I turned to see Dem, the helicopter lifted off without leaving him there with me. I was really pissed off but there was nothing I could do.

I was wheeled into the reception area and my pants were cut off so the nurse could see the wound. I had not seen it but it hurt a little and when I had tried to stand up back in the APC, my left leg wasn't functioning. There were other casualties in the reception area, all of who seemed to be worse off than me, so I was put off to the side for a while. About 11:00 am, I was taken into the operating room, laid on my stomach, and given a "caudal block" in my lower spine, anesthesia that was supposed to completely deaden all feeling in my lower body. After a short period, the doctor began to cut on my wound but I screamed in pain. Either they had not waited long enough or they didn't use enough anesthesia - in either case I wasn't ready for them to cut on me. They then gave me another shot, and also something to put me asleep. I awoke as they moved me into the recovery room and drowsily laid there for a couple of hours. I asked the nurse how bad it was and she said not bad at all. She said the doctor would be around in a while to tell me specifically what the situation was, but she did tell me that the wound had been cleaned and would remain open for a day (called debriedment) to ensure that all damaged material had been removed.

I was then wheeled into the regular ward and put in a bed, where I anxiously awaited the doctor's visit. He came by about an hour later and explained essentially what the nurse said. He added though, that the nerve leading to my left foot was partially damaged, so there might be some long-term consequences, although he didn't think they would be significant. I immediately asked him what I really wanted to know, could I be able to take my regularly scheduled flight home or would I be sent home through medical channels. He said he didn't see why I couldn't take my scheduled flight, but he said I would probably still be on crutches. I was very happy to hear that. I asked the nurse to bring me some writing materials and began a letter home to Sue Ellen. In it I said that I had been slightly wounded but was all right and should be flying home as scheduled. The nurse asked me about this time if I wanted my next of kin notified and I said absolutely not! I asked the nurse to please ensure that my letter went out immediately, which she did.

Before dark, JB came to visit. He told me Dem would be hospitalized longer than me but that he was doing fine. He also asked me for the official record what had happened. I said unequivocally that a sniper had wounded us. He seemed relieved at that as apparently the Regimental Commander was worried about what could happen if I blamed Dem. Much later that night, I started getting the feeling back in my legs. Shortly after midnight, the airbase and hospital areas began receiving mortar fire, so I had to get roll out of bed and get under it for some slight protection. I thought that it would really be ironic to have survived 356 days and then get killed in the hospital. Fortunately the mortar fire did not come close.

Even under these conditions, some humor can be found. In the bed next to me was a senior warrant officer (CWO3) helicopter pilot. He had been shot down twice on his tour and not



been hurt, but the night before he was wounded in a mortar attack on Camp Holloway. His wounds were relatively minor, although one small piece of shrapnel had penetrated his penis. He was obviously concerned about what the long-term ramifications of that injury would be. I was listening when the Doctor made his rounds and was asked by the pilot what was going to happen to him. The Doctor said he would be evacuated to Japan in a few days and when he had healed, but before he was sent home, he would be able to test the usage of his damaged member to see if there were any bends or leaks! The pilot had a good laugh at that and was much relieved.

While I was in the hospital, an administrator came around and asked me my personal information so they could prepare a Purple Heart award. When asked about being wounded before, I responded yes, thinking that JB had submitted the information for a first Purple Heart. Consequently, some other administrator came around and presented me with orders for the Oak Leaf Cluster (OLC - second award) of the Purple Heart and the medal. I never received the first award or the appropriate paperwork for it, but since I knew I had earned them both I always wore the ribbon with the OLC.

The next afternoon, the surgical procedure was duplicated, but I only needed one shot this time. The wound was rated as clean, and I was sewn up with big metal staples. I was put on a high dosage of Darvon, a painkiller, and told that I would be released the next day. When someone came to get me (SFC Campos or Johnson, I don't recall), I asked him to take me to the VN hospital so I could see Dem. He was in fairly good spirits and we talked awhile, but I really wanted to get out of there because, as I had heard, the sanitary conditions there were terrible. I said goodbye to Dem and told him how proud I was to have worked with him. I recall that he was likewise glad to have had me as an advisor.

During the next couple of days I cleaned up my personal gear and got ready to leave. I tried to turn in all of my field gear to the supply office at the MACV compound but was told that I would have to take it all to Saigon with me, even though I was on crutches. I went back to our team house and left everything there but my pistol belt and pistol, with a note on it for Jackson to give it away to the soldiers. On one of those evenings, JB and I walked into our communal area from opposite ends and saw the LT advisor practicing quick-draws with his new revolver. JB really chewed him out about that and told him to not do it again.

I got my RA recommendation from the general's office, and the night before I left Pleiku, I received a Bronze Star for Meritorious Service and a Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star. The next day, carrying only one handbag, I "crutched" my way onto a C-130 cargo plane and flew to Saigon. I got to Koepler Compound a day earlier than I was supposed to, hoping for an earlier flight home, but that didn't happen. When I turned in my remaining gear to the supply office and said that the remainder of it was lost in combat, nobody seemed to care and all was okay.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, a number of us were bussed to Bien Hoa Air Base for the flight home. Because I was on crutches, I was the first to make the walk to the aircraft and board. Just like in many movies and books, there was a long line of new soldiers getting off of one aircraft as the long line of veterans who had completed their tours were boarding another aircraft. There were a lot of catcalls from the line of veterans, primarily "You'll Be Sorry", but the newcomers were silent. After I boarded, the flight attendants took special care of me, bring me as much fresh cold milk as I could drink. As the plane left the ground, a massive cheer arose from all of us. The aircraft stopped for fuel once, in Anchorage, Alaska, and we had the chance to take a long walk to the terminal where we were able to throw down two or three quick drinks before reboarding. The last leg of the trip got us to Travis Air Force Base, and from there a few officers and I paid

for a taxi to the San Francisco Airport where we arrived about 9:00 pm. After making arrangements for the flight home the next day and a telephone call home, a few of us met at a cocktail lounge. This was the period of the flower children and the growing anti-war demonstrations in the San Francisco area, but we saw none of that. Perhaps it was due to me being on crutches, but for whatever reason, we could not pay for our own drinks that night. We sat in the lounge having one drink after another until it closed at 2:00 am. We saw nothing but generosity and friendship from the other patrons there.

I ended up sleeping in the waiting room for my next day's flight. It was extremely uncomfortable but I was still able to doze. The flight from San Francisco to Denver departed about 10:00 am and arrived in Denver about 2:00 pm. Sue Ellen met me and we had a long walk to the gate for our flight to Laramie. I don't remember much about that flight other than that I was freezing cold as I was wearing a short-sleeved Khaki uniform shirt without a jacket. The rest of the family met me at the Laramie airport and then we went to the apartment where Sue Ellen had stayed. The long trip was over.

Throughout the past week and during the trip home, I had given considerable thought about the war and my attitudes towards it. I strongly believed that the US was correct in being in Viet Nam and helping an ally who was definitely trying to become a democratic, free nation. Because of the tremendous results of our defeat of the enemy's Tet Offensive, and the morale that I saw demonstrated by the ARVN soldiers I worked with and the civilians in Pleiku, I was certain that our side could win this war and that it was a war worth fighting

## CHAPTER 3: INTERLUDE

### CONVALESCENT LEAVE

After I got settled in the apartment in Laramie and became reacquainted with my family, I had to call the hospital at Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, to get an appointment to have my stitches removed and to obtain further instructions on my medical care. We made arrangements to travel there a few days later. I was still on crutches but could put more weight on the leg until I was able to walk unassisted. On the cold and windy day we drove to Cheyenne, the car had a flat tire, which I was able to change with help from Sue Ellen. When I saw the Doctor, he was all enthused to see a war wound and asked me a lot of questions about it. I only had a brief one-paragraph statement from the Doctor in Pleiku that stated I had the nerve in the left leg partially severed. This Doctor then called the main Army hospital in the area, Denver's Fitzsimmons General Hospital, and got me an appointment with an Orthopedist there.

Back in Laramie one day, I drove downtown by myself to visit my mother at her office. About 3:00 pm I left, just as it began to snow. By the time I had driven the few blocks to the apartment, the snow was really accumulating. Overnight, we must have received 12 to 18 inches of it and were snowed-in. It took a couple of days before we could leave the apartment, during which time I remember my brother Bob forcing his way through the drifts to bring me a bottle of bourbon. As I recall, Sue Ellen had enough food to get us through the crisis.

Early on I had called the personnel section at Fort Knox and told them of my wound and to get my regular leave status changed to convalescent leave. I was told to follow orders from whatever doctors I saw and to keep them informed of an expected date of arrival there. About the middle of April we drove to Denver to see the specialist. He said that he was of two minds about my wound. The first was that since he did not know how badly the nerve was damaged, he thought an operation might be needed. His second thought struck me as better – to just keep walking on the leg and over time, determine if I could recover fully. I took the latter course of action! Since I had what is called partial "Drop Foot", I bought new shoes and boots and had braces installed to spring my left foot up to the normal position as I walked. With this news, we were able to begin planning our move to Fort Knox.

While still in Laramie, I received a thick envelope in the mail from the LT tank troop advisor. The envelope had a strange address on it, one that I did not recognize. In the envelope were about twenty pictures taken on the battlefield on the third day of TET, and a letter of explanation. The LT sheepishly recounted how he had ignored JB's instructions about quick drawing, and had accidentally shot himself in the foot. He was then recovering in Japan. This reinforced my earlier impression that he should never have been retained in the Army after his Fort Knox problems.

### TANKER

I don't remember a lot about our move to Fort Knox – just the routine of packing up at one end, traveling across the country and unpacking at the other end. We were able to immediately move into an up and down apartment in the Van Voorhees housing area, and I was assigned to the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 32<sup>nd</sup> Armor, one of four tank battalions in the 194<sup>th</sup> Armored Brigade at Fort Knox. Although organized as a regular army unit, the brigade's sole reason for existence was to provide men and vehicles to support training in the Armor School. As I was to find out, it was a thankless job, wearing out our vehicles and people in support of the school, while not being able to train or maintain like soldiers should. I was initially assigned as the

assistant S3 (Operations and Training) officer for just a couple of weeks until I took command of A Company.

A Company consisted of the regular 17 M60 tanks (5 each in 3 platoons plus 2 in company headquarters), plus one of the battalion headquarters tanks and the battalion Scout Platoon, equipped with 10 M551 Armored and Airborne Reconnaissance Vehicles, called Sheridan's. Personnel strength varied from about 50 to 70% of authorized. All of the officers and all but two of the NCOs were there pending reassignment to VN, so there was no longevity upon which to build esprit de corps and help enhance unit morale. Based upon my experience I was able to improve the maintenance posture considerably, and personally assigned my soldiers on a daily basis to ensure that the maximum amount of support could be provided to the TRs (Troop Requirements). The summer months and September were day in day out support – no days off and no maintenance days off. We ran the tanks and Sheridans until they broke down, and then fixed them. Those vehicles that could drive but not shoot were sent to vehicle driving TRs, and those that could shoot but not drive were towed to the firing ranges just to use their weapons. Throughout my command I averaged 12 operational tanks and 5 Sheridans available for use on a daily basis, a much larger number than any other company in my battalion and more than any other company in the brigade.

A few things stand out in my memories of this period. The first was Character Guidance Training, the only training of concern to the commanders above me. I learned early on that what really counted was to have the total number in attendance equal the total number of soldiers I had assigned, so my First Sergeant (1SG) and I sent the sick, lame and lazy to multiple sessions in order to get the total numbers required. Then I personally designated which soldier went on which tank – if a soldier could drive, he drove. Often we would send a wheeled vehicle out with the tanks to bring the drivers back in order to shuttle more tanks around. Finally, I had to help the 1SG reconstruct his duty rosters to CYA the fact that some of the same soldiers were on perpetual extra duty, like guard duty or KP (Kitchen Police). All things considered it was a very challenging and demanding assignment. I was fortunate in the officers and NCOs I had, and I think I was able to train them more than one would expect given the circumstances.

On the personal front, a number of things occurred. I still wanted to apply for Regular Army, so I had to pass a physical exam. In about August, I made an appointment at the hospital and met with an orthopedist. After examining me, he asked what kind of profile or discharge I wanted! I said neither, that I wanted a clean bill of health. He was amazed and said I was the only soldier he had seen who did not want out of the Army. He filled out the appropriate papers and I was then able to submit my RA application. About the same time, I returned to the company orderly room (office) one day and was grabbed by my company clerk and pulled into my office. He handed me some papers and said if I was leaving, he wanted to be reassigned. Not knowing what he was talking about, I looked at the papers and saw that they were orders for me to attend the Armor Officer Advanced Course (AOAC) starting in September, instead of the following May. I sent the orders to the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Louis Brooks Martin, and asked for guidance. He immediately called me and asked me to stay on until December, at which time he wanted me to be the battalion S3 until May. I agreed to do so and he was able to get those orders cancelled. I thought it was ironic that the Armor officer assignment people had made such a big deal of sending me to a troop command and they were now going to cut that command short. Colonel Martin, whom I really enjoyed working for, also asked me if I wanted him to write a special efficiency report on me as I was in the secondary zone for selection for major. Thinking that I didn't have a chance I told him no. That was one of the dumbest things I ever did, because in retrospect, I probably would have been selected!

In the late autumn, I was called before an interview board for my RA application and apparently did all right. I continued on as company commander until early December, when I passed command of A Company to Captain John Miller, and assumed the position of Battalion S3. As with the tank company, we were only concerned with TRs – no individual or unit training and no regular maintenance activities. I did well in this assignment, helping the company commanders based upon my experiences, and generally improving the battalions support activities. As April 1969 was ending I was informed that I would be receiving an Army Commendation Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster) at a battalion ceremony. I went to Colonel Martin and asked if it could be presented in private because there were two other officers leaving at the same time to attend the same course as me (Captains Wayne Tingle and Bill Merkel) and I did not want there to be any embarrassment about my receiving an award and them not receiving one. He agreed, and on my last day in the battalion I went to his office to receive the award. It had been a well rewarding eleven months, during which I learned a lot and was able to contribute significantly to my unit's mission. L 71 M.D

### ADVANCED COURSE

AOAC 4-69 began in early May and would continue until February 1970. There were about 110 US Army officers and about 15 foreign officers in that class. Herm Schmidt was in the same course with me as were Wayne Tingle, Bill Merkel, and Jim Ranallo, the Ranger Advisor from the Ia Drang. All of the US officers had been to VN and most of us knew that we would probably be going back. My desk mate was a Swiss Major, Henry Staedeli. Henry, Herm and I all lived in the field grade Godman Housing Area, where we had moved after being in the up and down apartment for only a couple of months. It was a nicer apartment (duplex), closer to school and the main post, and near where some friends from Germany lived (Larry and Pat Prather). The area had an officer's club adjunct with a swimming pool.

The Advanced Course had previously been called the Career Course, similar to courses at all of the other branch posts. (Infantry at Fort Benning, Artillery at Fort Sill, etc.) It was the first level of schooling for those officers who were going to be professional, long serving Regulars. It consisted, in the case of Armor, of blocks of instruction in Communications, Automotive Maintenance, Gunnery, Leadership, and Tactics, and included both military and civilian type electives. The military elective I took was called Prefix 5 – the additional designation for Nuclear Employment that would be added to my basic MOS (Military Occupation Specialty) of 1203 (Armor) / 1204 (Armored Cavalry). The civilian elective I took was "History of Southeast Asia" taught by a Vietnamese refugee named Binh. Classes ran from 8:30 to 11:30 and 12:30 to 3:30 five days a week, with a few Saturdays thrown in. It was the easiest job that I had had up to that point in my career, and I intended to take advantage of it. I had done fairly well in the other schooling that I had attended in the Army, but had received no meritorious ratings from them. When I had asked JB Taylor, my senior advisor in VN, how he was selected early for promotion to major, he said the only reason he could think of was that he had been the top graduate in his career course. I had no intention of vying for that in AOAC 4-69, but would work hard and do my best.

At the start of the course I was buoyed by two events and deflated by another. In June, my RA Commission came through, so I went to the personnel office one day after class and was sworn in as a Regular Army Officer. About the same time, I received a letter from the Military Intelligence (MI) Assignments Branch concerning the Foreign Area Specialist Training program for which I had applied and been accepted. The MI people said that now that I was in the FAST program, wouldn't I like to be reassigned to MI, since that was the branch I would be serving

with on all FAST assignments. I guess I had not thought it through completely, because I was upset to think that my future assignments in Armor would be limited. I stewed about this for months. However, this was offset by my selection for promotion to major, on the promotion list following the list that COL Martin asked me about the special efficiency report.

I really enjoyed AOAC. I studied for a couple of hours every night and I tried to read at least two military history books every week. The study regimen paid off. After the test on communications I was tied with about six other officers for the top spot in the class, and after the automotive maintenance block I was tied with only one other officer. By the middle of October I was solidly in the lead for the best grade. At that time, Wayne, Herm and I drove to Washington D.C. to attend the annual Association of the United States Army (AUSA) convention. We received official approval to miss classes, so we departed at noon on a Saturday and arrived in DC late that evening. The convention was at the Sheraton Hotel and was a big, big event (as it still is today). We toured the exhibitions on Sunday and attended a couple of events, and on Monday we went to Armor assignment branch to discuss the Army's plans for us. What a shock!

I was given three options; go to language school and start that training one fourth of the way through the course with graduate school to follow, go to graduate school and complete that schooling in less than the normal time followed by the full language course, or go back to VN for another tour and then attend both the full language course and graduate school when I returned from VN. And, as an oh, by the way, either of the first two options might have to be interrupted by another tour in VN if my turn came up. I was told to take a few weeks to think over what I wanted to do.

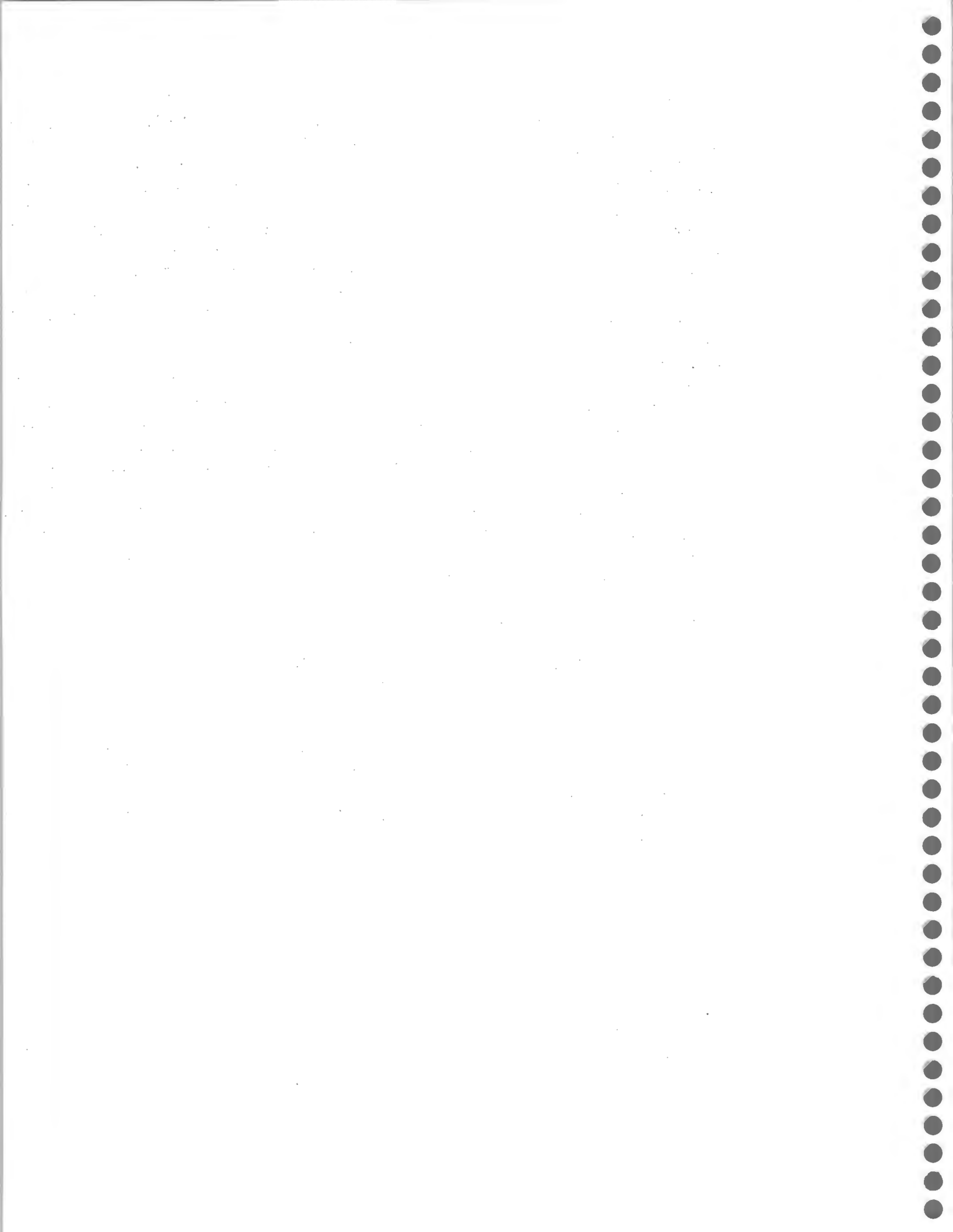
That same evening we went to the Hospitality Suite set up by the Fort Knox Chapter of AUSA and consumed our share of the free liquor offered there. After awhile, an armor Lieutenant Colonel I recognized as being an assignments officer came into the suite. After another drink or two I corralled him and asked for some honest information concerning my situation. The most revealing thing he told me was that the offer from MI branch was no laughing matter and that if I went into the FAST program, I could write off any further choice opportunities in armor branch, especially the chance of commanding at the lieutenant colonel level. That pretty much decided things for me but I took a few days to give my situation further study.

We attended the final bash at the convention on Wednesday evening, during which time I went out to the front of the hotel and had some pleasant conversations with a few anti-war protestors, and the following morning we drove back home. Within a day or two I called the assignments officer and asked him if I went back to VN after AOAC, could I be assured of going to a US unit. He said he didn't know then, but would call me back. A few days later he called and said yes, he could slot me for an American troop unit, so I said do it!

In November we had another good event – second son Donovan was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. He was one of many children born to the wives of my classmates, not a rare occurrence for those of us between tours in Vietnam.

The remainder of AOAC went by quickly, but it was only after I knew that I would be returning to VN immediately that I discovered that, four years into the war in VN with no end in sight, the advanced courses were not teaching any tactics related to VN! Everything was still focused on the potential armor battles on the plains of Germany. As I recall, there were a few classes on counter insurgency, but nothing related to the techniques of armor warfare developed through our experiences gained in VN. This was a major shortcoming in the Army's training system.

In late January 1970 the course came to an end. I was designated as the Distinguished Graduate of AOAC 4-69 and was the first member of the class to receive my diploma, along with a Colt Commander .45 caliber pistol and a small silver bowl, which were awarded by the Armor Association. We moved out of quarters the next day and were on our way to Denver where Sue Ellen and the boys would live while I was gone. Although we looked at a few places, it was an easy choice to move into the vacant duplex next to the Sarveys. Mike was interning to become a CPA with a large firm in Denver. As always happens in this situation, time passed too quickly before it was time for me to depart. A major foul-up occurred when my travel orders required me to depart from the east coast - McGuire AFB, New Jersey, instead of the west coast. As it turned out, I left Denver early one morning, flew east for four hours, then flew back across the country, landing once at San Francisco. From there we made a stop in Hawaii and maybe another stop along the way, until landing at Tan San Nhut airbase in Saigon.





## CHAPTER 4: BRIGADE ASSISTANT OPERATIONS OFFICER

On arrival in Saigon, we were taken to the US Army Reception Station at Long Binh a short distance from town. There I went through the ritual of submitting my preferences for assignment, and chose a different sequence than before. This time, I requested, in order (based upon what I thought the likelihood of receiving an armor assignment was), III Corps, II Corps, IV Corps, and lastly, I Corps. Just as before, I received my last choice, I Corps, but I was assigned to a US combat unit, which was what I wanted. The next day, two other captains (Bill McGough and Gene Rory) and I were taken to Tan Son Nhut for a flight to Quang Tri.

The First Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry Division (Separate) was a separate brigade that had been deployed to VN immediately after the Tet Offensive of 1968. The headquarters was located at Quang Tri Combat Base (QTCB) outside of the provincial capitol of Quang Tri, in the northern part of South Vietnam. Its actual Tactical Area Of Operations (TAOR) was all of the area to the west of QL 1 from just south of Quang Tri city north to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), an area of about two kilometers on each side of the border between North and South Vietnam. The TAOR actually went as far west as the Laotian border, but in reality the BDE normally only operated to the west as far as the first mountain range. The two major sub-areas were the "Backyard", that area immediately west of Quang Tri, and AO (Area of Operations) Orange, which included the old US Marine base of Con Thien, which had been heavily attacked at the same time as the Tet Offensive. The areas to the east of QL 1 and south of Quang Tri were the tactical responsibility of the 1st ARVN Division and regional/local VN forces (RF/PF).

The 5<sup>th</sup> Mech was organized with one infantry battalion (1/11 INF), one mechanized infantry battalion (1/61 Mech), one tank battalion (1/77 ARM), an artillery battalion, a separate armored cavalry troop, a separate engineer company, and a support battalion. Attached to the BDE from the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (3/5 CAV) which in turn had a tank company attached from the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, C Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 34<sup>th</sup> Armor (C/2/34 or as it was called, "Dreadnought Charlie"). The BDE was commanded by a Brigadier General (William Burke when I arrived, followed by John Hill), with a Deputy Commander, and had a large staff controlled by the BDE XO. The BDE's mission, although I never saw it in writing, was to conduct tactical operations in the TAOR to destroy enemy found therein and to deny enemy access to the populated areas along QL 1. A main part of this was to destroy any enemy that infiltrated to the south through the DMZ.

When we arrived at Quang Tri we were taken to the BDE reception station. Once again I submitted my preference statement, in priority: 3/5 CAV S3, 1/77 AR S3, and lastly, BDE assistant S3. And, once again, I received my last choice. I didn't get my assignment that same day, however. The next day, Gene and I were exempt from new people training because we had already served a tour before so we just hung around the reception station while Bill attended whatever class was scheduled that day. After supper, we received a call to walk to the BDE HQs and see the adjutant. There, I learned of my assignment as Operations Officer (actually one of two assistant S3s for operations). Gene was assigned to the tank battalion and Bill was assigned to 3/5 CAV. The next day I got a ride to the billeting area and was assigned a bunk in a four-bunk sea-hut. (Sea-huts were built on a wood floor with a wood frame. Half of the walls were also wood and the remainder was screened. The roof was either wood or canvas.) Since I was promotable to major I was assigned to a major's position, but since I was still a captain, I was billeted with captains – two of whom would work for me. Thus began one of the most tiring periods of my life.

The Brigade S3 section was led by a Lieutenant Colonel, initially Dana Meade, an armor officer who was perhaps the most intelligent officer I ever met. He was a West Point graduate, had received early promotions, and when he left in May he went to work on Henry Kissinger's National Security Advisor staff in the White House. A couple of years later the Senate would not approve a Colonel's promotion list because the White House (Dr. Kissinger) insisted that Meade's name be added to the list. After a short standoff, Meade kissed it off and went to West Point as a permanent professor. He was a great guy to work for – he issued broad guidance, let the staff work out a solution, made very few changes and then sold the plan to Red Devil, the radio call sign of the Brigade Commander.

The Operations section had two assistant operations officers, Major Vern Clarke and now me. Under us were three or four Captains who were duty officers (called "Watch" officers here, reflecting the recent assignment of the brigade to the US Marine Corps Field Force that had just recently departed from I Corps.) The watch officers rotated on 8 hour shifts, answering radio and telephone calls, keeping the main operation map and the briefing room map of the TAOR up to date with unit locations, maintained the daily log of activities, and delivered morning and evening briefings to the Brigade Commander and staff. Clarke and I supervised these actions, made sure all tactical and intelligence information was integrated on the maps and briefings, coordinated support for units in contact with the enemy, wrote orders for operations for immediate implementation, and in general, provided "adult" supervision to the watch officers. We were in a big, flat roofed square building (TOC – Tactical Operation Center) with thick concrete walls that were sandbagged for more protection. That was one place in VN where I truly felt safe – although during the enemy's Easter Offensive of 1972, a 120mm rocket landed on the building and completely destroyed it. Besides the operation center and briefing area, the TOC contained offices for the S3, the S2, the Fire Support Coordinator (artillery, aviation gunship and naval gunfire support), a small office for we operations officers, and a radio support group which maintained all of the secure radio, telephone and teletype equipment for the occupants. The S3 Plans section was outside the TOC in a standard seahut.

The major difficulty that I experienced at BDE HQs was my own personal living conditions. I lived in a seahut with three other captains, two of whom worked for me. Whatever shift I worked, noon to midnight, midnight to noon, and six am to six pm or vice versa, I was never able to sleep well or to relax well, as people were always moving about, making noise or conversely, they were sleeping so I had to be quiet. After about a month of this, Clarke departed for another job and I was the sole operations officer, which made my days excessively long and tiresome. As I recall now, I only had one evening to go to the club and relax in the nearly four months in that assignment, and that evening was interrupted, as I will explain later.

Other than performing the duties described above, which varied depending on enemy activity (the enemy became very active in April and May), I was responsible for writing the BDE's Weekly Operations Plan (describing what we thought we would be doing during the next seven days) and the Weekly Operations Summary (describing what we actually accomplished). The way this worked was on Saturdays I wrote the plan for the following week, using the previous week's plan as a guide and adding any new operations that we anticipated. I took the draft plan to LTC Meade, who normally accepted it without question, and he took it to the CG, BG William Burke. BG Burke always made significant "word-smith" changes (like happy to glad) and it was returned to me for final print and submission to our higher headquarters, XXIV Corps. Then on Sundays I repeated the process for the summary report. It also received major editing by the CG. As I discovered, the CG was just playing head games with me. I would write

these reports one way and submit them for changes, and he would rewrite them the way I had written them the previous week. I tried to outwit him by submitting the version that I thought he would change to but that never worked. He just had to have his changes, no matter what. LTC Meade just smiled and accepted it without comment but assured me that my work was totally acceptable.

When LTC Meade departed in May and was replaced by LTC Richard Meyers, I took the first Operations Plan to him as normal. He looked at it and said it was fine and to send it to Corps. I said I thought I shouldn't do that because BG Burke always wanted to approve them. Meyers said, "I'm the S3 and this report is my responsibility, so go ahead and send it." The next day I did the same with the summary report and was told the same thing. On Monday, the general's briefing book came to the operations section like normal. This was a loose-leaf binder with copies of all outgoing and incoming messages in it for a 24-hour period. The one I received on that Monday was for the previous Saturday. I always reviewed the book on a daily basis to keep informed of what other information was coming into and going out of the headquarters. On this particular day I saw the Operations Plan that I had prepared - BG Burke covered it with comments, one of which was "Who the hell approved the release of this message? S3 see me!" I took the book into LTC Meyers' office and showed it to him and he immediately took the book and went to see the general. Meyers had reddish hair and the appropriate complexion for a redhead, and when he returned from the general's office, his face was deeply flushed from the chewing out that he had received. He was so flustered that he didn't mention to BG Burke that he had also approved the Summary Report that would be in the next day's book. Sure enough, we went through the same drill the next day. After that Meyers seemed to listen to me more.

Another task that I had, when required, was to organize and coordinate security arrangements when the BDE was to receive visiting dignitaries (VIPs) - normally any general officer or civilian equivalent who would visit the Quang Tri area. These arrangements included "Chase" helicopters, which were backups in the event the VIP aircraft went down, escorting gunships for the VIP's aircraft, Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) Cobra gunships to fly suppressive cover over the "Rocket Belt" (that area immediately south of the DMZ), and a combination of US Military Police, Brigade Scout Platoon and Quang Tri District local friendly units to outpost and patrol certain areas around QTCB. I had a checklist that I developed, so coordination was quite easy for me, once I knew the date and times of a visit.

During the first two plus months on the job, I had established some rapport with commanders and S3s in the line units, especially with 3/5 Cav. When those units made enemy contact it was often difficult to obtain exact and timely information about the engagements, so I would frequently have to call the units' leaders and ask for the appropriate information. With the CAV I was also able to forewarn them of BDE HQ's concerns over their conduct and tactical results. Through these actions, I became aware of the impending departure of the 3/5 S3, MAJ Jim Tipton, so I discussed with LTC Meyers my desire to become the S3 of 3/5. Although I knew that I was doing an outstanding job as BDE Operations Officer, I also realized that I was only a promotable Captain and I had picked up some vibes that for appearances only, the command group would probably like to have a real Major in my position. (I had determined that the original reason for having two of us in that position when I arrived was the less than total effectiveness of Verne Clark and that after I had demonstrated my abilities, they had released him for other duties.) My timing was right in initiating my transfer, because in early June we had a change in command - BG John Hill became the new BDE CG. I briefed BG Hill a couple of times late in the evening before he took command, and he seemed like a much more practical and

reasonable leader than BG Burke. A few days after the change of command I decided to treat myself to my first evening off in months.

When the 5 pm evening briefing was over, I reviewed everything with the watch officer and told him I would be at the officers club until about 9 pm. I arrived there about 6:30 and was just finishing my first beer when a messenger came to get me, saying that the CG wanted to see me! That had never happened before so I didn't know what to expect. I went to the CG's office, knocked on his door and was told to enter. I saluted and was told to sit down. LTC Meyers and the BDE Executive Officer (XO), LTC Harold (Bud) Page were also in the room. BG Hill said the purpose of my being there was to review the plans for the next day's VIP visit and I was told to describe what I had done for the security arrangements. I started to describe the arrangements, beginning with the time of arrival, when I was interrupted – I was told that I had the wrong time of arrival. The light dawned on me then – nobody in the room knew what the exact time was! I then explained that for this particular visit, we had received three contradicting arrival times and that the latest version that everyone in the room had seen in the daily briefing book was the correct time. I was told to go find that briefing book, which I did, taking about 30 minutes to do so.

When I returned, I handed the book to BG Hill, opened to the proper page, and I pointed out all three of their sets of initials showing that they had seen the message. BG Hill asked me to explain how I knew that this was the correct and up to date version so I said that when I received the second and then immediately thereafter the third, current version, I checked with Corps G3 to find out what was correct. I was interrupted by General Hill who asked me who I spoke with at Corps. I said the sergeant in charge of their operations center, at which point Hill bent over in his chair and put his forehead on his desk and said something to the effect that God help him, his first visitor's itinerary was being managed by a sergeant and a captain. I immediately responded by saying that the sergeant was the Corps G3 Operations Sergeant Major and that I had further verified the date and times with all of the aviation support elements. That relieved the tension in the room and I was told to explain all of the other security measures I had taken. When I was finished, the general got up and said "Let's go to the TOC and call Corps on the secure phone line". I listened in as BG Hill talked to the Corps G3 and could tell from the conversation that he was told everything like I had told him and that he was also told that his operations officer (me) had already coordinated everything. When the phone call ended, Hill said he was satisfied that everything was ready for the visit and he thanked me for my efforts. I went back to the club but it was closed – so ended my one night off!

The whole story didn't end there, however. About two nights later LTC Page came into the TOC to look at the operations map to see what was going on. This was not something that he did regularly, so I went up to him and asked if there was anything I could do for him. Looking at the map, he said, "You and I have our work cut out for us, Stu." I asked him what he meant and he said that I was going to be the 3/5 CAV S3 at the end of the month and he was going to be the Commander! I never talked to him about it after that but I'm certain that my actions concerning the VIP won me the job.

Before continuing, I should discuss some things about the BDE TAOR and enemy activity therein that I observed while assigned to BDE. I only made one trip outside of the combat base during my assignment there. That was a helicopter reconnaissance around the entire area that I requested so that I could identify places and names when I heard them on the radio. My pilot was a captain who was the assistant BDE Aviation Officer. He started out the flight by trying to get me sick, making rapid ascents and descents, and very sharp turns in the observation

helicopter. After a few minutes of that I told him that I flown quite a bit in Germany as part of my job there and I didn't think he was going to bother me. He settled down then and flew in a more normal manner. We flew first to the north of Quang Tri, along QL 1, the main north-south highway in all of Viet Nam. About 10 kilometers north we passed to the east of Dong Ha, where 3/5 Cav and some supporting units were based, and then we flew further north to the southern boundary of the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ) which was marked on the map with a red line but had no discernable terrain features to mark it on the ground. The actual boundary between North and South Vietnam was a river. At an elevation of about one kilometer we could clearly see the North's huge flagpole and red flag flying on the north side of the DMZ. We next flew west over an area called AO Orange, which encompassed the old Marine Base of Con Thien (now called A4) and south of that a base called C2, which was a few kilometers north of the VN Cam Lo District HQ. Had we turned west at Dong Ha, we would have followed QL 9, the east-west highway that went all the way to the VN-Laotian border and beyond. Less than a kilometer north of QL 9 was the Cam Lo River that paralleled the highway. About 10 kilometers west a rugged mountain chain arose. One mountain peak, with a US artillery position (Fire Support Base - FSB - Fuller) overlooked the Cam Lo Valley to the east, the area we called the "Backyard", Mai Loc Special Forces Camp and Camp Elliott (an ARVN artillery base) to the south, and westward to the "Rockpile", a unique formation that arose about a kilometer off the level surrounding area. QL 9 turned south at the Rockpile. We landed at Fuller and spent just a few minutes on the ground, and then flew back to Quang Tri over the "Backyard". Two days later the enemy began a siege of FSB Fuller that lasted about 40 days!

The terrain east of QL 1 was primarily low - just a little above sea level, consisting of sand and dunes with some scrub vegetation. That was the area that Bernard Fall wrote about in his book, *Street Without Joy*, the French name for the area. West of that road was a little higher in elevation and consisted of some agricultural areas but mostly scrub brush or heavy forest on rolling hills. This terrain extended to the west about twenty kilometers and from the DMZ south about forty kilometers. West and south of that open area was steep, heavily forested mountains. The whole area was interspersed by small streams and two fairly large rivers. The population was primarily ethnic Vietnamese and was concentrated in Quang Tri and Dong Ha cities and along the coast in small hamlets. The weather was the same as where I had operated on the coast in II Corps, with the west moving monsoons from November to March.

Two things about the enemy became obvious shortly after I arrived at BDE. The first was that as the Monsoon Season was ending, enemy attacks at night increased significantly. Because of the proximity of the DMZ and the mountain area to the west, the enemy, all North Vietnamese Regulars, could assemble and attack at night in up to company sized formations anywhere in the TAOR. We could count on any small or apparently disorganized unit being attacked violently with the enemy then withdrawing before daylight. There were about twenty of these attacks in April and May.

The second significant element of enemy action was the use of anti-tank landmines throughout the TAOR, but especially so in the area between QL 9 and the DMZ. That area had seen heavy fighting since the division of the country in 1954, and it seemed like both sides had made the area into one gigantic minefield. Some of the mines were planted at night along or on roadways, but more were leftover from previous times. These latter mines were often very deep in the earth due to movement of the topsoil caused by the rains, and were frequently not detonated by the first or even second or third vehicle in a column, but by a later vehicle. That and the effects of rust and old age meant that you could use mine detector equipment and mine

sniffing dogs all you wanted, but would still detonate mines. Someone had started keeping track of where and when mines were detonated a few months before I arrived, and I became the record-keeper when I was assigned. As I recall, there were about 75 – 80 instances recorded when I started, and by the time I left for 3/5 CAV we were up to about 150 instances – nearly one every other day. The remarkable thing about it was that, although the soldiers suffered minor and major injuries from these detonations, they had killed nobody. That record ended in December when a B Troop, 3/5 APC detonated a mine on the right front of the vehicle and was blown over onto the driver's side, at which point it detonated another mine and killed the driver.

After my talk with LTC Page, I counted the days before I was reassigned. With about a week to go, Major Claude Abate was temporarily assigned as my replacement. I briefed him on everything but shortly after I left he was reassigned as S3 of 1/77 ARM and another major became the BDE Operations Officer. I really didn't care who got the job as long as I was out of there.

## CHAPTER 5: SQUADRON OPERATIONS OFFICER (S3)

On July 13th, a 1/4-ton (jeep) picked my gear and me up at Quang Tri and took me the few kilometers north to Dong Ha, where I was met and welcomed by LTC William Bradberry, the departing SQDN CO and MAJ Richard (Rick) Borgstrom, the SQDN XO. I was billeted in their seahut in a small fenced-in compound, with our own latrine and shower. This was within thirty feet of the SQDN TOC, which was a concrete bunker about 2/3rds underground – my office for the next 4 months. The floor of the bunker was below the underground water level so until the rains stopped completely, there was water on the floor. We worked around this by covering the floor with wood pallets. Borgstrom had replaced MAJ Jerry Nader, who I would meet again at Ft Knox after this tour, and I was replacing MAJ Jim Tipton, who had just departed and was temporarily replaced by CPT Howard Bachman, who had been in the 3<sup>rd</sup> ARVN Cav with me. Howie had commanded C Co 2/34 Armor (Dreadnought Charlie) attached to the squadron and then commanded C Troop. My S3 Air (assistant S3) was Wayne Young, a new Captain. Of the other officers in the squadron, the two that I became close to were Bill McGough, my friend from the replacement station, and John Crowley, the B Troop Commander who would soon switch jobs with Wayne. I also worked closely with the S2 and in fact often served as his tactical boss. He was a nondescript Captain whose name I forget as he only lasted a few weeks until he was fired.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry consisted of three line troops, A, B and C, each configured the same. Each troop had three platoons, with a platoon leader's APC (armored personnel carrier), four scout APCs, an infantry APC, an APC with a mounted 4.2 inch mortar, and three M551 Airborne Assault & Reconnaissance Vehicles (popularly known as Sheridans) which in fact were light tanks. The Troop HQs had two APCs, one for the commander and one for communications, an APC for the mechanics and a Light Recovery Vehicle that normally stayed in the base camp. Squadron HQs had two APCs for the commander and S3, a couple of Communications vehicles, a Flame Throwing section of two APC-type vehicles with flamethrowers mounted as their primary weapon, and an assortment of tracked and wheeled support vehicles. Most of the APCs were equipped with side-mounted M60 machineguns protected by armored shields, and the commander's cupola had a .50 caliber M2 machinegun, also with a shield. Vehicles configured like this were called ACAVs for Armored Cavalry Assault Vehicle. As previously mentioned, Dreadnought Charlie was attached to the squadron from its parent battalion in the Saigon area. It was a standard tank company of 17 M48 version tanks, with three five tank platoons and two in the company HQ. All in all, 3/5 CAV was a very potent fighting force.

During the few days before both LTC Bradberry and Howie Bachman departed, I was shown the areas of operations and had extensive discussions with them about the squadron's tactical methods of operating. I flew to all of the troop/company positions with the commander and was introduced to those unit commanders; CPT Cliff Marr in A, CPT John Crowley in B, CPT Harv Timberlake in C and CPT Mack Cranford in Dreadnought Charlie. They all seemed to be tactically and technically proficient, but the platoon leaders throughout were quite young and inexperienced, about half of whom had no prior troop experience. Likewise the senior noncommissioned officers. One of my jobs was to take a last-light flight throughout our AO in a scout/observation helicopter every evening to observe the positions of our units (called NDPs for Night Defensive Positions or RONS for Remain Over Night – the two names were used interchangeably). Prior to BG Hill assuming command of the Brigade, all combat units spent all

of their time on operations, but Hill changed that so every unit came to the base camp for a two and one half day stand-down on a rotating basis. During the stand-downs the troops would accomplish individual and equipment maintenance while also serving as the squadron's reaction force.

On my second day in Dong Ha LTC Bradberry held a commander's meeting, followed by a "newbie" welcoming ceremony at the officers club. I was the newbie and had to be initiated into the fraternity. Initiation consisted of first proving you were capable of belonging to this elite group by drinking from the brass casing of a 152mm Sheridan canister round. As I recall, there were three choices of drink; six warm sodas of your choice, six warm beers or three mixed drinks of your choice, all of which had a single ice cube in it. The canister had to go to your lips and stay there until it was totally empty, at which time you turned it upside down to prove it had all been consumed. Although I normally only drank beer, I chose bourbon and seven-up to reduce the volume of liquid. I passed that part with ease and was then directed to complete the initiation by performing an inspection of the uniforms of all officers that were present. The officers formed two lines facing each other, about three feet apart. If the initiate found anything wrong with an officer's uniform, that officer had to put money into the free drink kitty, and if something was wrong that wasn't detected, the initiate had to feed the kitty. The additional kicker was nobody could step on the tile in the center of the floor that had the unit's crest painted on it. I started my inspection along one line of officers, found some problems and missed one, and started back on the other line. Unbeknownst to me, the two lines slowly moved together so that when I got to the middle of the floor, I stepped on the crest. That cost me a few more dollars. Afterwards we had a fairly sumptuous meal outside on the patio and had some farewell presentations for LTC Bradberry. The whole affair was an excellent indoctrination into the unit and I should add that, although the Army in those days had many sad experiences concerning the abuse of alcohol, we never had a problem with it.

On the prescribed day we held a small change of command ceremony – LTC Bradberry departed and LTC Page assumed command. About the first thing he asked me was what our mission was. I replied that there was no permanent mission but rather a weekly statement of what we were supposed to do, the same Weekly Operation Plan that I had been preparing at BDE. What that basically said was the 3/5 CAV would support 1/61 MECH with one troop in AO Orange, conduct security and reconnaissance operations in two of these areas: Mai Loc, Cam Lo Valley or the Backyard, which included operations south of the river south of QTCB. One troop/company would be in our base-camp on maintenance stand-down and it would also be prepared to react to any assigned threat in the BDE TAOR. As such, the squadron did not have a permanent, fixed AO. With the information I gave him, LTC Page discussed these missions with the BDE staff and CG, and then gave his interpretation of them to the troop/company commanders. In addition, I was to learn later, he admonished them severely for their record of indiscipline – things such as vehicle accidents, shooting incidents, and the drowning of soldiers who were swimming in the many deadly streams and rivers in the area.

I should relate now LTC Page's background so my thoughts about him can be understood. He had been a recon sergeant in an Infantry Brigade during the Korean War. That BDE Commander was named John Hill, and his son, then Captain and now BG, was John Hill Jr. Page received a battlefield commission as a 2LT and went on, over the years, to command seven different armored cavalry and tank units. I later heard BG Hill state that Page was the best combat soldier he had ever known. I thought the same plus he was the best officer/leader I ever



served with, before or after I was in 3/5 CAV. He knew his job and taught me a lot, while at the same time allowing me to grow into the S3 position.

Within the first week as commander, LTC Page went to all of the troop/company NDPs and remained overnight with their commanders, personally observing how they operated. I accompanied him on these trips and spent my time with the platoon leaders, platoon sergeants and enlisted men. After each visit we compared notes and came up with a good assessment of the units and their leaders. From then on I knew whom Page could fully depend on, so when making plans for special situations I was able to get the right unit involved.

Our first significant special operation came towards the end of July. The US Special Forces Camp at Mai Loc was going to be turned over to RVN RF and PF units, and we were directed to temporarily assume command of the camp to facilitate the transfer to them. We took elements of SQDN HQ and one platoon from one troop and occupied the camp, with RF/PF elements interspersed between our vehicles. We also had a battery of 155mm Self-Propelled Howitzers for fire support. There was also one M42 "Duster" vehicle with twin mounted 40mm rapid-fire guns. This vehicle was designed to be an anti-aircraft weapon. There were no instructions or orders assigning it to us, so we just left it in place on the perimeter and had it put on an impressive firepower display every evening. The remainder of the Cav troop established NDPs in the vicinity where they could react to any threat to the camp.

Things went well for a few days and then one night the VN village of Mai Loc was attacked by a small enemy force. We requested and received a helicopter and LTC Page and I went airborne to call for artillery fire and to provide some observation of what was happening. Simultaneously, one of the platoons outside the camp received some enemy fire, so they lit up the sky with tracer bullets from all of their machineguns – an awesome sight at night when flying around two thousand feet above. We received a call to go into Mai Loc town and pick up some wounded civilians and found, when we arrived (a scary operation, landing at an unknown location in the dark), a VN Catholic Priest who was mortally wounded and two nuns who accompanied him. Unfortunately, the priest died while we were transporting him to the hospital at Quang Tri. The next morning the RF/PF placed six dead enemy bodies along side of the road into town to show the villagers the results of fighting the government, and also to allow the families of the dead enemy to pickup and dispose of the remains.

Within a day or two we received instructions for a special operation. We were to take two Cav Troops, the SQDN TOC and the artillery battery and conduct what we called a CAV-ARTY Raid west along QL 9 to the Rockpile and then south a few kilometers to an area called LZ Vandergrift from where the artillery could fire to the west almost to the Laotian border. The operation was intended to provide fire support to an ARVN infantry battalion that was airlifted further to the west and would move eastward to link up with us. While we conducted this three-day operation, we would still maintain control over our units in the Mai Loc area. LTC Page and I would essentially control eight company-sized units. I wrote out the plans for the operation and on the appointed date we moved out.

The movement to our destination began with one troop, the artillery battery and SQDN TOC at Mai Loc heading north to reach QL 9 where we joined with the second troop. LTC Page and I flew overhead in an observation helicopter and directed the convoy. As the first troop approached the Rockpile (on the north of the highway) they came under intense small-arms fire from a rock outcropping about 20 meters on the south side of the road. They returned fire with all automatic weapons and silenced the enemy fire. Later that day we found about six dead enemy in that position. We established two NDPs, one at the base of the Rockpile and the other

at LZ Vandergrift and began mounted patrolling in all directions. This continued for two days with only one small enemy contact that resulted in a few more dead NVA soldiers. On the third day the ARVN infantry linked up and we returned to Dong Ha with the artillery battery.

On the previous night one platoon from C Troop, still operating northeast of Mai Loc, went into its NDP before dark and established a strong position. At sometime after midnight the platoon sergeant was on top of his Sheridan observing the area outside the NDP (using either the Sheridan's infra-red capability or other night observation devices) when he detected enemy movement coming out of a wood-line about 50 meters away. He quietly alerted the whole platoon, which then, on the platoon sergeant's command, opened fire with all weapons. It was a slaughter - over 30 dead enemy were found the next morning. We had only suffered one casualty. During the action the platoon sergeant had fallen off of his vehicle and broke his ankle. In searching the dead enemy that morning, a diagram was found that showed the exact positioning of all the vehicles in the platoon. Because the platoon had occupied the NDP before darkness, it was "decided" by BG Hill that henceforth NDPs would not be occupied until after dark. I vehemently objected to this to no avail. I thought that it was much better to occupy positions in daylight so that all of our defensive measures could be correctly positioned. These measures included placing RPG Screens (an 8 foot section of chain-link fencing material secured at each end by a fence post driven into the ground - in order to prematurely detonate enemy anti-tank rockets fired at the vehicle), mechanical "ambushes" (Claymore anti-personnel mines rigged with trip wires), trip flares and concertina wire that we strung around the entire perimeter about 20 feet in front of the vehicles and the firing of artillery marking rounds from which defensive artillery targets could be planned. None of these measures could be as effective if done in the dark.

We returned to Dong Ha after about a ten-day absence. MAJ Borgstrom had purchased a refrigerator for our barracks and also obtained a stereo system for the officers club. These were well-appreciated enhancements to our quality of life in this combat zone. In fact they went against the common saying that we had at the time that "nothing was too good for the combat soldiers and that's what they got - nothing".

Two additional directives were received from BDE that were much discussed and one of which created a significant leadership problem in the units. The one directive that was readily accepted was that every NDP had to have at least five tanks or six ACAVs on the perimeter of NDPs. This was a result of an analysis made concerning the enemy attacks against NDPs in April and May - those units that had the aforementioned number of vehicles on perimeter seemed to withstand enemy assaults well, while those with fewer vehicles didn't. There was never any official discussion about taking actions to prevent our soldiers from being "the last soldier killed in VN", but with the US policy to reduce the number of soldiers there, the soldiers and junior leaders all had misgivings about conducting any tactical operation that did not have a "real" purpose. The second directive had again resulted from an analysis of what had been occurring in the BDE TAOR - the detonation of enemy anti-tank mines. BG Hill decided that it was more dangerous to be riding on top of a vehicle that detonated a mine than it was if everyone was riding inside, so orders were issued to ride inside. Nobody below the rank of LTC believed that, but it was the leaders' responsibility to attempt to comply with that directive. Of all things a leader had to do, enforcing that order was the most difficult.

One day in August, the Deputy BDE Commander came to Dong Ha and visited with LTC Page in his office. After he left, Page called me to his office and said "Stu, the thinking is that if any elements of the Army ever go west to Khe Sanh again, an overland trail will have to be built

from the Rockpile to provide an alternative route there in case QL 9 is blocked by the enemy. Take a few days and do some map reconnaissance and show me where you think that new trail should be." I thought about the problem and recalled all of the map reading instruction that I had received in Army schools, and over the next few days plotted a route that would have an acceptably low percent of grade over the mountains that had to be crossed to enable wheeled vehicles to use it. When LTC Page brought the subject up later I went and got the overlay that I had prepared and took it to his office. I placed it on his map and he placed his overlay on top of mine -- the two were identical with only one small difference. He commended me and I said that great minds think alike! I was quite pleased that I had passed that test.

We continued to operate with troops in the Mai Loc area. One day, we received a message from BDE to send a unit to a certain place and conduct a search of the area. The designated area was about three kilometers southeast of Mai Loc and was a densely wooded ravine about two kilometers long. I sent the order to the Troop commander in the area and then Page and I got a helicopter to take us there to observe his actions. The platoon that made the search could not have done a very thorough job because the area was too dense and large for such a small unit to deal with. The commander's vehicle had detonated a mine enroute and by the time Page and I arrived, he was quite shaken up. Whether it was that or something else Page observed I can't recall, but I knew Page was upset.

A few days later we flew to another troop to observe their operations. Page and I got into the back of the commander's ACAV and were talking to him when all of a sudden Page yelled, "What's that?" pointing at a cut-down version of an Army carbine. One of his first directives to the commanders was that they would get rid of any and all unauthorized weapons. Before the troop commander could answer, the attached VN scout walked up to the track. The commander immediately picked up the unauthorized carbine and gave it to the scout, saying he had no control over what the scout was armed with. On our flight back to Dong Ha LTC Page said he thought that commander had lied to him and couldn't wait to replace him. Things weren't always happy in the 3/5 CAV.

Later in August, Dreadnaught C was occupying an NDP west of Cam Lo when a small enemy force attacked the bridge over the river at Cam Lo. We were ordered to send the tanks as a reaction force to assist the RF/PF unit at the bridge, which we immediately did. We were provided an observation helicopter in which LTC Page and I flew to that area. It was another scary nighttime flight and while enroute, the enemy action at the bridge ended and we directed the tanks back to their original NDP. The company had foolishly left their defensive equipment in place, and when they reoccupied the position, the enemy detonated their claymores, which they had turned around to fire into the position. At the same time, small arms fire began but lasted only a brief time. When Page and I arrived everything was under control, but we had to evacuate the company commander due to some shrapnel wounds to his backside. I think the company found two dead enemy the next morning.

Over the next few weeks we had significant changes in our leadership and organizational structure. John Crowley had become my S3 Air, replacing Wayne Young who took over command of B Troop from John. Next, Mack Cranford turned over command of Dreadnaught C to a CPT Pierce Roan but that company was immediately reassigned to 1/77 Armor at Quang Tri in preparation for its deactivation. LTC Page was delighted at that, as he did not like having to support that tank company with our minimal support personnel and equipment. Finally, CPT Bryan Copley, the S1, took command of A Troop from Cliff Marr. Cranford and Marr departed

for "The Real World", as did John Crowley soon thereafter. Try as I may, I can't remember who my next S3 Air was.

In September and early October, we spun our wheels planning an operation that never happened. The VN along the coast east of Quang Tri, were encountering increased enemy activity and the plan was that 3/5 CAV would send the HQs and two troops to occupy positions in the area. This was the "Street Without Joy". The Squadron had operated in that area when they first moved north from Saigon in early 1968 but there was no institutional memory of that by 1970. After a lot of work coordinating possible actions we were told to forget it - that area was of too much political importance to the VN and they would secure it themselves.

One afternoon in early October, I drove to the BDE TOC at Quang Tri to pick-up an operations order. We were directed to assume control of one infantry company from 1/11 INF and conduct an airmobile assault into the area east of Mai Loc where our troop had been unsuccessful before. Apparently, an intelligence activity had detected a radio transmission from that same heavily wooded ravine and BDE decided this time to send an appropriate unit to find it. By the time I received the order, an observation helicopter was waiting for me, along with an artillery observer. I called LTC Page and briefed him on the operation and how short of time we were and he told me to handle the whole operation. As we flew the short distance to the infantry's pickup site, the artillery observer and pilot briefed me on the sequence of fire support and agreed to manage their respective elements while I concentrated on the infantry airlift. This was the only time I ever managed a complete airmobile assault and it went perfectly. As I briefed the infantry commander on the ground, artillery fire was already landing on the LZ some 15 kilometers away. Then, as the first lift (four HUEY cargo helicopters, each carrying about ten soldiers) took off and flew towards the LZ, my pilot stopped the artillery and began to hit the LZ with ARA gunship fire that he controlled. Finally, as the last rocket hit the ground, the first lift of infantry landed, disembarked and secured the LZ. Shortly afterwards, the remaining lifts of infantry were on the ground and the search began. I flew back to Dong Ha and received high praise for my work from Page and MAJ Borgstrom, who were both enjoying a beer while I conducted the operation. Needless to say I was elated, even more so the next day when the infantry reported killing one enemy soldier and capturing the radio we were looking for.

At this time (October 1) I completed an administrative task that I had been working on since I became the S3 - the unit's Standing Operating Procedures No. 1 - that detailed how the commander wanted Combat Operations to be conducted. This was about 30 pages of instructions that governed our daily recurring procedures. I was quite proud of the work, especially when LTC Page signed the document and commended me for my work.

The main topic on my mind at this time was my R & R scheduled for Hawaii, again to meet my wife. On the appointed day, I went in a two-vehicle convoy south passed Hue to Danang. Bill McGough went with me as he was going to pick up maintenance equipment and parts. We spent the night at an Army Hospital facility in Danang that had a great BOQ and officers club. What a treat to eat a great steak dinner and get a good night's sleep, without having to worry about enemy action. The next morning I was driven to the R & R Center, processed for my flight, and then departed.

This second R & R was similar to the first. Sue Ellen and I spent the entire time getting reacquainted, seeing the same sights we saw the first time, and generally relaxing. The main difference was that we stayed at the Rainbow Towers on the beach, next to the Army's Fort DeRusey. I got caught up to date on the boys and their activities and how life was going for the family in Denver. The six days passed all too quickly and it was time once again to say goodbye.

I felt better about it this time, as I knew I was going back to a relatively safe job for my last five months. The trip back to VN was uneventful. At Danang I caught a ride in a cargo plane to Quang Tri and from there I called for my ¼ ton truck to pick me up. It was then back to work as normal.

During the next week (the first week in November) only one thing sticks out in my mind. One evening I was in my quarters when LTC Page came in late. I asked him where he had been and he told me about spending the entire day and into the evening with the Maintenance Officer, Bill McGough, and a Tech Rep (Technical Representative) from the company that manufactured the Sheridan vehicles. They had spent all of that time trying to fix one Sheridan that had electrical problems in its turret, all to no avail. After a couple of drinks LTC Page began to cry, saying it was a damned shame that the country could not provide our soldiers with a better vehicle than the Sheridan, or at least one that could be easily repaired. Then he told me that when I got the opportunity to make decisions concerning assignment of officers in a squadron or battalion, I should always appoint the best captain available to the maintenance officer position. Those were words that I lived by in the future and consider myself fortunate to have received that guidance from a master.

Over the next few days there were two incidents in A Troop that I became aware of. That troop was assigned to 1/61 MECH, working out of A4 in AO Orange. One evening I heard from LTC Page that BG Hill had visited A Troop that afternoon while they were resupplying and found a number of soldiers walking around without their rubber overshoes on. The monsoon season had begun by this time and the whole area was wet and muddy. When BG Hill asked the soldiers why they weren't wearing their overshoes he was told that the ones they had were ripped and torn and that there were no replacements available. This set off BG Hill like a rocket – he verbally chastised the troop commander and then followed up doing the same to LTC Page. Then, within a day or two, one platoon from A Troop was sent about darkness from A4 south to C2 to pick up something from 1/61 HQs. When they got to C2 and picked up whatever it was they were after, the platoon members refused to return to A4, claiming it was too dark and too dangerous. After some heated exchanges between the 1/61 commander and the troop commander, additional elements of the platoon went to C2 and the whole unit moved back north. At the time I became aware of these incidents I did not give them much concern, considering them as examples of lack of motivation and discipline that I knew LTC Page would deal with. The next afternoon (November 9<sup>th</sup>) about 2:00 pm I was called to the CO's office. LTC Page said that because of the two incidents in A Troop, he had to make a change of commanders in that troop, and he wanted me to be the new commander. He said that it was now obvious (and it was) that I would not be promoted to major anytime soon and because BDE had received additional armor majors, BG Hill was assigning one of them to be my replacement as S3. Further, he said that CPT Copley was a good officer so Page did not want to relieve him of command and have it permanently mar Copley's record, so would I accept the troop command and would I say that, when told I was being replaced as S3, I had asked to take command of A Troop? It never occurred to me to say no and I have no idea what would have happened had I done so. To me it was the right thing to do, and I respected LTC Page so much that I immediately said yes to both requests. I went back to my quarters and packed my gear, then briefed MAJ Terry Alger who had just flown in. and then walked to the A Troop area to assume my third company-level command (the fifth if my two ARVN advisory units were considered commands).

[The text in this block is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a multi-paragraph document, possibly a letter or a report, but the content cannot be discerned.]



## CHAPTER 6: ARMORED CAVALRY TROOP COMMANDER

As I packed and walked to the A Troop area, I thought about a lot of things. First and foremost was that I was going the wrong direction in my assignments on this tour in VN. The "normal" assignment progression would have been to be assigned first to a relatively unsafe job. Then, if the opportunity arose, to ask for and receive a safer assignment. Finally, if the opportunity arose again, I would seek and accept a truly safe position. The normal would have been, in my case, just the opposite of what I was doing. Since I now had no control over my reassignment, I took the professional view of my circumstances and was determined to make the best of it. I believed then (and now) that I had the experience and training that every troop level commander should have to lead American soldiers in combat. I had commanded an armored cavalry troop in Germany, commanded a tank company at Fort Knox, been an S3 at Fort Knox and in VN, had attended the appropriate schooling and had excelled in the Advance Course. I had eight months of experience in this TAOR and I knew the things my immediate superiors, LTC Page and BG Hill, thought were important. In total, I was the right guy at the right time and place.

When I arrived at the troop area I was introduced to my subordinate leaders and staff. I was only briefly familiar with them up to that time so over the next few days I did some detailed assessments of their capabilities. My First Sergeant was ISG Raymond Bradley and the Executive Officer was 1LT Mike Adams. They had both been in position long enough to know their jobs, and from what I had learned at Squadron HQs, they did an admirable job of managing the administrative affairs of the unit. The Troop Clerk, whose name I forget, was also very good. I gave the three of them standing orders – continue to do well, keep things in order in the rear area and support the troops in the field with everything needed to conduct effective operations. They did not let me down throughout my tenure as commander! The remainder of the troop's supporting staff – Maintenance Sergeant, Supply Sergeant and Communications personnel were likewise competent and served me well. The following officers and Platoon Sergeants led the three line platoons:

- 1<sup>st</sup> PLT: 1LT Grady Hatton. This was the platoon whose scouts had rebelled two days before. Grady seemed to be a nice enough officer but I felt that he was not forcible enough to lead his platoon. His situation was compounded by not having an E7 Platoon Sergeant present for duty. SFC Martinez was on leave or R & R and when he returned he spent about half the time in the company area. When he was in the field he did a good job.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT: 1LT Jon Smyrtic. Jon was a very competent officer who was, if anything, a little too aggressive for that time and place. His Platoon Sergeant was in the process of out-processing so the job passed to SSG Chester Beverly. Beverly was the only 3/5 soldier who served under me later when I commanded a Squadron in Germany, (Chet was initially my G Troop 1SG and then was assistant Operations Sergeant in the S3 section.)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT: 1LT Gary Kasprzek. Gary was the senior of the three platoon leaders and had the most experience. His platoon was also lacking an E7 Platoon Sergeant and I don't recall now who acted in that capacity.

My vehicle crew in the field consisted of the driver Billy Marshall, (nicknamed "Stringbean), a Forward Observer (FO, pronounced as two letters), and a Sergeant nicknamed "Hill Billy" who rode in the Commander's Cupola and manned the .50 cal MG, and the Medic attached from Headquarters Troop, Fred Miller, nicknamed "Doc" Stringbean and Hill Billy rotated out before me and Doc shifted around and was not always on my track.

I held a leaders' meeting that evening and made sure that everyone would make the best use of the time available prior to our departure for AO Orange the next afternoon. Afterwards, I moved my gear into the seahut I would share with 1SG Bradley, got unpacked and settled in. This seahut was smaller than what the soldiers lived in, only large enough for two cots with an aisle in between and, opposite the entrance, a small area with a refrigerator. Built onto the side was a shower stall - a fifty -gallon drum of water on the roof that delivered water through a spigot. Sandbags, stacked about three feet high, surrounded the seahut.

The next day was quite hectic as I roamed the troop area and the maintenance park where I met many of my soldiers while they were taking care of their vehicles and equipment. In the afternoon, I had to discipline two soldiers, using my Article 15 disciplinary power. The first soldier was a PFC Thurlkill, a young soldier who had been caught with drug paraphernalia. He was on the promotion list to SP4, so as punishment for his small transgression, I temporarily reduced him in rank to PVT2 and told him that if he performed well and kept out of trouble for 60 days, I would remove the reduction **and** give him his promotion to SP4. I don't remember the other soldier's name or offense, but it was more serious and he refused my offer of Article 15 punishment. Whenever I think back on how the Army in VN did not support its company commanders, I think of this soldier. Over the next four months he continuously slipped through the discipline cracks, first saying he changed his mind and would accept an Article 15, then again refusing it, then refusing a Summary Court Martial, and finally, when his Special Court Martial was due to convene, he went AWOL. All of this time he remained in the troop area and not in the field. We got him on a helicopter one day and sent him out to join his platoon, but he somehow escaped and went AWOL back in Dong Ha. He was an administrative nightmare, going AWOL and being dropped from the rolls as a deserter, but the legal system would not let us put him in jail where he belonged. In June of the next year, 1SG Bradley visited me at Fort Knox on his return from VN and told me that the soldier was still in Dong Ha and still had not been captured and punished!

That afternoon, prior to our 2:00 pm departure time from the Motor Pool (the SP time - Start Point), I was mounted up on my ACAV and ready to go. My vehicle was actually not an ACAV because it did not have the two side-mounted machineguns as we did not have sufficient machineguns, armor gun shields or personnel to be so armed. I recall having told all of the platoon leaders that we **would** move out on time, but it took some significant shouting to accomplish that. The mark of a good armored cavalry unit was its ability to move on time because if the CAV was late in moving, all the other units behind would be late. Our column left Dong Ha and had an uneventful road march to AO Orange. Two platoons veered off the main road enroute and moved to and occupied their pre-designated NDPs, while the third platoon and Troop HQ's, (my APC, the communications APC and the maintenance APC) all marched to A4 where we established our positions inside the perimeter of that position. 1SG Bradley rode with me that day and stayed in the field for a couple of days, helping me learn about the people in the troop. I spent some time that first evening reviewing NDP setups with the platoon leader with me at A4, and the next two nights I stayed in the NDPs of the other two platoons, going over the same things to ensure that all of the platoons were properly establishing their positions. From the



start, I did not follow the guidance about moving into NDPs at twilight. I made the conscious decision as I mentioned before to establish strong positions. This was the only requirement that I willfully ignored, and I covered it up by not reporting our actual times of establishment to squadron. As I recall, the platoon leaders were all in agreement and from that time until I left we did it my way every time.

I identified two problems during those first couple of days that required my attention throughout my command. The first was the issue of riding inside of the vehicles as opposed to riding on top. I set the example by always riding inside (although I often shuddered when I recalled the mining incidents I experienced on my first tour) and I never failed to call vehicles when I observed people riding on top of them. These ass-chewing's eventually got most of my soldiers complying most of the time, but I was only sure of that when they were within my sight. The other problem I saw was that when vehicles stopped for whatever reason, but especially when occupying an NDP, everybody dismounted from their vehicles to do whatever had to be done. The only correct and safe thing to do was leave one member of the crew to man the main machinegun. I had heard and read about many instances in VN where the enemy attacked immediately after a US mounted unit stopped and the weapons were not manned, and I was not going to let that happen to A Troop. My orders in this regard I think were more uniformly obeyed after I properly emphasized them.

Another tactical problem requiring my firm guidance was what actions we would take to minimize the number of mines we detonated. From my experience in this area I knew that we were liable to detonate a mine anywhere, but I wanted to ensure that all actions were taken to avoid those incidents. The foremost anti-mine action was simply the awareness of the danger, and then remedies could be taken. First was the speed at which we moved in any area. Unless we were on a reaction mission that required haste, I stressed that our movements would be slow and deliberate, with the bigger Sheridan vehicles leading (because they could withstand a mine detonation better) and all other vehicles following in the same track (path). Also, where practical, we would shoot up the area to be traversed with the lead vehicle's .50 caliber machinegun. Then we would use mine-sniffing dogs and mine sweep teams with mine detectors whenever they were available. I don't recall a single instance of our either finding a mine or detonating one using these techniques, but I think my emphasis on the subject paid off in the soldiers' awareness. In my four months of command we only encountered three mining incidents, all of which I will discuss later. In my opinion there was too little intelligence about the mines in the TAOR and too little emphasis placed on counter-mine operations by the chain of command above me. My techniques were successful, whereas some similar sized units detonated more than three mines in a week!

Daily operations were similar, regardless of which specific AO we operated in. All soldiers would be awakened and at their fighting positions (called Stand-To) at first light, and sometimes we would fire all weapons out from the perimeter (called a "Mad Minute"). Breakfast of C-rations and personal hygiene took place and then the defensive equipment was dismantled and stored on the vehicles and daily maintenance of the vehicles and weapons was conducted. Then, two platoons would be sent off to pre-designated areas to conduct mounted and dismounted searches. Normally, one platoon remained with the TRP CP to conduct more extensive maintenance, such as replacing worn tracks and road-wheels. After the searches were completed, the troop assembled at one location in the afternoon to receive resupply of fuel, ammunition and partake of a hot, mess hall prepared meal. Mail and laundry was distributed and the soldiers were able to purchase beer and soda brought forward by our supply people. Alcohol

consumption had a checkered history. When I was at BDE no alcohol could be consumed in the field. That edict was apparently eliminated by BG Hill, because when I joined 3/5 CAV, beer was acceptable for consumption while on operations. No hard liquor was authorized, however. I only had one problem with alcohol consumption in four months – one of the mechanics got drunk one night at A4 – and after a good ass chewing the next day it was never repeated. After the supply RV (rendezvous) the platoons would be sent to their NDPs, establish their defenses and call for registration artillery fire on potential enemy targets. On occasion, a night dismounted patrol or LPs (listening posts) would be required to be sent out of the perimeter. I normally did not direct those activities myself as I thought they were not effective, they weakened the perimeter defenses of the NDPs, and they caused the troopers to be overtired the following day, to the detriment of that day's required operation. The hardest part of command was attempting to keep everyone alert and ready for action at all times as our combat effectiveness slacked off the more time elapsed since actual combat was encountered. Each day was similarly boring, and time passed slowly for all.

About mid-way through my first trip to AO Orange, I received orders to conduct a reconnaissance north of A4 to the Red Line (southern border of the DMZ). No specific objective was given, just go there, look around, and return. I made our plans, leaving part of 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon at A4, and taking the rest of the troop on the operation. About half way to the objective area, I had the 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon scouts and platoon leader drop out of the column and establish a defensive position, intending that they would discourage any enemy ambushes along our route of march, since we would have to follow the same route back as we would use going there. As we approached the Red Line we observed a burnt out Marine Corps tank that had been destroyed years before, probably during the battles around Con Thien in 1967-68. Our movement to the objective went well and we encountered no enemy nor did we detect any mines. I felt good about the latter as this was the heaviest mined area in the BDE TAOR. As we moved into a position to look down into the valley that was the DMZ, some of the vehicles had to move back and forth to take up exact positions. At that time a big explosion happened and many weapons began firing, as nobody knew what had happened. That only lasted a second as we saw that A15, the 1<sup>st</sup> platoon infantry carrier, had detonated a mine, severely damaging the track and suspension system on one side of the vehicle and causing minor injuries to some of the soldiers. As I recall, the injuries were taken care of on the spot but the vehicle damage would require it to be towed back to A4. A radio call was made to the rear for them to send forward recovery vehicles and then we began the task of towing A15 to the rear. It took at least two vehicles to pull the M113 because half of the vehicle was resting on its armored bottom without the suspension wheels and track.

After we had been moving about an hour, we heard gunfire off in the direction we were heading. I immediately received a call from the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT LDR stating that when they moved towards a linkup point with the VTRs (M578 and M88 Vehicle Track Recovery vehicles), they came under fire from a small enemy force. They returned fire and drove off the enemy. I don't recall that we took any casualties and I was glad that I had left the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT vehicles on our route to protect the main force from just such an occurrence. After meeting the VTRs, we picked up some speed but we still did not get to A4 until well after dark. I sent one platoon into the camp and stayed outside A4 for the night, with our tracks backed up to the outer perimeter fence.

Within a day or two we finished our tour in AO Orange and on the prescribed day, I sent my platoons back to Dong Ha, starting at about 2 pm. I brought up the rear of the last platoon to leave and arrived at Dong Ha at about 6 pm. After issuing orders to the leaders on what we were

to accomplish over the next two days, I reported to LTC Page and updated him of our maintenance and personnel situation. I put in a strong request for replacement officers for 1<sup>st</sup> PLT (LT Hatton) and 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT (LT Kasprzek). During this stand-down or shortly afterwards I received 1LT David Boyd to lead 1<sup>st</sup> PLT and 2LT Al Kincer to lead 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT. I remembered both officers from my time as S3, and thought highly of Boyd but had some questions about Kincer. Soon thereafter, LT Smyrtic was nominated to be BG Hill's Aide and received that assignment. 2LT Jimmie Johnson, another good officer who had been assigned to Squadron HQs for a short time, replaced him as 2nd PLT LDR. Having replaced the platoon leaders, I went to work on the SQDN CDR to provide me with experienced PLT SGTs. I originally received a PSG Carter who seemed to be very knowledgeable, but he wanted to be the S2's Intel SGT, so he went to SQDN. I finally received two very sharp E7s, SFC Beaty for 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT and SFC Powell for 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT. This completed my leadership team that I would work with until I departed.

The A Troop rotation through the various areas are a blur to me after my first trip with the troop to AO Orange, so I will only narrate events as I can now recall them instead of discussing them chronologically. These events will cover the remainder of November and December 1970 and most of January 1971.

One of our next field assignments was twofold – conduct small unit refresher training outside the back gate of Quang Tri, and occupy night positions in the Backyard. The refresher training was BG Hill's idea with the purpose of bringing together squads and platoons that were comprised of many new soldiers. Basic mounted and dismounted operations were trained, as were some other essential operations such as weapons firing and mine detection. The latter was extremely important because we used a set of bleachers for group training but the bleachers were left unsecured at night. That meant that before we used the bleachers each day, we had to inspect them for booby traps. My troop did a good job of that but another unit came along later and detonated a booby trap that killed eleven soldiers! There was not much other activity during this period. The only other thing of significance was our Thanksgiving meal, which was served in the field in a raging rainstorm.

One assignment was to protect the Cam Lo District HQ at Cam Lo, on QL9, occupy NDPs just south of QL 9, and be responsible for mine sweep operations on the road from QL 9 south to Mai Loc. The "responsibility" for mine sweep operations was not very specific, so I interpreted it to mean that the engineer mine sweep teams would work for me and sweep the entire road dismounted, as I did not want to be responsible if any mines were detonated and casualties occurred. It took so long to conduct the morning mine sweep the first morning, and higher HQs received so many complaints, that on the second morning, my orders were changed to "protect" the engineer minesweepers as they swept as they saw fit! In reality it would only have been a big deal if somebody had detonated a mine and was injured in which case I would have been blamed for the results. As it turned out the engineers did it their way and became responsible.

One day and night in early December my Command Post stayed south of the river, south of Quang Tri, with 1<sup>st</sup> PLT. Our position was on a high hill overlooking the river about 200 feet below. During the afternoon, out of sheer boredom, I was looking down at the river and observed a long, log-like object floating in it. After a few seconds I saw that the object was moving against the current and seemed to be under its own power. I walked back to my ACAV and got my AR15 and binoculars and then back to the point where I had been standing. Looking through the binoculars I could identify the object as an Asian crocodile, about 12 or more feet long. I suppose at the time I was totally frustrated at the war and, not thinking or caring, I took aim at

the beast with my AR15 and fired 20 rounds of tracer bullets at it. A number of rounds struck it, and it immediately turned upside down and floated down river. At the time, for some reason I was glad I had done it, but almost immediately I regretted it and still do to this day.

The next day we were expecting a resupply convoy from the troop to come to the 1<sup>st</sup> PLT position in the morning. I was going to drive back to Dong Ha to meet the soon to be new Squadron Commander so I accompanied the 1<sup>st</sup> platoon elements that moved towards the main highway. I believed that we had had vehicles on the road that morning so when the lead Sheridan's radio wouldn't work (we always led with one) I directed that vehicle to pull over and let an ACAV lead. Halfway to the linkup site we started to pass through a "Choke Point", a position where the trail was constricted to a narrow passage. I was now in the second vehicle in the convoy when a huge explosion rocked the whole area. The ACAV in the lead had detonated a large, buried bomb, probably at least a 250 pounder. That ACAV was blown into the air at least 20 feet off of the ground, and it landed upside down. I don't recall how many of my soldiers were injured in that explosion, but only one was very serious. That soldier was Private Thurlkill, whose legs were pinned under the upside down ACAV. We immediately called for assistance from recovery vehicles but it took us hours to get Thurlkill freed and on a MEDEVAC helicopter. During that time LTC Page flew into the area with his replacement, LTC Robert Osborn. That was the last I saw of Page until 1980.

That evening I went to the hospital in Quang Tri at the same time BG Hill visited. I had already directed that Thurlkill's temporary reduction to PVT be revoked, restoring him to PFC, and that he be promoted to Specialist Four (SP4). At the hospital he was under heavy sedation when I saw him and had either had his legs amputated or would have that done soon thereafter. BG Hill awarded Thurlkill the Purple Heart medal and I think a Bronze Star, also, and I requested BG Hill use his authority to promote Thurlkill to Sergeant. I cried quite a bit that night and will never forget that the incident occurred due to my error and impatience.

After the first or second rotation back to Dong Ha for maintenance, 1SG Bradley asked me if he could convert a partially destroyed seahut in our troop area into a Club for our soldiers. He said it would accomplish two things – keep our soldiers out of the Squadron's Enlisted Club where there were always fights with soldiers from other units, and it would earn money from our rear detachment soldiers that would pay for free beer and soda for our field soldiers when we came in out of the field. I remember the first rotation back to Dong Ha after the club was established. I sent the platoons in one at a time and directed that they stop and thoroughly wash their vehicles before going into the maintenance area. When this was done and all immediate maintenance was accomplished, I went to the Squadron Commander's office and invited LTC Osborn to come to our steak fry at our club. As we left his office I proudly pointed out how well my troop's vehicles looked in the maintenance park, especially when compared to the few vehicles there from the other troops. At our club, we stood in line drinking a cold beer while our steaks, obtained by the troop Supply Sergeant from the Squadron Mess Hall, were cooked over a charcoal fire in the "standard" military grill – a half of a 55 gallon barrel with legs welded on. I was quite pleased to display to LTC Osborn this care and concern for my soldiers. He seemed to be impressed but as I found out later, it didn't make much of an impact on him.

On Christmas Eve day, my troop CP and one platoon were back at Cam Lo. In the afternoon, I received a call that MAJ Alger, my replacement at S3, was enroute by helicopter to my location. That was the first (and as it turned out only) time he came to visit me so I was somewhat surprised. When he landed, I met him and took him to my vehicle. Inside, he explained that he was there to point out where he wanted me to place my NDPs that night. He

looked at my map and pointed out six or seven positions and I said, which of those should I use. His response was that I was to break each platoon into two subunits and occupy all of the positions he marked. I was dumbfounded! I had never heard of anything more dangerous and foolhardy. I took a few seconds to catch my breath, and then told MAJ Alger that neither he nor LTC Osborn had been around the previous winter when the enemy could consolidate and mount attacks at night with up to company sized forces. I said that consequently, Brigade had published an order (I knew because I had help draft it) that units would not occupy NDPs with less than seven vehicles on the perimeter and that I would not comply with their instructions because it went against that order. I asked if they knew about the order and whether or not it had been rescinded. Alger said he didn't know. I then took the riskiest move of my military career and reiterated that I would not comply with their instructions unless I knew for sure that the order was no longer in effect and that, if it had been rescinded, I probably would not comply with their orders because it was absolutely too dangerous! MAJ Alger hemmed and hawed and finally approved the two NDP sites I suggested. He then called for his helicopter and when it arrived he departed. I received no further feedback on my stance that night.

Within an hour or two we received mail and I received a small package from my mother. It contained some stale cookies but also a real treat – a six-pack of canned martinis. I told my driver to get out the vehicle's portable fire extinguisher and blasted two cans to cool them off! That was my Christmas Eve gift for myself.

The next day the troop that was in Dong Ha for maintenance ate their Christmas dinner early and replaced my troop in the field. We road marched to base-camp, did our normal cleanup and after operations maintenance, and then had our Christmas meal late in the day. Afterwards, I was at the Officer's Club having a drink when MAJ Strickland, the new XO, came in and said that LTC Osborn wanted to see me. I thought that my Army days were about to be terminated for my actions of the previous day, and to provide backup support for the dangers involved in LTC Osborn's scheme, I took LT Johnson with me to the CO's office. Osborn, who said he wanted to explain about the smaller and more numerous NDPs, immediately dismissed him. His exact words, as best as I can recall, were, "You have to understand my position Captain. Here I am following an outstanding commander (Page) into command and I have to make a name for myself by doing something different." I said something to the effect that that might be so, but small unit NDPs would be a catastrophe. He let it go at that but what I thought to myself was that he was not going to make that name for himself over the dead bodies of A Troop soldiers. I was very wary of LTC Osborn after that!

I should mention here about MAJ Borgstrom's departure from the Squadron. He was reassigned to BDE HQs a few days before LTC Page departed. Immediately thereafter, the NCO who managed the Officer's Club saw LTC Page and told him that MAJ Borgstrom had taken the stereo system from the club with him when he moved to Quang Tri. At the same time Page realized that Borgstrom had also taken the refrigerator from his Seahut. After doing some investigation, Page discovered that Borgstrom had purchased those items with funds from the Officer's Club five months before and now had in effect stolen them. Someone from BDE conducted a more formal investigation and Borgstrom was found guilty of theft, although an official court martial action was not initiated. Instead, Borgstrom's OER was rewritten in a very damaging manner and he was then further reassigned outside the BDE. That OER ultimately kept him from being promoted to LTC on time and in effect, ruined his career. As part of this sordid affair, a sum of money was also missing for which LTC Page was personally liable. Someone, probably MAJ Strickland, orchestrated a fund drive to help Page pay for the missing

money. I contributed about \$20 and got my troop officers to kick in a little also. I later heard that enough money was collected to get LTC Page off the hook.

Two other incidents occurred while the troop was in the Cam Lo area. My CP was in Cam Lo and the 1<sup>st</sup> PLT under LT Boyd was on the aforementioned hill southwest of Quang Tri overlooking the river. I received a radio call from the Deputy BDE Commander, COL Townsend, who told me he was flying in to get me and take me to the 1<sup>st</sup> PLT position because "I had serious problems with that platoon!" Before I could call Boyd the helicopter landed, picked me up and began the short flight to 1<sup>st</sup> PLT. Enroute, COL Townsend told me that the platoon was in a state of complete disarray. When he dropped me off I could immediately see what had irritated him. LT Boyd was sitting in an outdoor style lounge chair catching a few rays of sunshine and probably napping, something that all the leaders did whenever the opportunity arose. Further, as was usually the case, the platoon had dug a hole in the middle of the position and began throwing garbage into it, intending to burn and bury everything in it when they left. From the air it looked like the whole area was a garbage dump. I was not very concerned by these observations but had to caution Boyd about appearances when outsiders flew by. Everything was immediately corrected, the helicopter came back for me and COL Townsend was satisfied. A big deal over nothing, or as is said, I pole vaulted over mouse turds.

The second incident occurred due to a periodic shortage of vehicle repair parts. Although I was quite satisfied with the vehicle maintenance performed by my soldiers and the Maintenance Section, in December we experienced maintenance problems that made a number of vehicles inoperable. In order to have enough vehicles on the perimeter in the NDPs, I had to resort to placing the mortar vehicles on line on some occasions. I issued specific instructions to the platoon leaders on training the mortar crewmen on the placement of our defensive materials such as trip flares, claymores and concertina wire. I also made sure that the mortar vehicles were equipped with RPG screen materials. One morning one of the platoons that was located near QL 9 in the Cam Lo area began their normal collection of their defensive materials. This platoon had used a mortar vehicle on the perimeter the night before and as that crew began breaking down the defense, a new crewman dismantled a trip flare, wrapped the trip cord around the flare as per normal, and then tossed (not carefully placing) the flare into the storage box on the top left rear of the vehicle. The impact of landing in the box caused the trip cord to come loose; the trip flare then detonated and ignited other explosive materials in the box. A chain reaction occurred as those detonations overflowed into the crew compartment with the mortar rounds, detonating them and ultimately destroying the complete vehicle. As this was being reported to me over the radio, I was informed that nobody was injured but no fire extinguishers had been used because of the intense heat and danger involved. I investigated the accident and was assured that the individual soldier involved had been trained and had just made a stupid error.

I reported the incident to squadron and my supply sergeant initiated action to obtain a replacement vehicle. I thought that the incident was over, but a day or two later, MAJ Strickland arrived at my field location and said that he was preparing Report of Survey, a supply document that would lead to someone being held financially liable for the damages incurred. I was so mad that I could hardly speak. After a few moments, I told MAJ Strickland that the responsibility rested with squadron and higher HQs who could not provide me with adequate repair parts that then caused me to have to use the mortar vehicle in a capacity that it should not have been used. I was so adamant that there should be no finding of liability that I never heard back on the report.

On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, 1970/1971, the troop was again assigned to AO Orange. I had my CP located at A4 and was visited that day by the BDE Chaplain who told

me two stories that were quite disturbing. The first concerned MAJ Claude Abate who temporarily replaced me at BDE and was then reassigned to 1/77 Armor. Claude had apparently submitted a request to BDE that when he had completed six months in 1/77 that he be reassigned to some unit in the Saigon area. His request was returned to him with a note on it from BG Hill stating that all officers in the BDE served at his (BG Hill's) pleasure and that he would not consider Abate's request. I didn't know Claude that well so I don't know what went through his mind, but he apparently thought that he had the right to have the request go forward to higher HQs so he resubmitted it. When the request got to BG Hill it made him so mad that he immediately relieved Claude and told him to get out of the area by sundown! I know it negatively affected Claude's further career but in actuality it saved his life.

The second story that the chaplain told was about an incident that occurred the night before in the 1/77 barracks area. Apparently some soldiers in one seahut were playing their radios/stereos quite loudly so the Battalion Executive Officer went to the seahut and told the soldiers to turn the noise down, which they did. Shortly thereafter, the volume was again turned up, so the XO and the S3 who had replaced Claude Abate went back to the seahut. As they entered the door, one or more soldiers picked up their rifles and fired at the two majors, killing them both. This tragedy was the most significant example of how difficult it was to be a leader in Viet Nam at that time of the war. I later heard that the soldiers were punished, but not to the extreme.

In mid-January, the Troop went to Dong Ha for a stand-down and I told the platoon leaders that if the troopers really worked hard for the first full day we were there, I would get trucks and take a convoy of them to the big Post Exchange (PX) at Phu Bai, south of Hue. On that second day I was only able to get two 5-ton trucks, so the platoons drew lots on who got to go and we loaded up and left. Each truck had about 20 soldiers and I had the trucks stocked with ice chests full of beer and soda. When we got to Hue we were stopped at the bridge over the Perfume (Perfume) River, until traffic from the other direction came past us. I was leading our short convoy in my jeep, and half way across the bridge, I stopped the vehicle, got out and emulated General George Patton's alleged urinating into the Rhine River. At Phu Bai, we spent about three hours at the PX and then returned to Dong Ha.

Late in January the troop returned to Dong Ha for another maintenance stand-down. The second night I was told to report to BDE HQs the next morning along with the SQDN CDR and S3. I didn't know what that meeting was about so I went into it blind. The meeting was held in the BDE TOC and was attended by many Battalion Commanders and their S3s and numerous supporting personnel. BG Hill presented the operational plan for "Operation Dewey Canyon II" (US name) or "Lam Son 719" (ARVN name). The operation consisted of US forces under BG Hill advancing west on QL9 to the vicinity of FSB Vandergrift, then opening the highway from there to the Laotian border, occupying the old base at Khe Sanh, constructing an additional road from the Rock Pile to Khe Sanh, and then protecting both roads while ARVN forces advanced west into Laos to disrupt NVA supply routes and capture supply depots. I was selected by BG Hill to escort and protect engineers in the opening of QL 9 from Vandergrift to Khe Sanh, leading dismounted elements of A Troop west starting at midnight of the prescribed D-Day! Because the engineers were prepared to repair fording sites and install bridging almost simultaneously along the route, I was under the impression that the road would be opened the same day as we started. The remainder of the Squadron would escort and protect engineers in the construction of the new overland road. After A Troop reached Khe Sanh, we were to move north and establish a base camp and then, as the Squadron approached, move eastward to link up with

them. I was given a time schedule for the opening of QL 9 but the total length of the operation was undetermined – we were to be prepared to remain in the field indefinitely. After the briefing I returned to Dong Ha and began preparations for the indefinite portion of the mission but was directed to not reveal what our specific mission was. I attended the SQDN CDR's operations briefing in the afternoon, then made my final preparations and moved out to the Cam Lo area about 4:00 pm. Once in that area I held a PLT LDR's meeting in my vehicle and briefed them on the specific mission. I remember telling them that I wasn't sure as to whether I should be elated to have been selected to lead the advance or be scared to death about the possible dangers involved. That first night I tried to sleep but could not as I had so many planning thoughts running through my mind. I would begin to sleep but then think of something new and get up to make a note of it. This routine continued until the actual movement began.

At 4:00 am on January 29th, 1/77 Armor began the advance to Vandergrift. After they passed my location near Cam Lo, A Troop fell into the road march behind them. We arrived at our staging area at an area we called Ca Lu, set a troop sized position, and, when the engineer unit leaders were available, about noon, I held a meeting for all of the key participants. What I needed to know from the engineers was which sites along QL 9 needed to be worked on or bridged, which engineers by company were designated to do the work at each site, and how many M60 machineguns and PRC 25 radios were available to the engineers. My initial plan was to occupy each site as we advanced on foot with a minimum of five engineers or Cav troopers, with one machinegun and one radio at each site. (There were 25 stream or river crossings, numbered #13 through #36 with one site numbered #17a). I gave the engineers a couple of hours to develop their supporting plans and scheduled a meeting for all leaders for about 6:00 pm. About 4:00 pm I was called on the radio and told to report to BG Hill, who was about one kilometer north of my position. I rode to his location and met with him and LTC Meyers of 1/77 Armor. All General Hill wanted to know was whether or not I was ready and if I needed any additional support from him. I replied that all was ready, so he wished me well and I returned to my troop.

At the 6:00 pm leaders meeting I issued my operations order. For A Troop, all personnel would be dismounted for the movement except for two soldiers per vehicle to move the tracks the next day. Our order of dismounted march would be: a point element of three troopers from 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon, an engineer mine sweeping team with a couple of 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon security troopers, a bulldozer from the engineers, the 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon CP with 2LT Johnson, an M551 Sheridan (intended to provide infrared illumination to our direct front and some heavy firepower if needed), the troop CP with an attached M106 Mortar vehicle to provide immediate indirect fire support, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon and engineers, and 1<sup>st</sup> platoon and engineers, and then four additional bulldozers and an Armored Vehicle Launch Bridge (AVLB) bringing up the rear. At first light, 1LT Boyd would start moving the tracked vehicles forward, advancing as fast as he could after the engineers had prepared or bridged each site. As he advanced, the dismounted troopers would be remounted and would provide us their support if needed. I felt that I had developed a good workable plan that provided for almost any contingency except encountering an enemy force of platoon-size or larger. If that size force was encountered while we were dismounted, all we would be able to do would be to wait until the vehicles came forward.

About dark another AVLB was sent forward and the bridge emplaced at the first stream crossing (#13). At midnight, all elements were assembled in order of movement and we were ready to begin. At the last moment, one of the few "druggies" in the troop protested that he wanted to turn himself in to the drug rehab program. I told him fine, he could do that, only after



we completed our mission. I directed his platoon sergeant to take away the soldier's weapon so that he wouldn't be a threat to us, and then I gave the order to move out. At the same time I told my "FO" (forward observer - LT Tony Hackney) to start the artillery pre-planned fires north of QL 9 to attempt to hide the noise of our movement.

Within an hour, my tactical concept changed significantly. Almost immediately, the Sheridan became stuck in the ford and was immobilized at Site #14. At the same time the word was passed back to me that the lead bulldozer could not make adequate time without using its headlights. Between Sites #14 and #15, the mortar vehicle threw a track and also became immobilized. It was apparent that if the artillery was firing to our north, it was not making sufficient noise to cover the sound of the bulldozer, so I gave the order to turn the bulldozer's lights on and move forward as rapidly as possible. I could only hope that there would not be any enemy of sufficient force to stop us if we were going to meet our time schedule. We continued west then at a good pace, until the bulldozer got stuck at Site # 18. I still had engineers to drop off at sites further west so we continued on until we reached Site #22, at about 6:00 am. We were all exhausted from the march and needed some rest, especially me -- I was going on 48 hours without sleep! We stopped in the middle of the road, put out minimal security, and rested until about 8:45 am. At this point all I had control of was the dismounted elements of 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon and my Troop CP.

Just before we stopped and throughout the time we rested, the air was filled with helicopters, conducting air assaults on the high ground south of QL 9 by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 187<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, and carrying soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry to establish the base at Khe Sanh. There were also helicopters carrying prefabricated bridging materials to the selected sites along QL 9, but none of those aircraft were as far west as we were.

We resumed our movement west at 8:45 am and reached Site #29 at 10:00 am, the time designated for an engineer unit to emplace a bridge. After two hours, with no engineers in site, we again moved west, arriving at Site #33 at 1:30 pm and linking up with a company of infantry from 3/187<sup>th</sup>. I was in communications with that Infantry Battalion's CP, keeping them informed of my forward location, and I was also able to communicate with 1LT Boyd, who kept me informed of the slow movement of the Troop's tracked vehicles. By this time I realized that while my ground movement westward was in keeping with the presumed schedule, the engineers were slower in conducting their missions than what was anticipated. However, from everything I learned later, the engineers did a fine job throughout that day and the next, although I never again was on QL 9 after the big walk!

My situation as of approximately 2:00 pm January 29<sup>th</sup> was as follows:

1. My dismounted element had gone as far to the west as possible. We would now have to wait for our armored vehicles.
2. The river at Site #33 was about twenty feet across and maybe ten feet deep. It was a fast-flowing river with huge boulders on the river bottom, which meant that we would have to launch an AVLB to cross that site.
3. After discussing all possibilities with the infantry company commander, I told him that as long as I was in this area, I would be in command of all our forces, and I directed that he and the bulldozer crew begin clearing enough space for a RON large enough for my troop with vehicles and his company.

I called 1LT Boyd and told him that as soon as possible he was to get the assigned AVLB to the front of his column so it could emplace the bridge immediately upon arrival at my location. We then sat down and rested, although I still did not get to go to sleep soundly. About

5:00 pm our vehicles arrived, after all of the engineer work was completed to that point. They were followed by a CAV Troop from the 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, whose mission was to go past us when we reached Khe Sanh and open the road to the Laotian border. As the AVLB came up, the vehicle commander told me that he was almost out of gas. I didn't want the vehicle to go to the crossing site and have the engine die, so I directed that the nearest gas-bearing vehicle be brought to the AVLB's location so that we could transfer gas to it. This took about another hour, and just as the refueling was being completed, I walked around the AVLB and saw that a number of end-connectors (the large, nut and bolt type device that connected each block of track together) were loose or missing wedge bolts, either situation which could cause the vehicle's track to break apart and then block the road. Again I didn't want that to happen directly at the bridge site, so I directed the AVLB crew to immediately perform the necessary corrective maintenance. The AVLB was finally ready to move the few feet forward and it launched the bridge at approximately 10:00 pm. We then continued the move to the west, with all troops mounted except for the mine-sweep and security elements walking with the bulldozer.

About an hour later, two things happened simultaneously. First, I started losing consciousness -- no matter how I tried, I kept falling asleep. Then I received a radio call from 2LT Johnson, who told me that his lead M551 Sheridan, had detonated a mine, causing it to block the road. (This mining incident occurred on a stretch of road that had been traveled on all day by engineers from the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, had also been mine-swept by my elements, and had been graded by the lead bulldozer!) In my foggy haze, I remember him telling me that it would take quite some time to either repair the vehicle or to get it moved out of the way. I called the infantry battalion's CP in whose area I was now in and asked for information on how fast my column was needed to advance. Basically, I said that if BG Hill wanted me to continue to move forward rapidly, I would need permission to push the disabled M551 off the side of the road into the river that we were paralleling. I never received a response to my request for information or if I did, I slept through it. The next thing I remember was being awakened by my FO and told that the road was cleared of the M551, but the bulldozer crew refused to go any further until they had some rest. This was after daylight, so I told the Troop to eat and clean up, and after I ate I walked forward to see what was wrong.

The lieutenant in charge of the bulldozer told me when I arrived at the front of the column that his crew was too tired to continue without rest. I told him that as soon as I found out what the situation in front of us was, I would be back and order him to get his crew working. I took a few soldiers with me and started walking the roughly one kilometer west towards Site #36. As I was moving I received a radio call from BG Hill telling me he wanted to see me at Site #36. I met up with him there about 10:00 am on January 30<sup>th</sup> and was told that the engineers would not have the final bridge in place for another hour or so. I told BG Hill about the engineer lieutenants' refusal to move asked him for clarification of my command authority over the engineers. BG Hill told me there was no question but that I was in command, and that I should go back to the lieutenant and order him to get his crew working. BG Hill then told me that if the lieutenant refused, I was to shoot him! I said "Yes Sir" and walked back to the column. Fortunately (for both the engineer lieutenant and me), when I told the lieutenant to go back to work, they did! We moved out again and finally reached Site #36 at approximately 11:30 am.

Within an hour, the engineers carried in a bridge under a helicopter and placed it in position. We crossed the bridge, continued up the incline on the other side behind the bulldozer, and at the first place the bulldozer could pull off to the side of the road, we went around it and moved out our normal mounted march speed. I had put my guidon up on a radio antenna so that I

could announce my identity to any friendly forces we might encounter. At the point where a trail turned north to pass by or through the Khe Sanh Base, we veered off in that direction and I reported my location to the BDE TOC at 2:30 pm. I moved the troop about five kilometers north of Khe Sanh and established a Troop-size position and again reported to BDE, this time that my initial mission was accomplished!

As I recall, I had not been given any specific mission to accomplish once we were in position north of Khe Sanh, so I determined that for the first day or two I would concentrate on protecting my force and give the troopers a little rest. The first evening there, one or more of the platoon leaders asked if we could have a "Mad Minute" to test fire all of our weapons and to give any enemy in the area an opportunity to see how much fire power we could bring against them if they were inclined to attack us. (Cavalry troopers got very nervous if they did not have an opportunity to test fire all of their weapons on a regular basis!) I called the BDE TOC and informed them about that we would be test firing our weapons and then gave everyone the word to start firing at a designated time a few minutes later. When we opened fire, the sound was immensely loud, what with 30 .50 cal machineguns, 20 M60 7.62 mm machineguns, 9 Sheridan main guns, and all individual weapons (about 130) firing simultaneously. Within a minute I received a radio call from BG Hill asking what the hell was going on. I explained about the "Mad Minute" and told him that I had informed the BDE TOC - his response was "Roger Out". My FO also called for registration artillery fire, and the 3 mortar vehicles also fired rounds for our perimeter defense. Afterwards, I took a spit bath in my track and changed into a clean uniform, issued orders for the night and then went to sleep, sleeping quite soundly for the first time in days.

During the first full day in this position, which would later be named by the troops as "The Emerald City", in joking honor of LTC Osborn (OZ), who would later establish the squadron CP in the same location, we called for resupply of fuel, food and ammunition. We were only able to get fuel, which was sling-loaded in by a helicopter in a 500-gallon heavy-duty rubber container. Beginning on the second day, I directed one or more platoons to begin a dismounted search of the area about one kilometer around our position, and then I had them move towards the east mounted, in an attempt to find a suitable trail so that we could move in that direction to affect a link-up with the squadron when they reached that area. (The new road being built was officially known as "Red Devil" road, but the troops all called it "The Yellow Brick Road".) As we were rapidly using up our rations, and less rapidly our ammunition, I told 1SG Bradley to take a few vehicles south to Khe Sanh to see what he could beg, borrow or steal for us. I also thought it would be neat if he could get us a bulldozer to help establish our position. Late in the day, "Top" returned, having "obtained" three ¾ ton trailers that could be towed behind ACAVs, and two additional water trailers so that we would have one cargo trailer and one water trailer per platoon. Those would be necessary once we later began platoon-size operations. Top also told me that he had "obtained" a small bulldozer, but it moved so slow that he thought it would take forever to get to us, so he abandoned it. Just as this resupply convoy reached us, LTC Osborn flew into our position with a couple of cases of C-rations, about two dozen cartons of by now luke-warm milk, and a few cases of M16 ammunition. We appreciated the effort, although it certainly was not adequate for our needs.

A few days later, I took my APC and a couple of ACAVs and headed for Khe Sanh. There wasn't much of our squadron there to coordinate with so it was going to be a short trip. However, I passed by the CP of the 2/17 AIRCAV and decided to stop in and see if I could find a friend that I knew from the Advance Course at Fort Knox, Major Jim Lloyd. Fortunately, he was

there in their TOC so I spent a few minutes talking to him. His unit was flying in support of the ARVN who had invaded Laos. Jim told me of the severe beating the ARVN was taking and that a large number of 2/17 helicopters had been shot down. I got a good orientation on what was really happening, as opposed to what was in the press then and immediately after the conclusion of the operation.

In the next day or two, one of the platoons had moved far enough east to find a fording site across an east-west moving stream. I went to check it out and when I approached it, it appeared that we would be able to use it. I dismounted my vehicle and as I was looking at the stream banks and into the streambed, I noticed something that got my attention real quick. What I saw was an animal footprint that was much larger than the spread of my hand. And, it had just been made within minutes because it was slowly filling up with water! The only animal that I knew that could make a print that large was an Asian Tiger. I got back on my vehicle post haste and conducted the rest of my recon mounted. A similar thing occurred the next day when LTC Osborn flew into my area and told me over the radio that he wanted to pick me up and conduct an aerial recon. When he landed, I took Jimmie Johnson with me and boarded the helicopter. We flew around a bit and then landed at a site the CO wanted to look at on the ground. The CO, Johnson, the SQDN Chaplain (who was also on the aircraft) and I dismounted and as we started to walk away from the helicopter, it took off. LTC Osborn said that it would return in a few minutes. I was only armed with my pistol, as was the CO, and Jimmie had an M79 Grenade Launcher with only the one round in its chamber. The Chaplain was not armed. Here we were, very deep in the middle of "Indian Country" with no substantial weaponry to support ourselves until the helicopter returned. I was somewhat scared at this situation and it got even worse when I jumped into a streambed and observed human boot prints that were, like the Tiger's the day before, slowly filling with water, indicating that at least one enemy soldier was in our vicinity. I immediately told everyone to get back, and we formed ourselves in a defensive posture until the helicopter returned. That was the longest few minutes of my life!

Once we had reconnoitered the probable route that the squadron was going to follow in this area, I decided to move the troop about seven kilometers to the east along that route. I also knew by this time that the squadron would occupy the position that I was currently occupying. This must have been close to February 15<sup>th</sup> as I recall going cross country in my APC and thinking that it was my 31<sup>st</sup> birthday and what the hell was an old guy like me doing this far out in Indian Country. When we left our original position, the empty rubber fuel container was still there. We tried for a day or two in advance to get a helicopter to come in and pick it up but to no avail, so as we departed, we turned our .50 cal machineguns loose and destroyed it. Our new position was ideally situated on a broad open plain so we had good fields of fire in all directions. I was still mainly concerned about self-protection for the troop as we were still a long way from support by any other friendly forces. Our isolation from other units, combined with there having been no ground resupply, meant that the two or three "druggies" in the troop had used up whatever drugs they had carried with them and were undergoing withdrawal problems. Although two of the platoon sergeants asked me to take the druggies off of their hands, I refused because I knew if I sent them back to the rear, they would just start using drugs again.

Right after we made the move, Top, who had gone back to Dong Ha to make sure things were OK there, returned with some supplies and the first mail we had received in over two weeks. He brought the mail to my APC and we sat inside contemplating what to do about a potential problem. The suspected drug pusher in the troop was a mechanic on our maintenance vehicle. In the mail was a box about ½ cubic feet in size, addressed to that mechanic. Something

was rolling around loose inside the box and it was apparently not filled with much because it was so light. After Top and I talked, I told him to take the mail to the platoons and then bring the mechanic to my track where I would give him his box. Top did that and returned in a few minutes with the mechanic. I told him that I suspected that he was a drug pusher and that I suspected that there were drugs in the box addressed to him. I said that my options were to either send the box back and let the MPs open it or to let him open it in my presence. He opted to do the latter because, as he said, he had no idea what was in the box (which by the way had no return address on it.) He opened the box and inside was a single can of food from a C-ration package, and taped to the inside wall was a vial, about the size of a test-tube, containing white powder. The mechanic professed no knowledge of what it was, so I gave him two more options. First, I said I would confiscate it from him and send it the rear to be analyzed by the MPs, or second, I would, with his permission, destroy the contents of the vial. He really had no choice but to let me destroy it, which I did by pouring it into a fire in a fire-pit that was burning in the center of our position.

Within a day or two of our movement to the new position, the SQDN and B TRP CPs and one platoon of B TRP linked up with us for one night. I had the opportunity to talk with LTC Osborn and CPT Wayne Young to hear about how the road building had happened but I didn't receive any information that I can recall on how the rest of Lam Son 719 was progressing. I was made aware that C Troop, which was guarding the eastern end of the road in the vicinity of the Rockpile, had numerous small enemy contacts and had taken some casualties. The next day the squadron and B TRP departed and made it to "Emerald City". Before the CO left, he told me to begin establishing platoon NDPs. That same day I directed 1LT Boyd to recon a good, safe position about one kilometer to the northeast and to be prepared to occupy it in late afternoon. I wanted him to have a solid position as I fully expected that he would be attacked that night. Sure enough, at about midnight the 1<sup>st</sup> platoon position was attacked by about a squad of NVA sappers. The attack was easily beaten off with only one minor casualty sustained. They had one confirmed enemy killed.

The next day, a squad from an engineer platoon, mounted in APCs, pulled into my position. They said they would be working on the road to the west of me. I told them to check into and out of my radio net every day so that I would be able to help them if they encountered any enemy. They didn't check out that night nor did they contact me the next day, although I could hear them operating only a kilometer or so away. The following day about mid-afternoon we heard some explosions and gunfire from the direction where the engineers were working. I tried to call them on the radio but got no answer, so I sent a few vehicles from one of the platoons to see what happened. Apparently, a small group of enemy attacked the engineers and then withdrew, killing at least one engineer and wounding others, and damaging one vehicle. By the time my troops got to the area, all they could do was assist in the medical evacuation of the dead and wounded. Had the engineers kept me informed about their position, my troops could probably have responded quickly enough to engage the enemy.

During these few days BG Hill called me on my radio and said he was enroute to my position. I got out of my vehicle and went to the perimeter of the position where I popped a smoke grenade where I wanted him to land. When he landed his helicopter, he waved to me to come over to it. As I recall, his aircraft did not have doors on it and MAJ Tommie Steiner, Wayne Tingle's friend, was the co-pilot in the helicopter. Steiner was the BDE Aviation Officer and routinely flew every helicopter that BG Hill took. When I got to the helicopter, BG Hill said

he just wanted to stop in and thank me for my fine work on the advance to Khe Sanh. That was it! I was quite pleased and passed the word around to all of the troops.

That night or the next I went to sleep as usual about midnight or a little earlier. I hadn't thought of it at the time, but my driver and the medic (both new guys – Stringbean had departed and Doc Miller was either in the rear or riding on another vehicle) were not sleeping in the vehicle. When I awoke about 5:30 am the next morning, I called the Commo Track to see if anything had happened during the night. The RTO said he would be right over to see me. When he got there he told me that they had heard an explosion during the night in the vicinity of my vehicle and didn't know what it was. I got out of the vehicle and walked around it, and on one side I saw where an explosion, probably from a hand grenade, had detonated on the side of the vehicle. What I was able to determine was that somebody, most likely the drug pusher, had attempted to "Frag" me by tossing a hand grenade on top of my vehicle, intending for it to drop inside as I slept with the top hatch partially open. Fortunately for me, the grenade did not go inside but rather rolled off of the vehicle and detonated on the side. I didn't say anything about this until late in the afternoon when I had a leaders' meeting. Top was back in the field and I discussed what I was going to say with him and he agreed with my approach. At the end of the meeting I told all of the leaders that I had been fragged the night before and that I knew who had done it although I couldn't prove it. Looking directly at the head mechanic I said that the bastard that did it had better be successful the next time because if he wasn't, I would kill him! And by the way, if he was successful then Top would kill him! Top wholeheartedly agreed. That ended this incident, although I never again left the hatch open at night.

It was then about February 17th and I was scheduled for a second R & R. I debated on whether or not to go and decided that I would. I had 1LT Adams, my XO, come to the field to be the acting commander, and spent most of one afternoon briefing him on the troop's operations in the field. Mike was a great XO on whom I relied heavily to keep things under control at Dong Ha, and I had full confidence in his ability to command the troop in my absence. I did give him some advice, though. I explained to him that I thought it was highly likely that in my absence he would receive some order from LTC Osborn that Mike would think was extremely dangerous or ill advised. I refreshed Mike's memory about the one occasion at Christmas when I was ordered to break the platoons into two NDPs and that I refused to do it. And, there were a couple of times when I heard the CO tell other troop commanders to do things that I would have been reluctant to do. I told Mike that if something like that came up he had three options: say yes sir and attempt the operation, knowing that he would have to live with the responsibility if things went wrong; say yes sir and then do things differently to make the operation more sound and safer; or he could refuse to do it and thereby face possible relief and court martial. I felt comfortable when I caught the helicopter back to Dong Ha that Mike would do a good job in my stead.

After only one night at Dong Ha, I was driven to the military airport at Quang Tri to catch a flight to Danang. At the airport I ran into CSM Roy Nelson, the CSM of 1/77 Armor. He was returning from duty from the hospital after being wounded in the early days of Lam Son 719. We only chatted a few minutes until my flight was called. I arrived at the R & R Center at Danang in early afternoon and immediately checked in and inquired about an R & R flight to Australia. The next two flights there were booked solid and because I was low priority going on a second R & R, I was told that there wasn't any chance of getting to Australia later. So, I made a decision to go to Hawaii instead because I really didn't want to go to any of the other R & R sites such as Hong Kong, Malaysia, etc. I was then booked for the next day's Hawaii flight, which I got on. It was a very uneventful flight, during which I decided to call home and see if Sue Ellen

and the boys were going to be there. Given all that I had been through since my October R & R and all the things that could possibly happen to me when I got back to the Troop, I thought I would be stupid not to go home. The one problem with my decision was that it was specifically forbidden for troops on R & R in Hawaii to return to the mainland. I had no idea how or if the military would enforce that rule so I didn't give it a second thought. After all, the worst thing the authorities could do to me was to send me to Viet Nam!

In Hawaii I called home, made round trip flight arrangements and as I recall I was able to sit on the beach and catch some sun before my flight left Honolulu. Other than the fact that I flew to the States in a Boeing 747, the only time that happened before or since, the entire five days was uneventful. I was delighted to see my family in their rental apartment in Lakewood, Colorado, and I think my mother and brother Bill came down from Laramie to see me. I remember that I had lost so much weight, down from about 155 to 135 pounds, that I had to go out and buy some clothes to wear. (I also remember that shortly after I returned at the end of March I rapidly put weight back on and outgrew those clothes.) It was a really short visit but I was able to refresh myself for the last month of my tour in Viet Nam.

The return trip was also uneventful until I got to Dong Ha. It took two days to get flight out of Danang and I ended up on a supply aircraft that landed at Dong Ha, from which I had to walk about a mile to the troop area. By the time I got there it was early evening but I intentionally did not make my presence known to squadron because I wanted to spend at least one night in the rear before going back to the field. This was February 28<sup>th</sup>. I was surprised and shocked to find that Mike Adams was there, and was disheartened by the story he told me on how that came about.

Immediately after I left the field, Mike was ordered to move the troop to the east, exchanging positions with some B and C Troop platoons, which had been protecting that part of the road. One day, after they had moved, Mike was called on the radio and directed to send some dismounted troops to a location about a kilometer south of the road. Apparently there had been a radio intercept or an aerial sighting of something that BDE wanted to be reconnoitered. This was the type of mission armored cavalry units were frequently assigned and for which they were ill suited. It was easy enough to assemble 15 to 20 troopers, equip them with adequate radios and machineguns, and then head them into the jungle looking for the enemy. What normally wasn't taken into consideration by echelons that assigned that type mission was that it severely degraded the capability of the armored vehicles and the dismounted element often had to operate beyond the range of their radios and supporting indirect weapons. That is exactly what happened in this instance. The dismounted patrol moved out, got disoriented or lost, couldn't contact the Troop CP, and then discovered numerous newly constructed enemy bunkers that had recently been occupied! Because of the situation, the platoon leader decided to get out of there immediately. They moved in the direction of the road and finally found it. They called in their situation to the CP and Mike called it in to the SQDN CP. Within a few minutes the SQDN CO called Mike and told him to send the dismounted soldiers back to the bunkers and destroy them.

Given the facts that I have portrayed here, it seemed to me then and seems to me now that what should have happened was that at least an infantry company, reinforced with an engineer demolition team, should have been sent to do the bunker destruction. Apparently, Mike Adams thought the same way and, after thinking about the order to send troopers back to the bunkers, he told LTC Osborn that he would not obey that order because it was too dangerous. Mike was told to pack his bags because he was relieved as acting commander, and he would be replaced by a staff captain as soon as a helicopter could get there. Within a short period of time a helicopter

arrived, picked up Mike, and dropped off the Squadron's newly assigned S2, whose name I don't recall ever knowing. That captain then commanded for the next week or so until I returned.

The evening that I returned to Dong Ha was spent with Mike, who brought me up to date on everything else that had happened while I was gone, and I discussed with him things that I wanted done in the next 7 days which was when I would be coming out of the field. I'm sure we drank more than a couple of beers that evening, and when I went to bed I slept like a log. In the morning I was told that A Troop had enemy contact the previous night so I immediately went to the SQDN TOC to find out what had happened. The following account is based upon my own recollection of the events of that enemy contact as I was told by the crew at the SQDN TOC, from what I found out later that day when I returned to the field, and from what I later heard from participants in that action.

After 1LT Mike Adams was relieved of acting command, the replacement captain apparently was not diligent in obtaining necessary resupply of defensive materials (RPG screen, trip flares, concertina wire, etc.) and maintenance supplies for the vehicles in the troop. Consequently, the full operational availability of the vehicles in the troop was somewhat diminished, as was the ability to occupy strong defensive positions at night. During the day on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2LT Kincer and the 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT were detailed to protect some engineers and their bulldozers as they made some improvement to the road about three kilometers to the west of the troop CP. Late in the day, one of the M551 Sheridans broke down and was not going to be able to be moved back to the position selected for the night's NDP. Kincer made the decision to form into two NDPs, one around the disabled Sheridan, with three or four vehicles, and the other with the remaining six vehicles and two bulldozers. The position selected for the latter NDP was not very good – there were not good, long-range fields of fire for the main weapons – especially at the north side of the position where a heavily wooded ravine began just a few meters from the vehicles. And, the vehicles had a limited amount of defensive materials to emplace. Kincer positioned his command ACAV closest to that ravine. At sometime around midnight, an enemy sapper initiated an attack by throwing a satchel charge against the command ACAV. Kincer was sitting on the driver's hatch, which was in the locked-open position, pulling guard duty for that vehicle. Apparently, he had his legs hanging over the side of the vehicle and when the satchel charge detonated, it tore off one of his legs and completely destroyed the other leg. Fierce fighting occurred for about 30 to 45 minutes, as the enemy penetrated the position. The troopers in the smaller NDP heard the firing but made the decision not to move towards it to assist in beating back the enemy assault. Even while the attacked troopers were still fighting, a MEDEVAC helicopter was called for, and when the firing died down, it flew in and evacuated Kincer and six other wounded troopers. Of the six, one had lost a foot and the others were less seriously wounded. Two dead NVA soldiers were found the next day and numerous blood trails indicated that many more had been seriously wounded.

By the time I went to the SQDN TOC at Dong Ha a new 2LT had been flown into the NDP to assume command of the platoon. I made arrangements to fly to the field in the early afternoon and then went to the Hospital in Quang Tri to see the wounded troopers. The six troopers were all together in the emergency room, having received initial treatment and awaiting further care. LT Kincer was in the center of the ER tent on a gurney, with transfusion tubes in both arms, but he was loosing blood as fast as they were pumping it into him. The floor beneath him was one large pool of it. Fortunately, Kincer had never been conscious since the attack started. I talked to the head nurse who told me there was no chance of him recovering but they would continue to give him blood until the end. At that time, about 11:00 am, he had received



over 50 pints! I touched him as I said a prayer for him and then went over to the other six and talked briefly with them. I then returned to Dong Ha and caught my flight to the field. Later in the afternoon I was informed that 2LT Kincer had died of his wounds.

Before stopping at the Troop CP the helicopter landed at the scene of the attack. I talked briefly with the new lieutenant, whose name I can't recall, and with SFC Powell, the PLT SGT. I made sure that they were reestablished as a complete platoon and that they had been re-supplied, and then I flew to the Troop CP. I had a very short conversation with the captain, who then got on the helicopter and flew to the SQDN CP. I spent the remainder of the day catching up with the current situation and familiarizing myself with the new positions that the platoons were occupying. The TRP CP was in the center of the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT's position, which was on the top of a steep hill. It wasn't a good position but from what 2LT Johnson told me, it was the only adequate site in the area. The 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT remained in the area of their NDP, which was approximately two kilometers west of the TRP CP, after using the bulldozers to clear a more suitable area. The 1<sup>st</sup> PLT occupied a position about two kilometers to the east, again on top of a steep hill. Because of the elevation of these positions, we received a lot of rain and were often blanketed with fog or clouds. I remember thinking that it was not a very pleasant way to spend my last few days in the field. The Troop's mission was to outpost the road and to make infrequent dismounted patrols in the areas of the platoon positions. There was no traffic on this section of the road, from my position east to the Rockpile, because of the steepness of the road and its slickness due to the rain.

That day and all of the next I spent collecting the maintenance data, vehicle by vehicle, on what repair parts we needed and how we could get them from squadron. On the evening of March 2<sup>nd</sup>, I called the SQDN Maintenance Officer, CPT Bill McGough, and read him a list of the parts I needed by vehicle (there were about ten that were of only limited availability). This was a standard practice between us, or so I thought. My main concern was how to get the parts, assuming they were on hand. What I received for my effort was a radio call from LTC Osborn, telling me that my troop's maintenance was all screwed up, and that by God I would stay in the field until I got it fixed, even if it meant staying closer to my departure date than 10 days. From then until the 19<sup>th</sup>, repair parts trickled in, and the vehicle status slowly improved.

Over the next two weeks we did not experience any direct enemy activity and life was really quite boring, with a couple of exceptions. On one cloudy, wet evening, I received a call from a helicopter asking for help in locating a Ranger patrol that was operating to my northeast. I could hear the helicopter but could not see it, so I directed it by sound to my position from which it was able to fly on the correct line to meet the patrol. On another day, I was sitting on top of my vehicle catching some sun when my eyes were drawn to my immediate north. From the far side of the next ridge I observed about six enemy 122mm rockets firing to the southeast, towards the Vandergrift staging area on QL 9, south of the Rockpile. Through my FO, I immediately called for suppressive artillery fires, as I could identify the exact position from which the rockets were fired. My FO told me a minute or two later that we could not get any artillery because, whenever enemy rockets were fired at Vandergrift, all artillery had pre-designated counter-battery targets at which they fired. Try as I might, I could not convince anybody with authority that it would be better to shoot at the known location of the enemy rocket launchers than at some "suspected" location. We were finally able to direct some artillery on our target after awhile, but it was too late in my opinion to any good. I heard later that my acquaintance, CSM Roy Nelson of 1/77 Armor, was severely wounded in a rocket attack at Vandergrift, and I have always wondered if it

was the same attack, and if things would have been different had I received immediate artillery support.

On another clear day, I was again sitting on top of my vehicle, when I received a call from LTC Osborn that he was enroute to my position. In a few minutes his helicopter arrived in the area and we tossed a smoke grenade to the place where we wanted him to land. LTC Osborn was flying in the co-pilot's seat and was apparently controlling the aircraft's flight, even though he was not a "rated" pilot. As the aircraft started to land on the steep hillside, its rotor struck the earth, causing a large cloud of dust and some serious shaking of the whole aircraft before it settled down on its skids and shut down. Unbeknownst to me, one of the RTOs (Dennis Willis) on the Commo Track had taken a Polaroid picture of the helicopter. Just as LTC Osborn walked up to my vehicle, wondering how he was going to explain that slight accident, Willis arrived, held up the now developed picture, and asked LTC Osborn for an autograph. It was all I could do to keep from falling over laughing, but I kept a straight face as Osborn swore at Willis and told him to get away from him! (At the 3/5 CAV Reunion in Louisville, KY, in June 2003, now retired Colonel Osborn attended for the first time. One evening, my "Doc", Fred Miller, pulled a similar photo from his album and asked Osborn for an autograph. Time heals all wounds, and he did autograph it with amusement.) The helicopter was not damaged and was able to fly home without assistance.

By March 17<sup>th</sup> the troop's maintenance posture had improved considerably. That was the day I was supposed to return to Dong Ha. Late in the day I received a call from LTC Osborn, who told me that my replacement was not available yet and so I would have to stay with the Troop at least another day or two. I had a nightmare vision of something awful happening to me, such as had occurred on my first RVN tour when I had to stay in the field an extra day. Fortunately, nothing happened. On the 18<sup>th</sup> we received a load of APC track blocks for 1<sup>st</sup> PLT, which would correct the remaining vehicle problems, but they would have to be carried to that platoon by hand because the road between our positions was still quite slick with mud. That evening I was called by LTC Osborn and told that my replacement was in Dong Ha and would be flown to the field the next day. I was to then fly back to Dong Ha on the helicopter's return flight.

On the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT had a brief ambush engagement on the road west towards the SQDN CP. It didn't last long and there were no casualties. I had instructed 1LT Boyd to walk over to my position at first light that morning with enough troops to carry the APC track. When he arrived, I spent a few minutes with him, reviewing the hand-written efficiency report I had written on him. It was a good report, befitting a good combat leader. Afterwards, he departed with his group, carrying the track. About noon I was informed that the weather did not permit a helicopter to fly to my position, but that one had flown my replacement to the SQDN CP. Another helicopter would be available about 3:00 pm at the CP and I was to make the determination on whether it could fly to my location. If not, I was to drive there in one of my vehicles. About 1:00 pm the clouds had not lifted so I departed in my APC with a couple of ACAVs escorting me. I demonstrated the panache of a cavalryman by flying the troop guidon from my antenna and proceeded west, past the scene of the morning's ambush, past the scene of 3<sup>rd</sup> PLT's heavy engagement, along the "Yellow Brick Road" on which I had not traveled, past the location of the big troop-size position where I had spent so many days and nights, and past a burnt-out mortar carrier that we had lost to enemy action while I was on R & R. When I arrived at "Emerald City", I went into the CP and reported to LTC Osborn. He had very few words for me, other than introducing me to CPT Tom Merriwether, my replacement. I was told that I only

had ten minutes before the helicopter left, so I took Merriwether to my track, introduced him to the crew, pointed out where the platoons were on the map and gave him my map. That was about it. I don't remember if he had any questions of me – if so I answered them – so we shook hands and I grabbed my bags and left for the helicopter, which departed immediately. Thus ended my time in the field and my command of A Troop.

In Dong Ha I got drunk that night with Bill McGough and with MAJ Jim Strickland, the SQDN XO, who was in the rear area because he had had a run-in with LTC Osborn. I can't remember whether or not it was an official relief for cause action but it didn't matter to me in either event. Bill had two sets of orders to take him back to the US. The first set ordered him to depart RVN on March 27<sup>th</sup> and directed him to report to Fort Knox after a month's leave. The second set ordered him to depart on March 26<sup>th</sup> and directed that he be discharged when he got home. Since he wanted to fly home with me, he decided to use the first orders, and I thought he had decided to remain in the Army. In about two days we flew to Cam Ran Bay together, hoping to get a flight home earlier than the 27<sup>th</sup>, but that was not to be. Instead, we drank ourselves through the days and nights there. In the early hours of the 27<sup>th</sup>, we boarded a flight to McChord AFB, Tacoma, Washington. After an uneventful trip, we arrived late in the evening, made our travel arrangements for the next day and slept in chairs in the airport. The next day we said our goodbyes and looked forward to meeting in about a month at Fort Knox. I flew to Denver and Bill flew to Ohio. I never saw him again.



## EPILOGUE

As with my return from Vietnam the first time, I did a lot of soul searching on my way home in March 1971. I still thought that the US was doing the correct thing by supporting our allies there and from what I saw, the ARVN was doing a fine job even though Lam Son 719 turned out to be a debacle. Although I didn't personally know or speak to any Vietnamese on my second tour, I could tell from the reports I saw during my time at Brigade that their forces were up to the task of defending themselves, especially with the local RF and PF units. The people in Quang Tri Province were essentially free from the daily interference in their lives caused by the VC and NVA invaders. I firmly believed that "Vietnamization" was working and that with continued US materiel and fire support (primarily helicopters), the South would ultimately maintain their freedom. As for the US forces, I saw first hand the results of failed personnel policies in the way we tried to fight the war, and the debilitating effects caused by drug and race problems. Although I experienced few of those problems (probably more than I knew about, however) in A Troop, the ramifications for the Army would be significant for years to come.

Regarding the soldiers I commanded, I think they were (with a very few exceptions) the best group of young Americans that could ever be assembled. Draftee or enlistee, lifer or one-term soldier, they did their jobs to the best of their abilities and training, under the most difficult of circumstances that were beyond their control. One time at a job interview much later, I was asked what about my life was I most proud of. Without hesitation I responded that I was most proud and satisfied to have commanded in combat nearly 200 of America's best young men and to have done so with so few casualties!

I remember even less about my second homecoming than the first – that period of time is just blank in my mind. I had orders to Fort Knox and reported there about the 1<sup>st</sup> of May to the Armor School where I was going to be an instructor. Almost as soon as I arrived, I received a letter from BG Hill thanking me for my work under him. It is a letter that I cherish to this day. In June or July Top Bradley called me from his home in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, where his family stayed while he was in Vietnam. I invited him to my quarters and we talked and drank well past midnight. The one thing I remember about that brief chat was that the soldier whom I tried to take legal action against my first day in command of A Troop, was still in Dong Ha and had still avoided the military justice system! That spoke tons about how that system in that Army had failed. Top was enroute to Germany and although he promised to keep in touch, I never heard from him again.

Shortly after I arrived at Fort Knox, a number of officers from 3/5 CAV got together and met socially on a regular basis. MAJ/LTC Jerry Nader, the SQDN XO before Borgstrom, led the group and included John Crowley, George Topping (in C 2/34 before my time) and Monty Meigs, who just recently retired from active duty as a four-star general. His replacement in Vietnam as A Troop Commander was CPT Eric Shenseki. Rick commanded A Troop for only a few weeks before he detonated a booby-trap and lost part of a foot. He just retired as Chief of Staff of the Army in June 2003. I kept in touch with many of those officers but over the years lost contact with them.

Two other things happened that summer of 1971. First, I received a letter from MAJ Rick Borgstrom, requesting that I write a statement to mitigate what damage his efficiency as XO had done to his career. I politely declined to do that. About the same time I received a similar request from the S4 of the squadron who had apparently been relieved of his duties by LTC Osborn after I left. That request I agreed to, and wrote that, although I did not always agree with the way he

handled his job, I thought that overall he performed well. Further, I recall stating that whatever problems he had as S4 were a direct result of the imperfect guidance and direction he received from the XO and CO. Borgstrom ultimately was promoted to LTC but retired in the early 1970s. The S4 probably did not win his battle over the bad efficiency report and I heard that he got out of the Army a couple of years later.

**WHATEVER HAPPENED TO:** The following individuals are listed in the order they appeared in the narrative and are only the people that I knew something about after Viet Nam.

**Charles Greene:** Promoted to Colonel after command of 2/4 CAV and subsequently was the Fort Knox Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Training.

**Gene Nelka:** After returning from war in 1968, Gene was hospitalized for a considerable time and then discharged from active duty. He lived at home for a while with Carol and their two children, but his brain was messed up and they finally had to put him into the care of the Veteran's Administration. He was struck and killed by a railroad engine while walking along the track on Veteran's Day of 1978 or 79.

**Herm Schmidt:** After the Advanced Course, Herm attended a school for US State Department personnel who were going to Viet Nam to take over from the military as District and Province Advisors. During the initial class, the head administrator told the class that in the past, the government had sent second-class people to the advisor jobs but that now, starting with this group, they were sending the cream of the crop. Herm said he, along with most of the rest of the class who had already served as advisors in RVN, was quite upset about having his first tour considered as a second-rate job. After his return from that second tour, Herm was assigned to ROTC duty at William and Mary University but was then RIFed (Reduction in Force) – discharged from the Army when it downsized after the war. Herm and his family stayed in Virginia but I lost all contact with him.

**Gary Roderick:** Gary was in my CGSC class in 1973-74 after completing a second tour as an advisor – he was at the major battle of An Loc during the enemy's Spring Offensive of 1972. He later commanded a tank battalion in Germany and was then the project officer at Vilseck for the Army's transitioning of tanks from the M60 series to the M1 Abrams. That was the last that I saw of him, in 1982. He left that job and went to Fort Irwin where he was on the staff working for "Soc" Ioanidis. He then went to Tennessee as the Senior Armor Advisor to the National Guard there. One afternoon he came home from running with his wife and dropped dead of a heart attack.

**Josephus McCoy:** Mac got out of the Army and went to work as a janitor in one of the buildings at the Armor School at Fort Knox. I saw him often when I was going to school there but never saw him after I went back to RVN.

**Howard Bachman:** I saw Howie once at Fort Knox when I arrived there in 1968 and then lost track of him until 1970 in 3/5 CAV. After that I again lost track of him until I began the pre-command training for Lieutenant Colonels in January 1981. We went through that training together and I saw him once or twice in Germany – he commanded a tank battalion. He later

commanded a brigade at Fort Hood Texas and then retired and became the head of a Military Academy in Pennsylvania.

**Nguyen Van Dem:** Dem was promoted to Captain while still in the hospital in March 1968. When I returned to Fort Knox from my second tour in 1971, Dem had just been promoted to Major and had completed the Advanced Course there. Unfortunately I did not see him. When the South fell in 1975, I made numerous attempts to locate him from refugee organizations but to no avail. Later, I became a member of a group called "Counterparts", an organization of both US/Allied Advisors and the Vietnamese whom we advised. I tried to find out information about him through that group but again had no success.

**JB Taylor:** I saw JB at Fort Knox once after my second tour. He later commanded the 1/11 CAV, taking command from David Maddox. He followed that by commanding the 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR, was promoted to Brigadier General and was assigned to Fort Lewis in 1988. I tried to contact him once or twice but only saw him once or twice in the PX. He then was promoted to Major General and was assigned to Saudi Arabia and subsequently retired in the Fort Lewis area. I have not heard from him at all.

**Brigadier General Barnes:** General Barnes left the II Corps Senior Advisor position to command the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade in RVN. I only saw him once after I left RVN on my first tour – I met him in an elevator at the 1969 AUSA Convention in Washington, D.C. He was a Major General at the time and was embroiled in an investigation of his RVN command, initiated by an officer named Hebert, who wrote a book about Barnes. It was interesting reading!

**Louis B. (Brooks) Martin:** Colonel Martin remained at Fort Knox in various positions from 1968 to 1980 when he retired. I kept in contact with him via Christmas cards until I retired.

**Wayne Tingle:** After AOAC, Wayne also went back to RVN for a second tour, after attending the helicopter course at Fort Rucker, Alabama. In April or May 1971, he was seriously wounded while in combat, flying in Cambodia. He was assigned to the Armor School with me and recovered from his wounds, but in September 1971 he was diagnosed with a tumor on his spinal column. I went with his wife to Washington, D.C. where he had been evacuated (Walter Reed Army Hospital) and stayed two days there until he was operated on and came out of intensive care. Although Wayne seemed to have recovered completely from that, he was not allowed back on flight status. We attended CGSC together, and later he commanded a battalion at Fort Knox. From there, he was assigned to the Pentagon to the office of the Chief of Legislative Liaison – a position he kept until he retired in 1986. Through his contacts from that position, he became a highly paid lobbyist for a defense contractor.

**Bill McGough:** I often thought about Bill but my attempts to locate him were unsuccessful, until 2003 when I paid for a search based upon his social security number. (In 1997 at the Nashville 3/5 CAV reunion, Bud Page gave me copies of the HHT and A Troop personnel rosters that he had-I have used them from time to time to track down people.) I waited too long as Bill's son told me when I made contact with his family. Apparently, Bill came home from RVN, stuck around his wife and family for a few months, and then walked away from them. He suffered through some tough times with a drinking problem, got himself back together, and made a new

life for himself. In late 2000 he was diagnosed with multiple cancers, and he died in March 2001, at the same time as the 3/5 CAV was meeting in San Antonio, Texas. He was one of my favorite people of all time.

**Richard Meyers:** LTC Meyers left the Brigade S3 position and assumed command of 1/77 Armor. He did an excellent job in that command during Lam Son 719. I know that he remained in the Army after VN and was promoted to Colonel but I never had any personal contact with him.

**Harold R. (Bud) Page:** Bud Page departed VN in December 1970 and went to Germany where he commanded a tank battalion. He later commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR and would have commanded it when I should have been assigned there after CGSC. But that didn't happen. I saw him once at Fort Knox in May 1980 when I attended the annual Armor Convention. Bud was the Director of the Armor School's Command and Staff Department and was going to retire within days of when I saw him. I told him that I was on the command list and was awaiting assignment to a specific unit. He thought about that and said that he didn't think a squadron in the 2<sup>nd</sup> would be available to me. I asked him to put in a good word for me if he had the chance and he said he would. Long after I retired I became active in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Association and started to write the Regiment's post-WW II history. I wrote COL Page in 1995 and asked for input from him but I didn't receive a response. In the spring of 1997 I answered the phone one day and immediately recognized Bud Page's voice. He asked me if I was planning on attending the next 3/5 CAV reunion (which I had told him about in my letter). I said I hadn't made up my mind yet and he responded by saying he would go if I went! That sold me on it. The reunion was in Nashville (actually quite a ways out of town) in late June 1997. Bud was already there when I arrived on Thursday evening and we did a lot of talking that evening. The next morning after the group's formal meeting we again talked for quite awhile. Later that day I found out that he and his wife had to leave on an emergency. I had given him a copy of "Into Laos" to read and he returned it by mail in early August, saying he looked forward to seeing me again at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cav reunion in October. In early September I received a telephone call from Colonel (ret) Bill Wilson, who had been the 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron Commander and then Regimental XO under Bud. He told me that Bud had suffered a massive stroke while on a golf course in his Florida hometown and was being kept alive mechanically until his family could all arrive. I called Ron Quezada of the 3/5 CAV group who lived in Florida and he went to visit at the hospital, and I called once and talked to Bud's brother. After about six days, Bill Wilson called me and told me that Bud had died. Bud Page was unquestionably the best officer, commander and combat leader I ever worked for. I truly regret not having served under him again and not seeing him more often after my second tour in VN. May he Rest in Peace. I know we will meet again sometime in Fiddler's Green, the home of all departed cavalry troopers.

**John Hill:** Brigadier General Hill commanded 1<sup>st</sup> BDE 5<sup>th</sup> Mech until it deactivated and then was the Deputy II Corps Advisor, serving under the noted civilian, John Paul Vann. He later was promoted to Major General but then retired to his home state of Texas and became an attorney. He died sometime in the late 1990s.

**Rick Borgstrom:** Rick completed his tour somewhere in VN, under the cloud of a bad efficiency report from 3/5 CAV. He was assigned to Fort Knox where I was, and when I saw him he asked



me to write a letter on his behalf to mitigate the bad report he received from Bud Page. I politely declined. He was ultimately promoted to LTC but retired by 1980.

**John Crowley:** John was attending AOAC at Fort Knox when I returned there from my second tour. Upon completion, he was assigned as an instructor in the Weapons Department. In 1972-73, he was RIFed and moved to his home state of Georgia. He immediately signed up in the Army Reserve and within a year or two he volunteered for active duty as a reservist. He became a Personnel Specialist and was able to serve enough time on active duty to retire as a LTC. I have communicated with him a number of times by phone but to date he has not been able (or willing) to attend a 3/5 CAV reunion.

**Chester Beverly:** Chet was the only A Trooper that worked for me after VN. When I took command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron 2<sup>nd</sup> ACR in Bamberg, Germany, he was my G Troop First Sergeant. I later assigned him to be the assistant S3 sergeant. After he left Germany he retired from the Army. I know he lives in Florida but he has never answered my letters so I don't know what he is doing.

**Billy (Stringbean) Marshall:** When I returned from VN in March 1971, Billy was assigned to a unit at Fort Carson Colorado. One day I took my family from Denver and drove to see him briefly. Within the next year he was discharged from the Army and returned to the Kentucky/Tennessee area and went back to work for the same company he had worked for before entering the Army. He called me a couple of times while I was at Fort Knox but I lost contact with him until I paid for a search and got his address in Tennessee in 1999. I talked to him and wrote a couple of letters, and he attended the last 3/5 CAV reunion in 2003 in Louisville. I hope he will continue to attend in the future.

**Fred (Doc) Miller:** Sometime in the late 1980s I had a phone call from Fred. It was brief and I don't recall it distinctly. Then, in January 1998 I received a letter out of the blue from him. After a few turns in his life he settled down in central Idaho and worked as a nurse. In addition, he joined the ID National Guard and was commissioned as a Medical Service Corps officer. By then, Fred had advanced to command of a battalion. In his letter he wrote how often he thought of me when he was a company commander and how he saw me as a role model. I was able to stop in and visit with him that spring and told him about the 3/5 CAV group. He has attended ever since and I hope to stay in contact with him.

**Don Helmbrecht:** Don was one of my Forward Observers but not on my vehicle. I have vague memories about him from VN, but he attended the reunion in 1997 and we have enjoyed many fine times since then. Don is a postal employee in New York state and getting close to retirement.

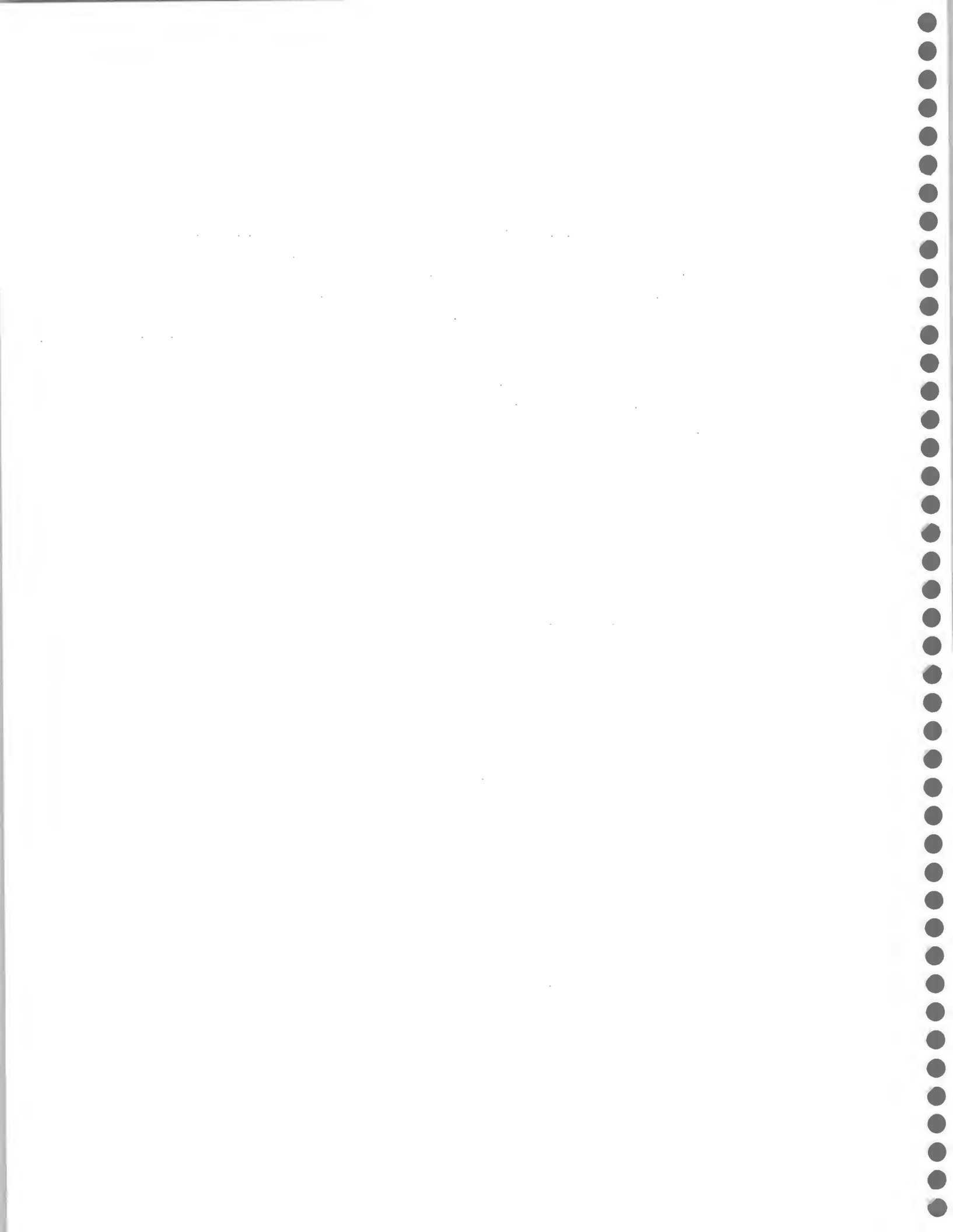
**David Boyd:** After VN I only saw Dave one time, when I was working for a defense contractor I ran into him in Heidelberg Germany. We have connected on the internet a few times but he hasn't attended a reunion yet. Dave retired from the Army as somewhat of a specialist on Russian armaments and is now working for the government in the same field.

**Jimmie Johnson:** Jimmie was severely wounded shortly after I left VN (see the account of his battle in "Into Laos"). Although he was motivated to make the Army his career, he encountered some stupid problems with the "system" after he recovered from his wounds. And, he apparently had a bad marriage. In 2000 or 2001 I paid to get his address and called him on the phone. He lives in Florida with a second wife and life has apparently really gone his way now. Jimmie came to the reunion in 2001 in San Antonio and we've talked since then. I hope to see him again in the future.

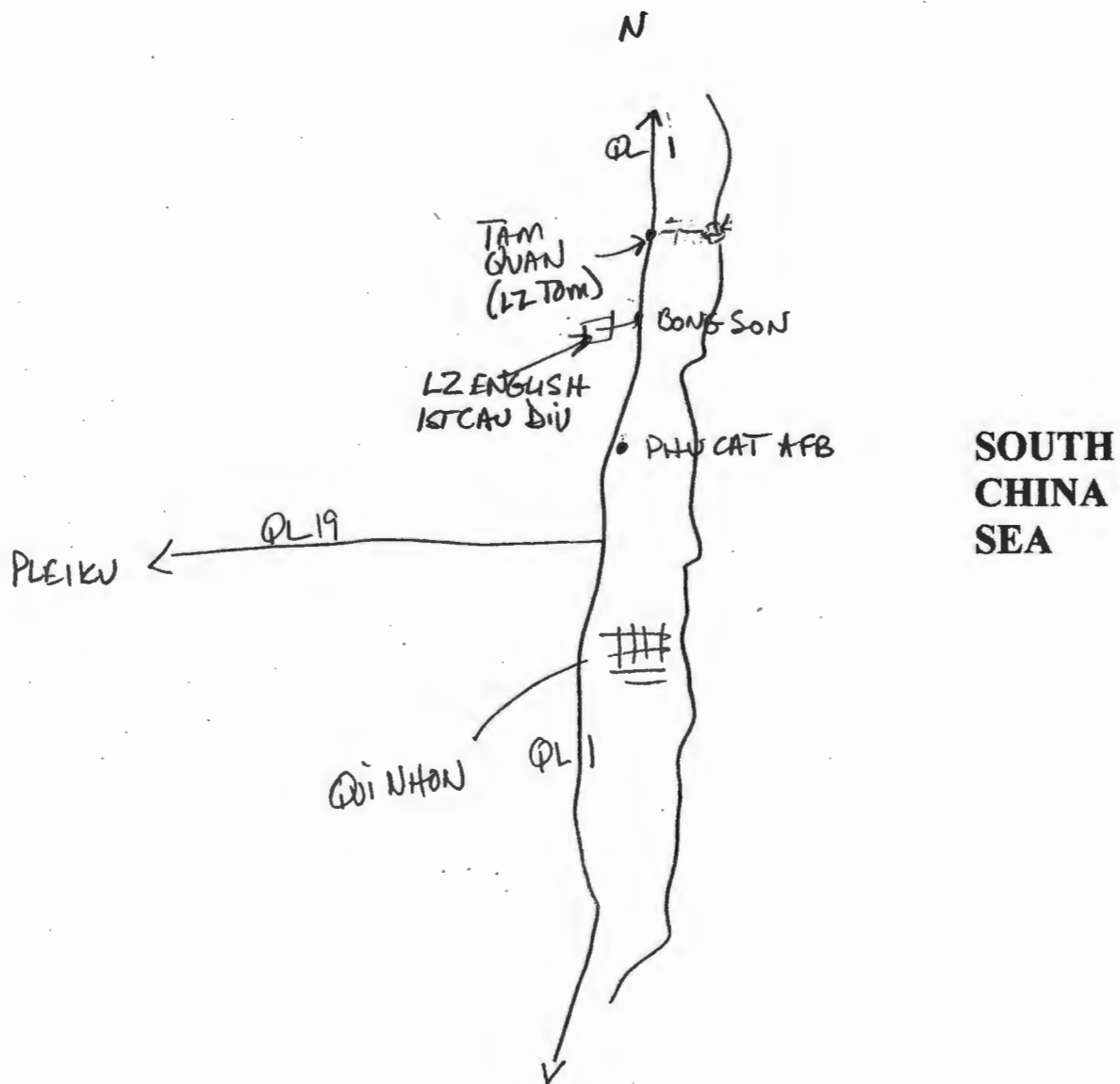
**Robert Osborn:** Colonel Osborn retired from the Army and after a short while teaching history in Texas, went to work for his wife who had started a Real Estate business. That business has made them rich – they apparently even have an office in the Seattle area. Bob attended his first 3/5 CAV reunion in Louisville in 2003 and was well received. I hope he continues to attend the reunions.

## **APPENDIX A: MAPS**

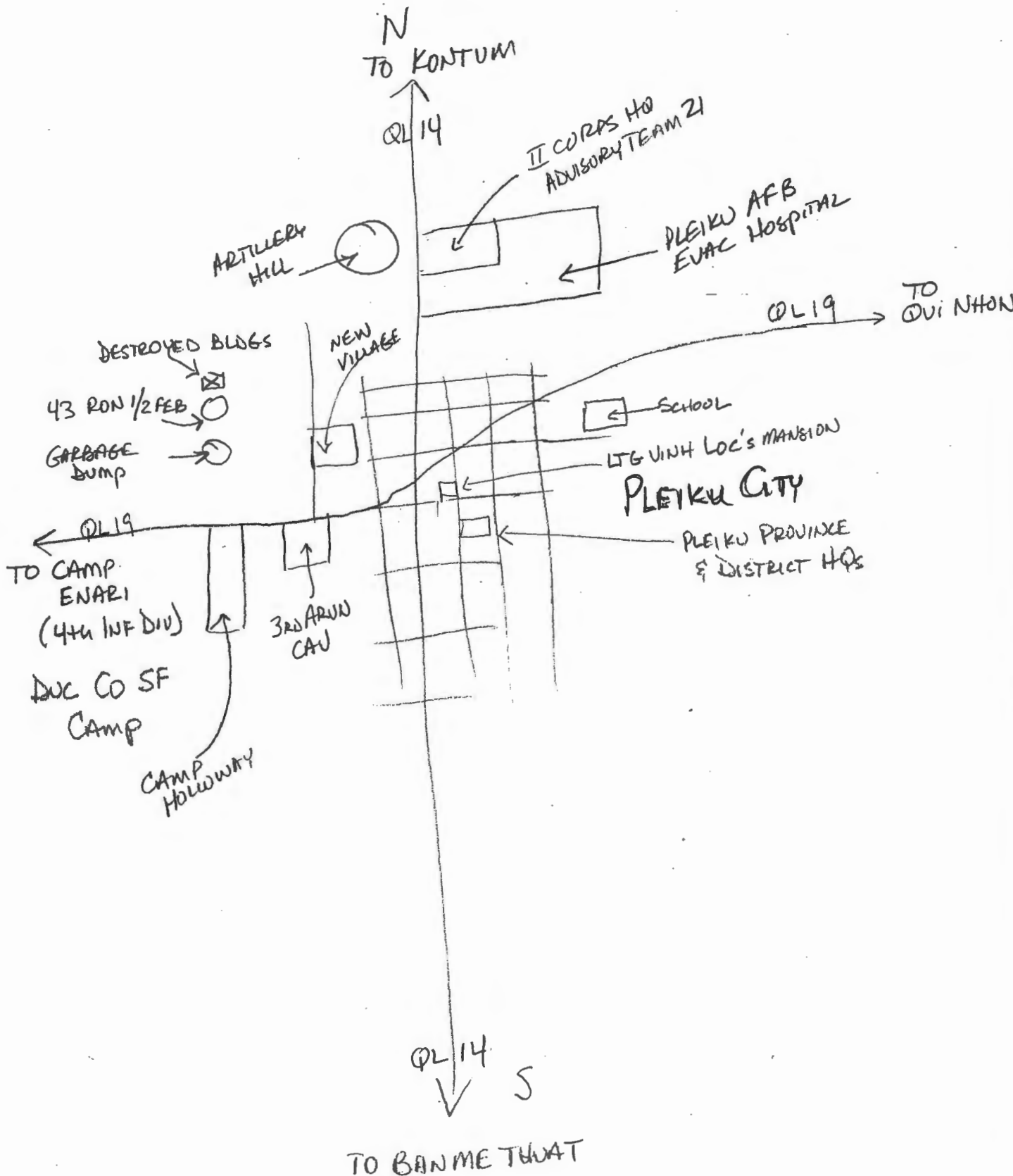
1. South Viet Nam
2. Binh Dinh Province
3. Pleiku City
4. 1<sup>st</sup> BDE 5<sup>th</sup> Mech TAOR
5. Quang Tri Province
6. QL 9 Advance to Khe Sanh





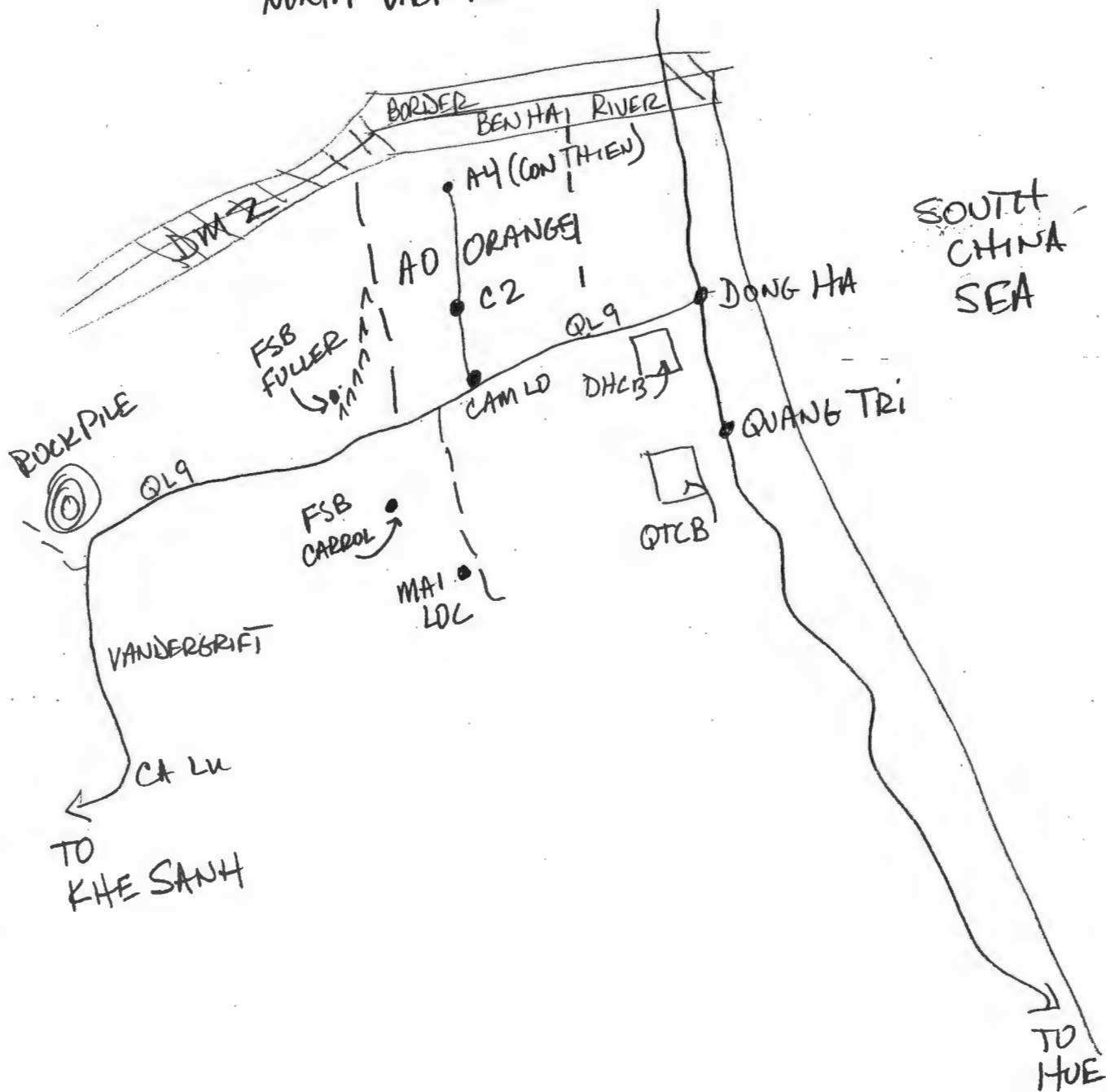


**BINH DINH PROVINCE**



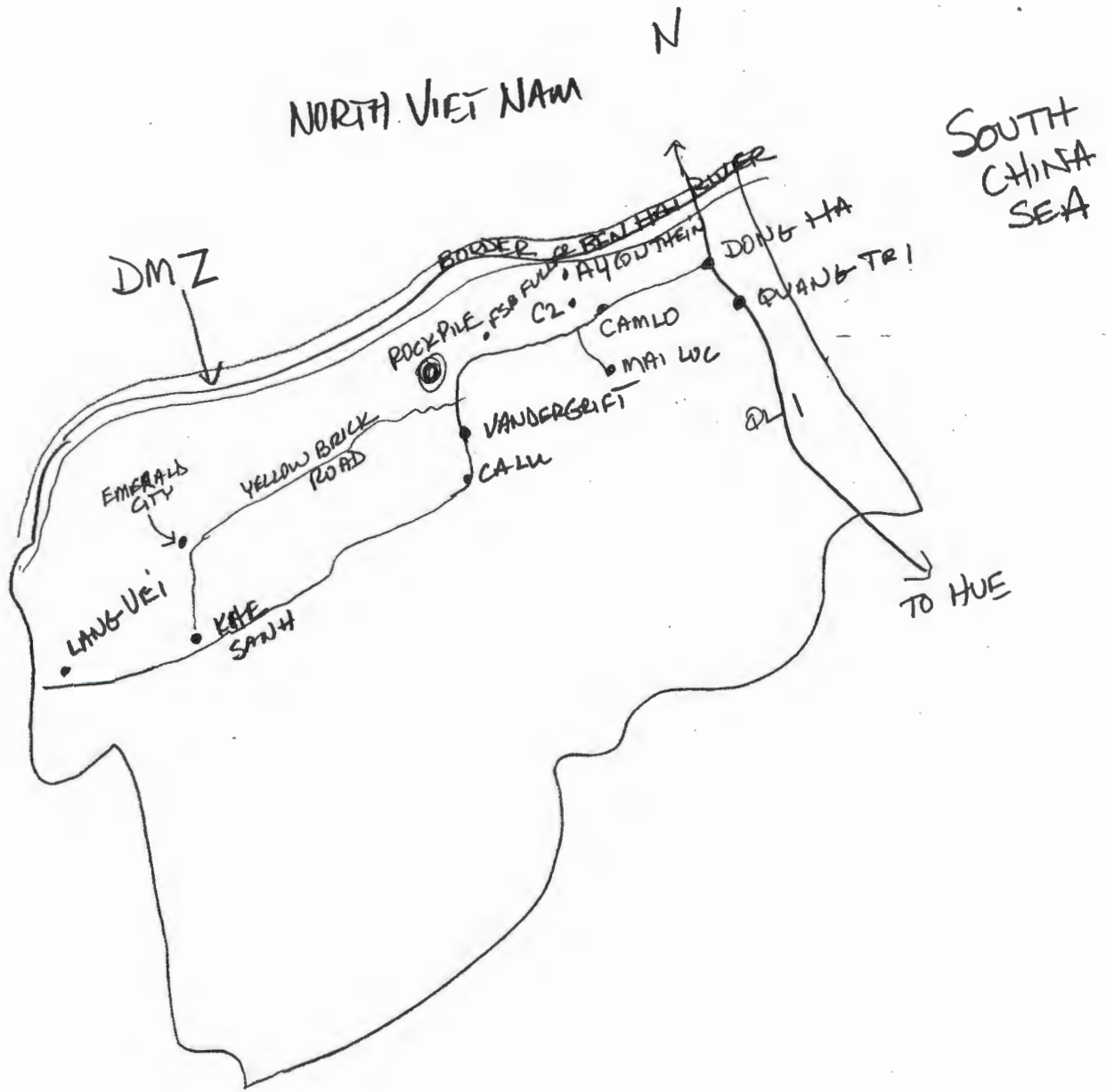
**PLEIKU CITY**

# NORTH VIET NAM



**1<sup>st</sup> BDE 5<sup>th</sup> Mech Tactical Area  
Of Responsibility  
(TAOR)**





**QUANG TRI PROVINCE**



**APPENDIX B: Photographs**

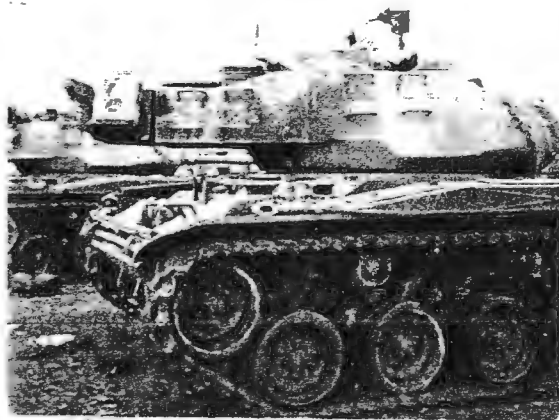




Senior Advisor Major Fred Raines



Staff Advisor Major Bob Altier



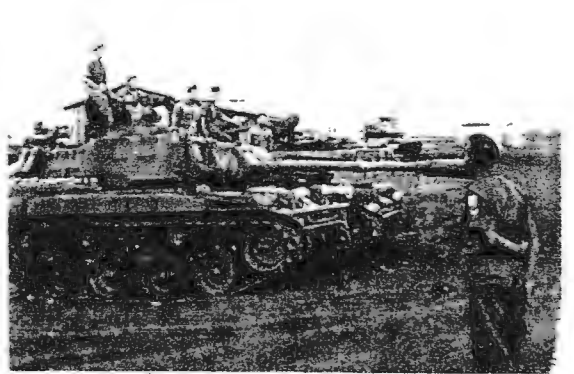
RPG Hole in M41 Tank April 20, 1967



1LT Khoa and Artillery FO



SP5 Josephus McCoy



CPT Hoang with HQs Tanks and Crews



CPT Hoang and Me in the Ia Drang Valley



SSG Chris Everett and CPT Hung



1LT Dem 4<sup>th</sup> Troop Commander



CPT Gene Livermore and SFC Norm Jackson



PLT SGT Sang and 1SG DO



Jack and Me in Tam Quan



CAV Troop Advisor



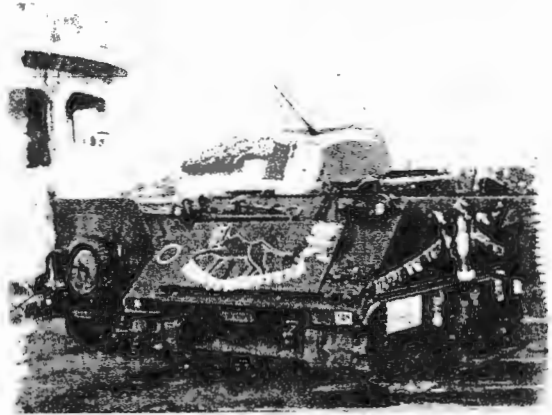
Weapons Captured December 1967



Troop Party December 1967 in Tam Quan - Me, 2LT Hong (3<sup>rd</sup> PLT), 1lt Khoa (Acting CO), 2LT Ao (1<sup>st</sup> PLT), 2<sup>LT</sup> Tai (XO), ASP LUONG ("Mickey" 2<sup>nd</sup> PLT), Norm Jackson, Unknown



PLT SGT "Santa" Sang 12/24/67 Tam Quan



Santa's Sleigh



A Troop 3/5 CAV Commander at A4



1LT Ron Hatton (1<sup>st</sup> PLT) and "FO" Hillbilly



2LT Jimmie Johnson (2<sup>nd</sup> PLT) and Dennis Willis (RTO)

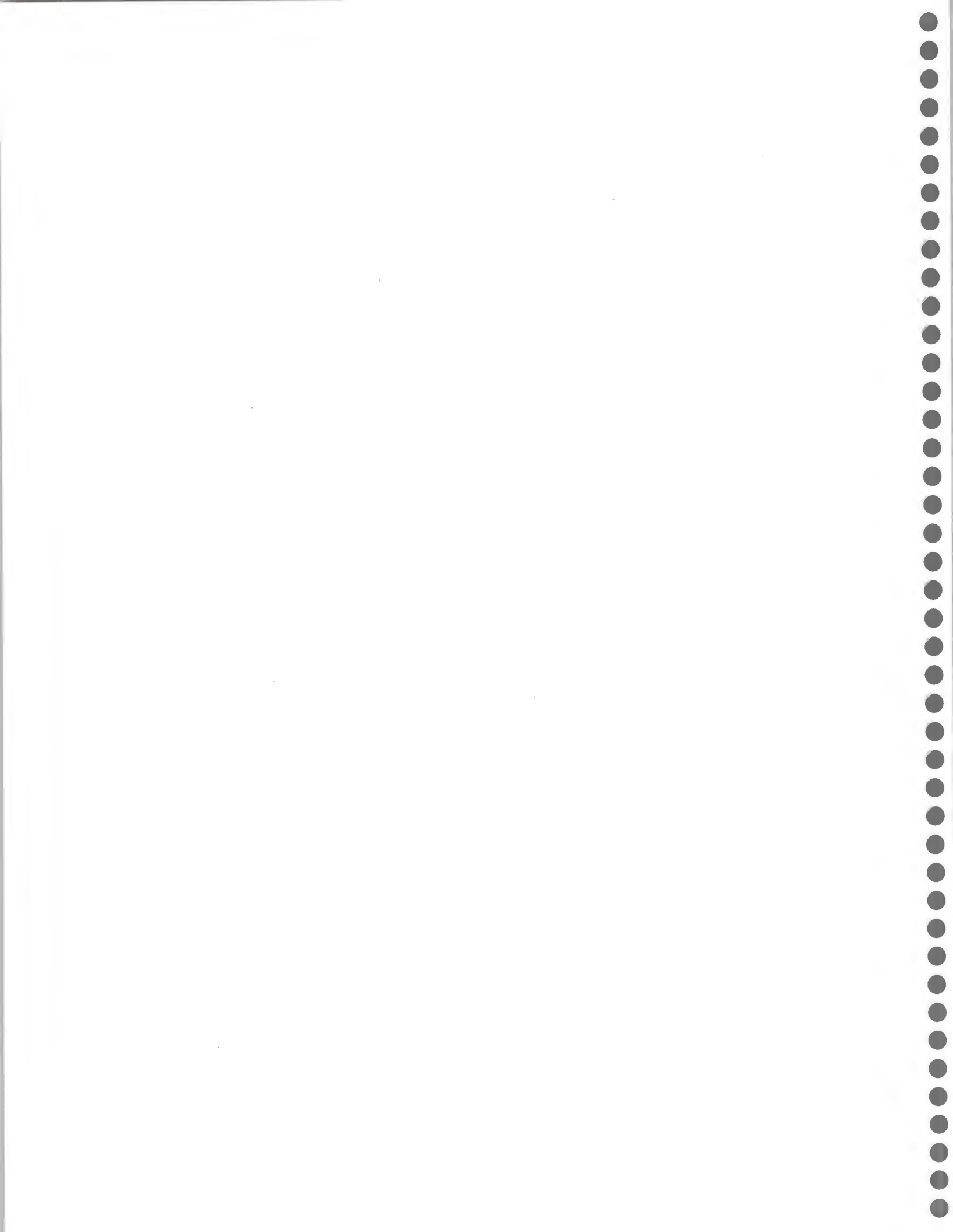


Playing George Patton in the Perfume River at Hue



## **APPENDIX C: Documents**

1. Bronze Star with V device Citation 11 July 1967
2. Certificate of Authorization for the ARVN Armor Badge 20 July 1967
3. ARVN Gallantry Cross with Bronze Star Citation 21 August 1967
4. Tank Troop Advisor Officer Efficiency Report (OER) 24 March to 12 August 1967
5. Award Orders for the Combat Infantryman Badge 4 October 1967
6. ARVN Gallantry Cross with Silver Star Citation 29 February 1968
7. Award Orders for the Purple Heart 8 March 1968
8. Bronze Star Citation (1<sup>st</sup> Oak Leaf Cluster – OLC) February 1968
9. Cavalry Troop Advisor OER 13 August 1967 to 18 March 1968
10. Army Commendation Medal with V device 19 April 1968
11. Assistant BDE S3 OER 11 February to 12 July 1970
12. Squadron S3 OER 13 July to 8 November 1970
13. Assumption of Command of A Troop orders 9 November 1970
14. Award Orders for the Air Medal 17 November 1970
15. Troop Command OER 9 November 1970 to 11 March 1971
16. Bronze Star Citation (2<sup>nd</sup> OLC) March 1971
17. Letter from Brigadier General John G. Hill, Jr. 17 March 1971
18. Letter from Fred Miller 4 January 1998



HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM  
APO San Francisco 96222

GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 1332

11 July 1967

AWARD OF THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

STEWART, THOMAS W. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ CPT ARMOR USA

Awarded: Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device

Date action: 20 April 1967

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: Captain Stewart distinguished himself by heroic action on 20 April 1967 while serving as Senior Advisor to the 1st Troop, 3rd Armored Cavalry Squadron, Army of the Republic of Vietnam. On this date, the 1st Troop was engaged in an assault on an estimated North Vietnamese Army battalion when, as elements maneuvered for position, they came under intense automatic and anti-tank weapons fire. Realizing that his counterpart was not bringing maximum fire to bear on the enemy positions, Captain Stewart, without regard for his personal safety, exposed himself to the intense enemy fire in order to relay sound tactical advice to his counterpart. Repeatedly, he assumed exposed positions to direct and coordinate artillery and air strikes on enemy positions which effectively suppressed the volume of hostile fire. When friendly casualties were sustained, Captain Stewart directed their successful evacuation and then continued to move about the battle area, encouraging the Vietnamese tankers to continue the fight. As a direct result of Captain Stewart's bravery and inspiring leadership, the Vietnamese pressed the attack and were successful in routing and driving the enemy from their positions. Captain Stewart's heroic actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the military service.

Authority: By direction of the President under the provisions of Executive Order 11046, 24 August 1962

FOR THE COMMANDER:



NEIL N. SNYDER, JR.  
Colonel, USA  
Adjutant General

WALTER T. KERWIN, JR.  
Major General, USA  
Chief of Staff

DISTRIBUTION:

I & II - A (Plus 2 MACAG-AO)  
1 - TAGO, ATTN: AGPB-A  
1 - TAGO, ATTN: AGPF-F



**BỘ CHỈ-HUY THIẾT-GIÁP-BÌNH**  
 QUÂN LỰC

**VIỆT-NAM CỘNG-HÒA**

**CHỨNG NHẬN**

.....Đội-Úy STEWART, THOMAS W.....

.....Số-quân ~~1000000~~.....

*được phép mang huy hiệu Bình-Chung Thiết-Giáp-Bình Quân-Lực Việt-Nam Cộng-Hòa.*



**ARMOR COMMAND**  
 OF  
 THE REPUBLIC  
 OF

**VIETNAM ARMED FORCES**

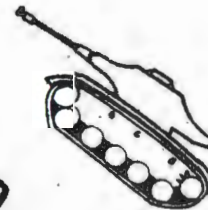
**CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION**

*This Certificate authorizes ..Captain.....*

*..... STEWART, THOMAS W. ....*

*to wear the ARVN Armor branch insignia*

*This authorization is granted by order of  
 the Commanding Officer, Armor Command  
 Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces.*



KBC 4478 NGÀY 20 THÁNG 7 NĂM 1967  
 APC 4478 July 20 1967



*Luong Bui Tung*

**TRƯỞNG BUI TUNG**  
 ĐỘI-TRƯỞNG THIẾT-GIÁP BÌNH  
 Colonel ARMOR

**CHỈ-HUY TRƯỞNG**  
 CHIEF OF ARMOR



Order 38/QDII/TQT/CP/HC

Commanding General  
II Corps & 2nd CTZ

Republic of Viet Nam  
Armed Forces Republic of Viet Nam  
Headquarters, II Corps AG

Under the provision of Decree 655-400 29 January 1964 and Directive SVVT 1472/TTW/VP/PCP/3 21 May 1965, Subject: The Gallantry Cross.

AWARD OF THE GALLANTRY CROSS WITH BRONZE STAR

STEWART THOMAS W. CAPTAIN U.S. ARMY

A brilliant and courageous combat leader. During his period of service as Advisor to the 3rd Armored Regiment, Captain Stewart proved himself an outstanding officer with a high service spirit who aided all units in obtaining resounding achievements.

Especially, during Operation Dan Thang 114, 20 April 1967, Captain Stewart side by side with the Commanding Officer led all assaults against all objectives, in lightning attacks against the enemy thus achieving tangible results

APD 4579 21 August 1967

Lt Gen VINH LOC  
CG, II Corps &  
2nd CTZ

READ CAREFULLY. REFERENCED SECTION IN AR 623-105 BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO FIL IN ANY ITEM

| PART I - PERSONAL DATA (Read Section IV, AR 623-105)  |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|--|--|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL<br><u>STEWART, THOMAS W.</u>   |            |           | 2. SERVICE NUMBER<br><u>81203</u> |                           | 3. GRADE<br><u>CPT</u> | 4. DATE OF RANK<br><u>30Sep66</u>      |  | 5. BRANCH<br>BASIC <u>ARMOR</u> DETAIL |                             | 6. INIT RA ADPMT<br>YES    NO |                                     |                                     |
| 7. UNIT, ORGANIZATION, STATION AND MAJOR COMMAND<br><u>US MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, SAIGON, VIETNAM, PACIFIC COMMAND</u>   |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| PART II - REPORTING PERIOD AND DUTY DATA (Read Sections IV and V, AR 623-105)   |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| 8. PERIOD COVERED   |            |           |                                   |                           |                        | 9. REASON FOR RENDERING REPORT (Check) |  |  | 10. REPORT BASED ON (Check) |                               | RATER                               | INDORSER                            |
| FROM  |            | TO        |                                   |                           |                        | ANNUAL                                 |  |  | DAILY CONTACT               |                               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |                                     |
| DAY   | MONTH      | YEAR      | DAY                               | MONTH                     | YEAR                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>    |  |  | FREQUENT OBSERVATION        |                               |                                     |                                     |
| <u>24</u>   | <u>Mar</u> | <u>67</u> | <u>12</u>                         | <u>Aug</u>                | <u>67</u>              | <input type="checkbox"/>               |  |  | INFREQUENT OBSERVATION      |                               |                                     |                                     |
| DUTY DAYS   |            |           | OTHER DAYS                        |                           |                        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>    |  |  | RECORDS AND REPORTS         |                               |                                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>133</u>  |            |           | <u>9</u>                          |                           |                        | <input type="checkbox"/>               |  |  | OTHER (Specify)             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| DUTY ASSIGNMENT FOR RATED PERIOD  |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| 11. PRINCIPAL DUTY  |            |           |                                   | 12. DUTY MOS <u>81203</u> |                        | 13. AUTH GRADE <u>Captain</u>          |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| Troop Advisor, M1 Tank Troop, 3d Armored Cavalry Squadron, II Corps Advisory Group, MACV.   |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| 14. MAJOR ADDITIONAL DUTIES   |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| PART III - MANNER OF PERFORMANCE (Read paragraph 21c, AR 623-105)   |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| 15. RATER Captain Stewart is an outstanding officer who has materially contributed to the success of the advisory effort. I rated him as outstanding in Part IV because from the onset of his assignment he has consistently proven himself to be an outstanding foundation for the overall advisor accomplishments in the squadron. When his unit engaged an enemy battalion, Captain Stewart adapted to every demanding combat requirement, encouraging his ARVN counterpart to aggressively utilize fire and maneuver to defeat the enemy. Captain Stewart's calm and decisive actions were a primary factor in the victory over the enemy force. He quickly established an unprecedented rapport with the new troop commander. He reorganized the troop administrative and maintenance structure. Exercising tact and persuasion he recommended a system of maintenance inspections that have produced one of the better maintenance structures in the Squadron. He instructed the junior grade platoon leaders in many of their newly acquired responsibilities that had previously been ignored as the foundation for a good command structure. He has initiated a plan to improve the dependent housing areas along with provisions for shelters for the dependents. His interests in the welfare of the soldiers and their families has won for him immeasurable respect and admiration. Captain Stewart is a devoted officer who has demonstrated resourcefulness, coupled with a unique awareness of the problems facing Vietnamese military organization. His patience and perseverance, together with exceptional technical knowledge, has - (Cont) |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |
| 16. INDORSER <input type="checkbox"/> I AM UNABLE TO EVALUATE THIS OFFICER FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON: Because of the nature of our duties, I have not been able to directly observe Captain Stewart's performance. However, I have great confidence in the rating officer, whom I know very well, and support his judgment completely. Based upon reports received, I understand Captain Stewart is interested in the Foreign Area Specialists Program for which I believe he would be well qualified. I, too, recommend him for integration and also recommend him for promotion.   |            |           |                                   |                           |                        |  |  |  |                             |                               |                                     |                                     |

DA FORM 67-5  
1 AUG 63

REPLACES DA FORM 67-5, 1 FEB 62, WHICH IS OBSOLETE EFFECTIVE 30 SEP 63.

ARMY OFFICER EFFICIENCY REPORT  
(AR 623-105)

STEWART, THOMAS W. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ CPT 30Sep66 ARMOR Period covered 24 Mar 67  
12 Aug 67

ITEM 15. Rater - Cont

Given him the tools with which he was able to instill responsibility and command awareness in a junior ARVN officer who previously was considered ineffective. Captain Stewart has applied for the FAST Program. In consideration of his abilities to successfully work with allied forces, I highly recommend his acceptance into this program. He should be favorably considered for integration into the Regular Army.



ROBERT E. ALTIER  
MAJ, ARM, OF105314  
Squadron Advisor  
II Corps Adv Gp, MACV

HEADQUARTERS  
 UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM  
 APO San Francisco 96222

SPECIAL ORDERS  
 NUMBER 277

4 October 1967

EXTRACT

36. TC 322. UP AR 672-5-1 fol indiv US Mil Asst Comd (SD-5891), Vietnam, org as indic, awd the COMBAT INFANTRYMAN BADGE as indic.

THIRD AWARD

VASQUEZ, GUADALUPE                      RA6951835                      MSG E8                      Adv Tm #77

SECOND AWARD

WEAVER, JAMES W.                      069572                      LTC                      CE                      Adv Tm #2  
 WYER, ROBERT M.                      02209139                      MAJ                      INF                      Adv Tm #86  
 GAMBLE, EUGENE                      RA51130285                      SFC E7                      Adv Tm #22

FIRST AWARD

*195761  
A/2ACR*

|                        |                     |     |       |                 |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----|-------|-----------------|
| GILLAND, JAMES W.      | 027484              | LTC | CE    | Adv Tm #59      |
| CRITTENDEN, OLIVER H.  | 095179              | MAJ | ARMOR | Adv Tm #70      |
| DENZLER, ANCIL L.      | 093387              | MAJ | INF   | Adv Tm #39      |
| GOOD, LEE E.           | 02271054            | MAJ | INF   | Adv Tm #52      |
| HOLMES, WILLIAM P.     | 0F100285            | MAJ | INF   | Adv Tm #22      |
| KIRK, RUSSELL J.       | 04030744            | MAJ | INF   | Adv Tm #43      |
| VAUGHN, EDWARD M. JR.  | 04074434            | MAJ | INF   | Adv Tm #34      |
| VAUGHN, NORMAN M. JR.  | 075849              | MAJ | INF   | Adv Tm #54      |
| WHEELER, ROCK C. JR.   | 084297              | MAJ | ARTY  | Adv Tm #28      |
| BURT, LEVI             | 05318466            | CPT | INF   | Adv Tm #28      |
| GARNER, JAY M.         | 05314798            | CPT | ARTY  | Adv Tm #36      |
| KNAUER, WILLIAM M.     | 094698              | CPT | INF   | Abn Div Adv Det |
| McLAUGHLIN, ROBERT W.  | 05005391            | CPT | INF   | CMD             |
| PLAUT, PETER K.        | 0F101035            | CPT | ARTY  | Adv Tm #33      |
| QUIRIN, PETER H.       | 05322444            | CPT | INF   | Adv Tm #22      |
| REED, HANFORD B.       | 05406359            | CPT | QMC   | Adv Tm #2       |
| SEIBERT, GUNTER P.     | 02307303            | CPT | INF   | Adv Tm #1       |
| SIMS, JACKIE D.        | 095649              | CPT | ARTY  | Adv Tm #91      |
| ✓ STEWART, THOMAS W.   | <del>05313856</del> | CPT | ARMOR | Adv Tm #21      |
| SULLIVAN, WILLIAM E.   | 05313856            | CPT | INF   | Adv Tm #23      |
| THOMAS, ROBERT B.      | 02293730            | CPT | INF   | Adv Tm #96      |
| WHITAKER, JAMES P.     | 0F101252            | CPT | INF   | Adv Tm #1       |
| BAILEY, RONALD B.      | 0F104607            | 1LT | INF   | Adv Tm #21      |
| BRODKA, STANLEY A.     | 0F107554            | 1LT | INF   | Adv Tm #1       |
| LYNCH, JAMES Q.        | 0F103465            | 1LT | ARTY  | Adv Tm #4       |
| ROBERTS, WILLIAM H.    | 0F104258            | 1LT | INF   | CMD             |
| SHIELDS, BUFORD F. JR. | 05326314            | 1LT | INF   | Adv Tm #2       |
| STEWART, LARRY N.      | 0F108941            | 1LT | INF   | Adv Tm #33      |



R E P U B L I C   O F   V I E T N A M

7 ALLANTRY   7 ROSS  
 \*-\*-\*-\*-\*

MERITORIOUS CITATION BEFORE THE DIVISION

- THOMAS W. STEWART - Captain -  - US ARMY -

"A courageous, outstanding officer who displays a praiseworthy fighting spirit and a high degree of devotion to duty.

While serving as Advisor to the 4th Troop of the 3rd Armored Personnel Carrier Squadron, Captain STEWART was very zealous with regard to his duties and conscientiously assisted the unit in the field of training, especially for military operations against the Communists.

In particular, during an operation on 30 January 1968 to drive a harassing Communist unit from the Pleiku Provincial Capital, and during another operation on 2 February 1968 at Than Phong hill, Pleiku, Captain STEWART distinguished himself by coolly and bravely joining Vietnamese troops in launching a violent attack against the enemy's sustained defensive positions. In this manner, these two operations achieved the following results: More than 360 Communist soldiers were killed in action, and 52 others captured. In addition, 158 assorted weapons and a large quantity of ammunition were seized".

Registered # 15  
 Major NGUYEN DUAT  
 Chief, G1 and Adjutant  
 General Division

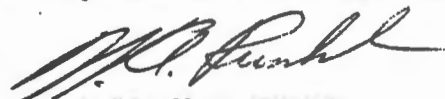
THIS MERITORIOUS CITATION IS TO  
 INCLUDE THE GALLANTRY CROSS WITH  
 SILVER STAR

APO 4579, 29 February 1968  
 Lieutenant General VINH LOC  
 Commander, II Corps,  
 Concurrently Commander,  
 II Corps Tactical Zone

OFFICIAL ORDER (# 12/CDII/TGT/NS  
 (dated 29 February 1968

/Signed and Sealed/

I certify that this is a true translation.



WILLIAM A. RUNKLE  
 LT                    USN  
 Chief, MACAG Translation Division.

HEADQUARTERS  
71st Evacuation Hospital  
APO San Francisco. 96318.

GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 86

8 March 1968

1. TC 320. The following AWARDS are announced

AWARDED: Purple Heart - Second Award  
Date of Action: As indicated  
Theater: Republic of Vietnam  
Reason: Wounds received in action  
Authority: By Direction of the President under the provisions  
of AR 672-5-1 and CG, USARV Msg AVGP-D 08713 Subject:  
Award of Purple Heart 4 Mar 66

WOLTERING, John W. RA 12737726 SSAN NVAL SGT E-5  
E Trp 17th Cav 173rd Abn Bde APO 96250  
Date Action: 6 Mar 68

✓ STEWART, Thomas W. ~~RA 12737726~~ SSAN NVAL CPT Arm  
Adv Tr 21 MACV APO 96318  
Date Action: 7 Mar 68

2. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced

AWARDED: Purple Heart - First Award  
Date of Action: As indicated  
Theater: Republic of Vietnam  
Reason: Wounds received in action  
Authority: By Direction of the President under the provisions  
of AR 672-5-1 and CG, USARV Msg AVGP-D 08713 Subject:  
Award of Purple Heart 4 Mar 66

KISSINGER, John E. RA 16946874 SSAN NVAL SP4 E-4  
E Trp 17th Cav 173rd Abn Bde APO 96250  
Date Action: 6 Mar 68

FOR THE COMMANDER:

*Barry L. Biggs*  
BARRY L. BIGGS  
CPT, MSC  
Adjutant

UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND



BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT  
THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL  
(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER)  
IS PRESENTED TO

CAPTAIN THOMAS W. STEWART

UNITED STATES ARMY

For distinguishing himself by outstanding meritorious service in connection with ground operations against a hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam during the period

April 1967 to February 1968

Through his untiring efforts and professional ability, he consistently obtained outstanding results. He was quick to grasp the implications of new problems with which he was faced as a result of the ever changing situations inherent in a counterinsurgency operation and to find ways and means to solve those problems. The energetic application of his extensive knowledge has materially contributed to the efforts of the United States Mission to the Republic of Vietnam to assist that country in ridding itself of the communist threat to its freedom. His performance of duty was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflects great credit upon himself and the military service.

READ CAREFULLY. REFERENCED SECTION IN AR 623-105 BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO FILE ANY ITEM

| PART I - PERSONAL DATA (Read Section IV, AR 623-105)  |       |      |  |       |                 |  | 5. BRANCH      |        | 6. INIT RA APMT             |    |       |          |
|---|-------|------|--|-------|-----------------|--|----------------|--------|-----------------------------|----|-------|----------|
| 1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL<br>STEWART, THOMAS W.  |       |      | 2. SERVICE NUMBER<br><del>123456</del> |       | 3. GRADE<br>CPT | 4. DATE OF RANK<br>30 Sep 66           | BASIC<br>ARMOR | DETAIL | YES                         | NO |       |          |
| 7. UNIT, ORGANIZATION, STATION AND MAJOR COMMAND<br>US MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, SAIGON, VIETNAM, PACIFIC COMMAND  |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| PART II - REPORTING PERIOD AND DUTY DATA (Read Sections IV and V, AR 623-105)   |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| 8. PERIOD COVERED   |       |      |  |       |                 | 9. REASON FOR RENDERING REPORT (Check) |                |        | 10. REPORT BASED ON (Check) |    | RATER | INDORSER |
| FROM  |       |      | TO                                     |       |                 | ANNUAL                                 |                |        | DAILY CONTACT               |    | X     |          |
| DAY   | MONTH | YEAR | DAY                                    | MONTH | YEAR            | CHANGE OF RATER                        |                |        | FREQUENT OBSERVATION        |    |       |          |
| 13  | Aug   | 67   | 18                                     | Mar   | 68              | X PCS RATED OFFICER                    |                |        | INFREQUENT OBSERVATION      |    |       | X        |
| DUTY DAYS   |       |      | OTHER DAYS                             |       |                 | CHANGE OF DUTY FOR RATED OFFICER       |                |        | RECORDS AND REPORTS         |    | X     | X        |
| 219   |       |      | 0                                      |       |                 | OTHER (Specify)                        |                |        | OTHER (Specify)             |    |       |          |
| DUTY ASSIGNMENT FOR RATED PERIOD  |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| 11. PRINCIPAL DUTY  |       |      | 12. DUTY MOS 81204                     |       |                 | 13. AUTH GRADE Captain                 |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| Cavalry Troop Advisor   |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| 14. MAJOR ADDITIONAL DUTIES   |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| PART III - MANNER OF PERFORMANCE (Read paragraph 21c, AR 623-105)   |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| 15. RATER Captain Stewart's manner of performance is rated outstanding. Captain Stewart is extremely cool under hostile fire; during this period he fought with his unit in four major battles where the enemy outnumbered the friendly forces by a ratio of at least two to one. In all of the battles he reacted immediately by calling for fire support and advising his counterpart to maneuver his troops to attack the superior forces. In all major battles Captain Stewart's unit was successful primarily because of his coolness, tactical knowledge and aggressiveness. On one occasion even though he was wounded he remained at his duty position continuing to advise his counterpart while disregarding his own wounds. For a period of three months his unit was under the operational control of a Vietnamese Infantry Regiment. Captain Stewart continually acted as the armor advisor to the Regimental Commander in addition to his regular duties. He recommended the method of employment of all armored forces in the area and convinced the Regimental Commander to task organize the infantry unit into Armor-Infantry teams. The employment of the teams was extremely successful and provisions have now been made to assign an armor unit on a full time basis to the Infantry Regiment. Captain Stewart's professionalism, aggressiveness and enthusiasm has earned him the respect and the friendship of all Vietnamese in the unit. His knowledge and ability to apply field expedients repairs for armored vehicles when ordnance support was not available resulted in one hundred per cent of his units vehicles being combat continued |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |
| 16. INDORSER <input type="checkbox"/> I AM UNABLE TO EVALUATE THIS OFFICER FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:<br>During the rated period Captain Stewart performed all of his duties in an outstanding manner. He established excellent rapport with his counterpart and both worked very closely together in improving the combat effectiveness of their unit. He participated in numerous combat operations. At all times he remained calm, quickly analysed the situation and always rendered good advice. Twice during combat he was wounded while advising his counterpart. For approximately three months his troop was employed in Binh Dinh Province under the operational control of an Infantry Regiment. During this period the troop successfully defeated the enemy during all engagements. Captain Stewart continuously sought improvement and never committed the same mistake twice. Because of his performance of duty he gained the respect and admiration of all of his associates. I highly recommend him for further military schooling and integration into the Regular Army.  |       |      |  |       |                 |  |                |        |                             |    |       |          |

DA FORM 67-5  
1 AUG 63  
2 JUN 1969

REPLACES DA FORM 67-5, 1 FEB 62 WHICH IS OBSOLETE EFFECTIVE 30 SEP 63 APR 1968

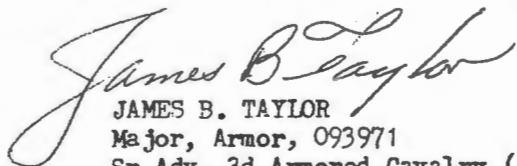
US ARMY OFFICER EFFICIENCY REPORT (AR 623-105)

DA 67-5 Continuation Sheet

STEWART, Thomas W., 05532171 CPT PERIOD OF REPORT: 13Aug67 - 18Mar68

Item 15 Continued:

operational at all times. Captain Stewart spent much of his time instructing his Vietnamese officers and NCO's in the principles of leadership. As a direct result of his instruction the Vietnamese Commanders in his unit are better than those of other troops in the squadron. His commanders are now decisive, dependable and imaginative in their leadership responsibilities. Captain Stewart spent many long hours assisting his units dependents. He helped them to attain a higher standard of living by advising on sanitation, living quarters, medical care and dependent schooling. He was instrumental in building and furnishing a dependent school in the Squadron area for grade school children. Of all the officers I know, Captain Stewart is the most tactically proficient in the employment of a Cavalry Troop in combat. He should be immediately considered for attendance at the advance course and appointed to the Regular Army.



JAMES B. TAYLOR

Major, Armor, 093971

Sr Adv, 3d Armored Cavalry (ARVN)

HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM  
APO San Francisco 96222

GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 948

19 April 1968

AWARD OF THE ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL

1. TC 320. The following AWARD is announced.

✓ STEWART, THOMAS W. 05532171 (~~05532171~~) CPT ARMOR USA

Awarded: Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device

Date action: 2 February 1968

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Reason: For heroism in connection with military operations against a hostile force: Captain Stewart distinguished himself by heroic action on 2 February 1968 while serving as Troop Advisor to the 4th Troop, 3rd Armored Cavalry Squadron, Army of the Republic of Vietnam. On that date, the Squadron Command Group came under intense, close range automatic weapons and small arms fire near Pleiku City from an enemy squad. Heedless of the extreme danger. Captain Stewart deliberately exposed himself to the fire to locate the enemy positions and to lay down a base of fire allowing the Command Group to withdraw to a better position. After the Command Group was safely relocated Captain Stewart again subjected himself to fierce fire to run to the perimeter to assist Vietnamese troops in repelling the enemy attack. As the enemy began to retreat, Captain Stewart rallied the Vietnamese soldiers and directed their pursuit of the fleeing enemy. Captain Stewart's heroic actions were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army and reflect great credit upon himself and the military service.

Authority: By direction of the Secretary of the Army under the provisions of AR 672-5-1

FOR THE COMMANDER



NEIL N. SNYDER, JR.  
Colonel, USA  
Adjutant General

WALTER T. KERWIN, JR.  
Major General, USA  
Chief of Staff

DISTRIBUTION:  
Special

IMPORTANT: THE PREPARATION OF AN EFFICIENCY REPORT IS A SERIOUS RESPONSIBILITY. EACH INDIVIDUAL WILL TAKE THE SAME PAINSTAKING CARE IN THE PREPARATION OF THE REPORT FOR HIS SUBORDINATES THAT HE WOULD EXPECT HIS RATING OFFICER TO TAKE IN THE PREPARATION OF HIS OWN REPORT. ALL ENTRIES WILL BE TRUE AND IMPARTIAL. READ CAREFULLY REFERENCED PARAGRAPH IN AR 623-105 BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO FILL OUT ANY ITEM

| PART I - PERSONAL DATA (Read paragraph 3-2a, AR 623-105)  |  |  |  |                              |                        |                                     | BRANCH |        |
|---|--|--|--|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| a. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL<br><b>STEWART, Thomas W.</b>                           |  |  | b. SERVICE NUMBER<br><b>[REDACTED]</b> | c. SSAN<br><b>[REDACTED]</b> | d. GRADE<br><b>CPT</b> | e. DATE OF RANK<br><b>30 Sep 66</b> | BASIC  | DETAIL |
| f. UNIT, ORGANIZATION, STATION, AND MAJOR COMMAND<br><b>HHC 1st Inf Bde 5th Inf Div (M) USARV</b> |  |  |  |                              |                        |                                     |        |        |

| PART II - REPORTING PERIOD AND DUTY DATA (Read paragraph 3-2b, AR 623-105) |       |      |   |        |      |                            |  |       |          |
|--|-------|------|---|--------|------|----------------------------|--|-------|----------|
| a. PERIOD COVERED  |       |      | b. REASON FOR SUBMITTING REPORT (Check) |        |      | c. REPORT BASED ON (Check) |  | RATER | INDORSER |
| FROM   |       | TO   |   | ANNUAL |      | DAILY CONTACT              |  | X     | X        |
| DAY  | MONTH | YEAR | DAY                                     | MONTH  | YEAR | FREQUENT OBSERVATION       |  |       |          |
| 11   | Feb   | 70   | 12                                      | Jul    | 70   | INFREQUENT OBSERVATION     |  |       |          |
| DUTY DAYS  |       |      | OTHER DAYS                              |        |      | RECORDS AND REPORTS        |  |       | X        |
| 73   |       |      | 79                                      |        |      | OTHER (Specify)            |  |       |          |

| PART III - AUTHENTICATION (Read paragraph 3-2c, AR 623-105)      |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| a. SIGNATURE OF RATER<br><i>Richard M Meyer</i>                  |  | TYPED NAME, GRADE, BRANCH, SERVICE NUMBER, ORGANIZATION, AND DUTY ASSIGNMENT<br><b>RICHARD M. MEYER, LTC, AR 385-22-1969<br/>1st Inf Bde 5th Inf Div (M) Bde S-3</b> |  |
| b. SIGNATURE OF INDORSER<br><i>Harold R Page</i>                 |  | TYPED NAME, GRADE, BRANCH, SERVICE NUMBER, ORGANIZATION, AND DUTY ASSIGNMENT<br><b>HAROLD R PAGE, LTC, AR, 467-34-4729<br/>1st Inf Bde 5th Inf Div (M) Exec Off</b>  |  |
| c. REVIEWER (Read chapter 5, AR 623-105)<br><i>John T. Hodes</i> |  | MY REVIEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDICATES NO FURTHER ACTION <input type="checkbox"/> RESULTS IN ACTION STATED ON INCLOSURES                            |  |
| SIGNATURE OF REVIEWER  |  | TYPED NAME, GRADE, BRANCH, SERVICE NUMBER, ORGANIZATION, AND DUTY ASSIGNMENT<br><b>JOHN T. HODES, COL, AR 579-26-3450<br/>1st Inf Bde 5th Inf Div (M) Dep Cmdr</b>   |  |

d. THIS REPORT HAS 10 INCLOSURES. (Insert "0" if appropriate)

DATE ENTERED ON DA FORM 86: **13 Jul 70**

PERFORMER'S INITIALS: *[Signature]*

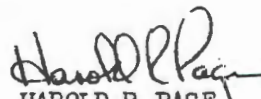
TO COMPLETE PARTS IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, AND XI, EVALUATE THE RATED OFFICER IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER OFFICERS OF THE SAME GRADE, SIMILAR EXPERIENCE, MILITARY SCHOOLING, AND TIME IN GRADE. ITEMS DESIGNATED BY ASTERISK REQUIRE EXPLANATION IN PART V.

| PART IV - PERSONAL QUALITIES (Read paragraph 4-3d, AR 623-105) |          |     |        |        |        |        |
|--|----------|-----|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| DEGREE   |          | TOP | SECOND | MIDDLE | FOURTH | BOTTOM |
| RATER  | INDORSER | 1   | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5      |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 2  | 2        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 2  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |
| 1  | 1        |     |        |        |        |        |

STEWART, Thomas W., CPT, 530-22-2453  
Period of Report: 11 Feb 70 - 12 Jul 70

Continuation of Part XI (b) from DA Form 67-6.

effort to retain. CPT Stewart should attend Command and General Staff College at the earliest opportunity.

  
HAROLD R PAGE  
LTC, Armor  
Executive Officer



**IMPORTANT!** THE PREPARATION OF AN EFFICIENCY REPORT IS A SERIOUS RESPONSIBILITY. EACH INDIVIDUAL WILL TAKE THE SAME PAINSTAKING CARE IN THE PREPARATION OF THE REPORT FOR HIS SUBORDINATES THAT HE WOULD EXPECT HIS RATING OFFICER TO TAKE IN THE PREPARATION OF HIS OWN REPORT. ALL ENTRIES WILL BE TRUE AND IMPARTIAL. READ CAREFULLY REFERENCED PARAGRAPH IN AR 623-105 BEFORE ATTEMPTING TO FILL OUT ANY ITEM.

**PART I - PERSONAL DATA** (Read paragraph 3-2a, AR 623-105)

|   |  |                                     |         |                        |                                     |   |  |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|---------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| a. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL<br><b>STEWART, THOMAS W.</b>   |  | b. SERVICE NUMBER<br><b>5544444</b> | c. SSAN | d. GRADE<br><b>CPT</b> | e. DATE OF RANK<br><b>30 Sep 66</b> | f. BRANCH<br>BASIC<br><b>AR</b><br>DETAIL |  |
| g. UNIT, ORGANIZATION, STATION, AND MAJOR COMMAND<br><b>HHT 3d Sqdn 5th Cav 1st Inf Bde 5th Inf Div (M) USARV</b> |  |                                     |         |                        |                                     |   |  |

**PART II - REPORTING PERIOD AND DUTY DATA** (Read paragraph 3-2b, AR 623-105)

|                   |       |      |   |        |      |                                    |                        |       |          |
|-------------------|-------|------|---|--------|------|------------------------------------|------------------------|-------|----------|
| a. PERIOD COVERED |       |      | b. REASON FOR SUBMITTING REPORT (Check) |        |      | c. REPORT BASED ON (Check)         |                        | RATER | INDORSER |
| FROM              |       | TO   |   | ANNUAL |      |                                    | DAILY CONTACT          | X     | X        |
| DAY               | MONTH | YEAR | DAY                                     | MONTH  | YEAR | CHANGE OF RATER                    | FREQUENT OBSERVATION   |       | X        |
| 13                | Jul   | 70   | 8                                       | Nov    | 70   | PCS RATED OFFICER                  | INFREQUENT OBSERVATION |       |          |
| DUTY DAYS<br>115  |       |      | OTHER DAYS<br>4                         |        |      | X CHANGE OF DUTY FOR RATED OFFICER | RECORDS AND REPORTS    |       | X        |
|                   |       |      |   |        |      | OTHER (Specify)                    | OTHER (Specify)        |       |          |

**PART III - AUTHENTICATION** (Read paragraph 3-2c, AR 623-105)

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| a. SIGNATURE OF RATER<br><i>Richard O. Borgstrom</i>   | TYPED NAME, GRADE, BRANCH, SERVICE NUMBER, ORGANIZATION, AND DUTY ASSIGNMENT<br><b>RICHARD O. BORGSTROM, MAJ, AR, 441-34-1799, 3d Sqdn 5th Cav Executive Officer</b> | DATE<br><b>30 Nov 70</b>                      |
| b. SIGNATURE OF INDORSER<br><i>Harold R. Page</i>  | TYPED NAME, GRADE, BRANCH, SERVICE NUMBER, ORGANIZATION, AND DUTY ASSIGNMENT<br><b>HAROLD R. PAGE, LTC, AR, 467-34-4729, 3d Sqdn 5th Cav Commanding Officer</b>      | DATE<br><b>30 Nov 70</b>                      |
| c. REVIEWER (Read chapter 5, AR 623-105) MY REVIEW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDICATES NO FURTHER ACTION <input type="checkbox"/> RESULTS IN ACTION STATED ON INCLOSURES |  |   |
| SIGNATURE OF REVIEWER<br><i>James E. Townes Jr.</i>  | TYPED NAME, GRADE, BRANCH, SERVICE NUMBER, ORGANIZATION, AND DUTY ASSIGNMENT<br><b>JAMES E. TOWNES JR., COL, IN 230-10-6749, 1st Inf Bde 5th Inf Div (M) USARV</b>   | DATE<br><b>2 Dec 70</b>                       |
| d. THIS REPORT HAS <u>1</u> INCLOSURES. (Insert "0" if appropriate)  |  | DATE ENTERED ON DA FORM 86<br><b>9 Nov 70</b> |
| PERSONNEL OFFICER'S INITIALS<br><i>MSJ</i>   |  |   |

TO COMPLETE PARTS IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, AND XI, EVALUATE THE RATED OFFICER IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER OFFICERS OF THE SAME GRADE, SIMILAR EXPERIENCE, MILITARY SCHOOLING, AND TIME IN GRADE. ITEMS DESIGNATED BY ASTERISK REQUIRE EXPLANATION IN PART XI.

**PART IV - PERSONAL QUALITIES** (Read paragraph 4-3d, AR 623-105)

| RATER | INDORSER | DEGREE  | TOP | SECOND | MIDDLE | FOURTH | BOTTOM* | NOT OBSERVED |
|-------|----------|---|-----|--------|--------|--------|---------|--------------|
|       |          |   | 1   | 2      | 3      | 4      | 5       | N/O          |
| 1     | 1        | a. ADAPTABILITY (Adjusts to new or changing situations)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | b. AMBITION (Seeks and welcomes, within bounds of military propriety, additional and more important responsibilities) |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | c. APPEARANCE (Possesses military bearing and is neat, smart, and well-groomed)                                       |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | d. COOPERATION (Works in harmony with others as a team member)  |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | e. DECISIVENESS (Ability to reach conclusions promptly and decide a definite course of action)                        |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | f. DEPENDABILITY (Consistently accomplishes desired actions with minimum supervision)                                 |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | g. ENTHUSIASM (Motivates others by his keen interest and personal participation)                                      |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | h. FORCE (Executes actions vigorously)  |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | i. INGENUITY (Creative ability in devising means to solve problems)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | j. INITIATIVE (Takes necessary and appropriate action on his own)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | k. INTEGRITY (Adherence to principles of honesty and moral courage)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | l. INTELLIGENCE (Acquires knowledge and grasps concepts readily)  |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | m. JUDGMENT (Thinks logically and makes practical decisions)  |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | n. LOYALTY (Faithful and willing support to superiors and subordinates)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | o. MORAL COURAGE (Intellectual honesty, willingness to stand up and be counted)                                       |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | p. NON-DUTY CONDUCT (Keeps his personal affairs in order)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | q. SELF-DISCIPLINE (Conducts himself in accordance with the highest standards)  |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | r. SELF-IMPROVEMENT (Takes action to improve himself)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | s. SELFLESSNESS (Subordinates his personal welfare to that of the organization)                                       |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | t. SOCIABILITY (Participates freely and easily in social and community activities)                                    |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | u. STAMINA (Performs successfully under protected physical and mental stress)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | v. TACT (Says or does what is appropriate without giving unnecessary offense)   |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | w. TENACITY (The will to persevere in face of obstacles)  |     |        |        |        |         |              |
| 1     | 1        | x. UNDERSTANDING (Appreciation for the needs and viewpoints of others)  |     |        |        |        |         |              |

DA FORM 67-6 1 JAN 66

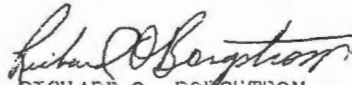
REPLACES DA FORM 67-6, 1 AUG 63, WHICH IS OBSOLETE.

U.S. ARMY OFFICER EFFICIENCY REPORT  
For use of this form, see AR 623-105; the proponent agency is The Adjutant General's Office.

Continuation of Part XI(a) of DA Form 67-6

STEWART, THOMAS W., CPT, 53C-22-2453  
Period: 13 Jul 70 - 8 Nov 70


command of a troop in this squadron as two events occurred simultaneously: (1) the arrival of a field grade officer as S-3 and (2) the need of the strongest captain available to assume command of a line troop. This outstanding officer is a credit to the officer corps and is respected by subordinates, peers and seniors alike. He remains calm and collected under fire and is deliberate in planning and decisive in executing all assigned and implied tasks. I would insist on CPT Stewart's assignment to any future command I might receive if he was available.

  
RICHARD O. BORGSTROM  
MAJ, Armor  
Executive Officer

Continuation of Part XI(b) of DA Form 67-6

STEWART, THOMAS W., CPT, 53C-22-2453

uted to CPT Stewart's performance of duty. He is truly an outstanding captain of armor who clearly displays those attributes necessary for continued outstanding service at higher grades. He is highly flexible, able to plan, coordinate and control operations of up to seven combat companies from two different nations and from four different battalions: all with minimum guidance from the commander. He is fearless and audacious without being foolhardy; able to read the commander's wishes with ease, always seeming to be one step ahead of instructions. He has no difficulty making sound decisions under high stress conditions. CPT Stewart was reluctantly reassigned as a result of the arrival of an S-3 in the grade of Major. I unequivocally recommend him for accelerated promotion and military schooling.

  
HAROLD R. PAGE  
LTC, Armor  
Commanding Officer

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
TROOP A  
3D SQUADRON 5TH CAVALRY  
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96477

UNIT ORDERS  
NUMBER 78

9 November 1970

1. TC 450. The undersigned assumes command.

Authority: Para 12b AR 600-20  
Orgn/unit: Troop A 3d Squadron 5th Cavalry (WDF2 AO) APO SF  
96477

DISTRIBUTION:

- 2- indiv conc
- 3- indiv 201 file
- 2- CO, 3d Sqdn 5th Cav
- 2- CG, 1st Inf Bde 5th Inf Div (M)
- 1- reference file
- 1- unit BB

*Thomas W. Stewart*  
THOMAS W. STEWART  
CPT, Armor  
Commanding

201

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HQ, 1st Infantry Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (Mech)  
Camp Red Devil  
APO San Francisco 96477

GENERAL ORDERS  
NUMBER 2033

17 November 1970

1. TC 439. The following AWARDS are announced.

STEWART, THOMAS W. ~~357-36-5166~~ CPT 1203 HHT, 3d Sqdn, 5th Cav  
(WDF2 TO), APO 96477 AR  
Dates of service: 19 July 1970 to 22 August 1970

ROBERTSON, JOHN W. 357-36-5166 1LT 1203 Trp C, 3d Sqdn, 5th Cav  
(WDF2 CO), APO 96477 AR  
Dates of service: 29 January 1970 to 5 September 1970

SCHLUTTER, WILLIAM D. 365-50-2343 1LT 1981 HHC, 1st Inf Bde  
(WANL A1), APO 96477 IN  
Dates of service: 8 October 1970 to 20 October 1970

STERUD, ROBERT A. 502-46-4559 1LT 1193 HHC, 1st Inf Bde  
(WANL A1), APO 96477 FA  
Dates of service: 6 July 1970 to 2 September 1970

OUELLETTE, JOSEPH R. A. 007-32-1166 1SG 11E50 Trp C, 3d Sqdn, 5th Cav  
(WDF2 CO), APO 96477  
Dates of service: 2 March 1970 to 27 September 1970

Awarded: Air Medal  
Theater: Republic of Vietnam  
Authority: By direction of the President under provisions of Executive  
Order 9158, 11 May 1942, as amended by Executive Order 9242-A,  
11 September 1942  
Reason: For meritorious achievement in connection with aerial operations  
against a hostile force

Para 2, GO 2033, HQ, 1st Bde, 5th Inf Div (M), dtd 17 November 1970 (Cont'd)

FOR THE COMMANDER:

OFFICIAL:

T. H. ROSS  
Major, AGC  
Adjutant General

*R. W. MOREHEAD*  
R. W. MOREHEAD  
CPT, AGC  
Asst AG

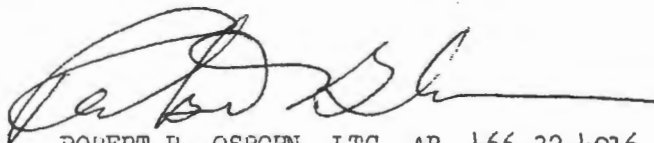
DISTRIBUTION:  
2 - Indiv  
1 - Indiv 201 File  
22 - AG Awards



STEWART, THOMAS W., CPT, AR ~~466-32-4016~~  
Period of report: 9 Nov 70 - 11 Mar 71

Part XIa continued

during the recent Bde AGI. I would be pleased to have Captain Stewart serve with me in any organization and in any capacity. He is truly a credit to the Armor Corps.



ROBERT B. OSBORN, LTC, AR, 466-32-4016  
3d Sqn, 5th Cav, Commanding Officer

INCL 1

CITATION

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT

THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL  
(SECOND OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

IS PRESENTED TO

CAPTAIN THOMAS W. STEWART, 530-22-2453

ARMOR

For meritorious achievement in the Republic of Vietnam: Captain Stewart distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while serving with the 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry during the period 29 January to 10 February 1971. During Operation Dewey Canyon II, his unit moved to western Military Region I with the mission of providing route security through the jungle, and mountainous terrain. Although hampered by the fact that the area of operations was totally unfamiliar and the terrain extremely difficult, he pursued his duties with exceptional diligence, working long and tedious hours under extremely adverse conditions in order to facilitate the overland movement of vehicles and combat personnel to the area north of Khe Sanh. During construction of the roadway, numerous bridges, by-passes, and culverts were required and the entire roadway required dozing and grading. Despite the continual threat of North Vietnamese ambushed and sniper fire, he relentlessly worked beyond what was expected of him. Only by his diligent effort and that of his unit was it possible to execute the operation. Because of his conscientious and unselfish devotion to his mission, he was instrumental in the success and timeliness of Operation Dewey Canyon II. His meritorious achievement is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflects great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

Brigadier General John G. Hill, Jr.  
Commanding General  
1st Infantry Brigade, 5th Infantry Division (M)  
APO San Francisco 96477

free



17 Nov 71

Dear Tom,

To my regret I didn't get  
a chance to say goodbye and  
tell you how much I personally  
appreciated all your fine work  
you did a fine job the entire  
year but your efforts in bringing  
A Troop along and the advance  
to the South were of particular  
significance. you'll be sorely missed.  
All best wishes. I hope we'll  
have another meet at it.

John Hill



4 January 1998

Dear Tom

Happy New Year, hope you are happy and healthy. I received the information on the 3/5 CAV association and wanted to thank you. If all goes well I plan to attend the 1999 meeting. I will also pass the information to Everett Wohlers and 2 medics I am in contact with.

I had wanted to contact you for several years after I read your name in a book, and it mentioned you retiring to Puyallup. This fall I had to make a trip to Ft. Lewis, had some extra time and happily was successful in reaching you.

I was a SPC 4 medic, a draftee, attached to A Troop in late July 1970, a skinny kid with black rimmed glasses. I rode on your M113 most of the time along with F.O. Lt Tony Hackney and driver SPC James Johnson, I don't remember the names of the rest of the crew. I thought very highly of you.

When I got out of the army in 1971 I had developed some interest in the medical field. I started college and after several years succeeded in becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner, an occupation which has treated me well and I continue to practice. I ended up in a private practice in rural Idaho and have been well satisfied here.

I joined the Idaho Army National Guard in 1981 and was commissioned in the Army Nurse Corp. Started out as a Lt and through longevity and folks feeling sorry for me have made it to LTC. Always amazes me for a draftee who didn't care for the army. I guess I liked it more than I thought. I have enjoyed my "part time" career and have had some opportunities most Nurse Corp officers don't get.

When I came to the Idaho Army Guard we had a CAV regiment. We were later transitioned to an armor brigade. Due to a shortage of physicians I had the privilege of being asked to command a newly formed medical company in the forward support battalion. I had the company for 4 years and will always remember it as one of the more significant highlights of my life. I was fortunate to have great senior NCOs and a outstanding battalion commander. It was a great thrill for me to watch the company fill, grow and become a tactically proficient unit. Watching those fine young soldiers train and work with such enthusiasm and dedication always made my heart swell. During those times I often thought of you and other company commanders of 3 decades ago. How different and difficult it must have been then, when the troops were not so motivated and the cause not so clear.

Life is funny in the things it doesn't allow youth to understand or appreciate. I would like to offer you a belated thank you for your competence and concern for us who were often at best only ambivalent toward the efforts of our leaders .

I have rambled enough, hope to see you in Las Vegas and if you ever get through Idaho please stop and see me.

Respectfully

*Fred P. Miller*

Fred P. Miller  
1672 E 1600 S  
Gooding, Id. 83330  
208-934-9100 H  
208-934-5900 W

**APPENDIX D: Recommended Reading**

*Mounted Combat in Vietnam*, General Donn A. Starry, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 1978

*Ringed in Steel*, Michael D. Mahler, Jove Books, 1986

*Into Laos*, Keith William Nolan, Presidio Press, Novato CA, 1986

## APPENDIX E: NAMES ON THE WALL

The following names are those of servicemen who I knew who were Killed in Action (KIA) or died of wounds incurred in the Republic of Viet Nam. They are listed chronologically just as they are on the VN Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C.

**Philip Owen Robinson**, Lieutenant, Junior Grade (LTJG), United States Navy. Entered service from Sheridan, Wyoming. KIA March 25, 1966. (Panel 6E, Row 50). Phil was an Alpha Tau Omega fraternity brother of mine at the University of Wyoming. He graduated a year or two before me. I didn't learn of his death until I saw his name on the University's War Memorial Monument in 1972. I have never been able to find out how he was killed.

**John K. Adams**, Captain, United States Army. Entered service from Roswell, New Mexico. KIA March 26, 1967. (Panel 17E, Row 48). CPT Adams was Troop Advisor to 3<sup>rd</sup> Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) Armored Cavalry Regiment. He was killed in Binh Dinh Province when a mortar round hit the vehicle he was in. (The VN Troop Commander was also KIA). I never met CPT Adams.

**William Edward Lawson, Jr.** First Lieutenant, United States Army. Entered service from Royal Oak, Michigan. KIA April 20, 1967. (Panel 18E, Row 53). Bill was a Field Artillery Officer in the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and was assigned to the ARVN 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR advisors to support operations along the Cambodian border near the Du Co Special Forces Camp. Bill was killed in an ambush of 1<sup>st</sup> Troop (M41 Tanks), 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR while moving out of the Ia Drang Valley. I was the Troop Advisor of 1<sup>st</sup> Troop.

**Clifton Tanksley**, Sergeant First Class. United States Army. Entered service from Chattanooga, Tennessee. KIA December 7, 1967. (Panel 31E, Row 61). SFC Tanksley was assigned as Assistant Advisor to the ARVN 4<sup>th</sup> Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> ACR. He was killed by gunfire in an ambush on his second day of duty while the Troop was departing "Sniper Island" near Tam Quan, Binh Dinh Province. I was the Troop Advisor of 4<sup>th</sup> Troop.

**Vaughn Marvin Angell**. Staff Sergeant, United States Army. Entered service from Salt Lake City, Utah. KIA January 19, 1968. (Panel 34E, Row 73). Then SGT Angell worked for me when I was the Support Platoon Leader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Squadron, 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry in Schwabach, Germany in 1965. He was an outstanding soldier. I have never been able to find out how he died.

**Roscoe Sybert**, Sergeant First Class, United States Army. Entered service from Jonesville, Virginia. KIA May 5, 1970. (Panel 11W, Row 107). SFC Sybert was one of my Platoon Sergeants and later acting First Sergeant in A Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 32<sup>nd</sup> Armor in 1968 at Fort Knox Kentucky. In VN SFC Sybert was a Platoon Sergeant in 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 77<sup>th</sup> Armor. His tank was hit with multiple RPG rounds and he was thrown off the vehicle. His platoon retreated without him. The next day the platoon returned and found his body – the enemy had placed numerous booby-traps on and around his body. He was an outstanding soldier with whom I drank many beers after fulfilling our duties in support of the Armor School.

**Alfred Lemuel Kincer, III**, First Lieutenant, United States Army. Entered service from San Antonio, Texas. KIA March 1, 1971. (Panel 4W, Row 14). 1LT Kincer was 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Leader, A Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Al's platoon was in a Night Defensive Position (NDP) between the Rockpile and Que Sanh in Quang Tri Province when an enemy Sapper unit attacked it on the night of February 28<sup>th</sup>. He was severely wounded in the initial attack and when the main fighting ebbed, he was picked up by a MEDEVAC helicopter and taken to the Field Hospital in Quang Tri. I was his Troop Commander and was able to visit him there and to say a prayer for him. He died of his wounds a few hours later. Al was a hard-charging, dedicated officer who was eager to do his duty to the best of his ability. He was an outstanding officer.

**Edwin Gerald Calhoun**, Sergeant, United States Army. Entered service from Duncanville, Texas. KIA March 25, 1971. (Panel 4W, Row 76). SGT Calhoun was assigned to A Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and was killed in an enemy contact while on Operation Lam Son 719, over a week after I left command of A Troop. I remember SGT Calhoun very well - was an outstanding soldier.

**David Arthur Bond**, Sergeant, United States Army. Entered service from Phoenix, Arizona. KIA March 28, 1971. (Panel 4W, Row 85). SGT Bond was assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, A Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, and was killed in an enemy contact on QL 9 east of Khe Sanh, Quang Tri Province, near the end of Operation Lam Son 719. This occurred about two weeks after I left command of A Troop. I remember SGT Bond very well - he was an outstanding soldier.

**William John Milco**, Specialist 4<sup>th</sup>, United States Army. Entered service from Chicago, Illinois. KIA March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1971. (Panel 4W, Row 88). SP4 Milco was assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, A Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> Squadron, 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, and was killed in an enemy contact on QL 9 east of Khe Sanh, Quang Tri Province, near the end of Operation Lam Son 719. This occurred about two weeks after I left command of A Troop. I do not remember much about SP4 Milco but he must have been a very good soldier.

#### **SHOULD BE ON THE WALL BUT IS NOT**

**Stanley Eugene (Gene) Nelka**, Captain, United States Army. Entered service from Baltimore, Maryland. Died as a result of wounds.

