

Daily Journal  
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2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry  
3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division  
(Re-designated, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division)  
Republic of Vietnam, 1967

Following is the complete journal of my time spent as the Operations Sergeant (S-3) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry. This diary was kept on a coiled wire top-steno type pad written with a lead pencil, blue and red ball point pen and even a grease pencil when nothing else was available.. Originally written in my own version of "shorthand," I have edited it only to the extent of clarification of the sometimes cryptic language it contains. The content, hence the meaning remains unchanged. *(These comments and the following are as received from MSG Sergeant David F. Butters (Ret) Bn Operations Sergeant 1967 - Ed)*

### Introduction

6 January 1967: Departed Travis Air Force Base on a C141. It was a miserable ride as there were no windows and the seats faced backwards. First refueling stop was Wake Island. It was raining relatively hard and didn't look at all like the World War II movie of the same name. It is extremely small. Most of the island appears to be airstrip. On to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. Landed just before dawn. Very beautiful with the sun rising over a volcano. From Clark directly on to Pleiku Vietnam.

7 January 1967: Arrived Pleiku. Crew chief had the rear ramp open as we began our approach. He told us that since the pilot did not want to remain on the ground very long, that we were to quickly disembark the instant the aircraft came to a stop. He went on to say that the airfield had been mortared for several days in a row. I say no damage. I expected a large, civilian type airport surrounded by jungle. Actually it was just another Air Force base. My first impression - BAD. All I saw were men with dirty cloths, some with weapons, some without. Everything has a light coating of reddish dust. Even the air seems to have a reddish tint. Glad we came in fatigues. We were all herded into busses that took us to a small Replacement Depot where our assignments would be verified and transportation sent to pick us up. Presently there are thirteen E8's and E9's, myself included, scheduled for assignment to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. In processing very rapid consisting of an unimpressive film on why we are here and a few war stories by the cadre in a vain attempt to scare the youngsters. Since I was the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Liaison NCO to the 38<sup>th</sup> Replacement Battalion in Korea, I am somewhat familiar with "Repl" activities. Personally, I get the impression that the cadre has never seen the enemy and rarely heard a round fired in anger. Admittedly, I have some apprehension but no fear. The apprehension stems from the fact that the only protection is a very small trench that would only hold about ten men. The perimeter is equally unimpressive consisting of only two poorly built sand bag bunkers and a barbed

wire fence that wouldn't slow down a cow. The road has a moderate amount of traffic, mostly military vehicles with some three-wheeled, Lambretta type, scooters carrying Vietnamese. From all appearances it seems like a relatively secure area since few weapons have been observed. The landscape is desolate with high hills on the horizon. Everything is reddish-brown with a layer of dust. Nothing is green.

8 January 1967: Slept poorly last night. Kept thinking of the dirty bed I was in. My assignment was confirmed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. As I understand it, the Division Headquarters along with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigades is located far south, near Siagon, in a place named Cu Chi. They have the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division OPCON to them. The 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Headquarters with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigades is located here in Plei Ki with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 25<sup>th</sup> Division OPCON to them. Seems screwy to me - but, "Ours is not to reason why----" Had to wait until early afternoon for a truck to take us to Brigade Headquarters. The trip was further than I thought, about ten miles. The Brigade is located on a hill that is just as dusty as Plei Ki Air Force Base. All the buildings are covered with a layer of the same red dust. We had some PFC with an M-14 rifle as shotgun on the truck that took us directly to the Brigade Replacement Section. The building was made of wood, with a corrugated tin roof. Again, in processing was very rapid. All the E8's and E9's have been split up into every unit in the brigade, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 9<sup>th</sup> Artillery, Engineers, 3<sup>rd</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and the three infantry battalions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 35<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> of the 14<sup>th</sup>.) I have been assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Received all pay, dislocation allowances, etc. The finance officer was one of my students from the University of Georgia ROTC detachment. Small world! I didn't remember him but he remembered me. MSG Smith (11F50) pulled a profile from a car accident at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina and got assigned as the Operations Sergeant with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade (Rear). Kelleher was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade. I am happy for him. He is too old to be humping the bushes. SGM Killenbeck went to the 69<sup>th</sup> Armored while Russ Streiber and I drew the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 35<sup>th</sup>.

On to the battalion area which consists of nothing but tent kits (GP medium tents on a plywood frame) with the sides rolled up. Things are getting less and less impressive as I go. Reported to Headquarters Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 35<sup>th</sup>. SFC Chase is the acting First Sergeant. He is originally from Massachusetts but now lives in northern California. He is an unpretentious, high quality NCO, the first one I've met that didn't have a bunch of war stories to tell the kids. Captain Fouty is the company commander. He was the reconnaissance platoon leader until he made captain. Since he is a "short-timer" they pulled him out of the field and gave him this job. Good for him. The supply sergeant, Baker, is extremely friendly. He came right out, shook hand warmly, issued me my field equipment including a cold weather, mountain type sleeping bag and two wool blankets. What in the world will I do with them in a jungle environment like Vietnam. Sergeant Baker then led me to the NCO tent. Wow! What an overcrowded mess. Trash and equipment strewn all over the place. Ammunition and live grenades loose everywhere yet everyone is completely at ease in what they call a very secure area. Baker took Streiber and I around the battalion area. Other than the First Sergeant, he is the only other man so far without a bunch of war stories. He explained that the battalion has been

out on a mission to secure highway 19 since January 2<sup>nd</sup>. This is the main east-west highway running from the coast to Pleiki and beyond towards Cambodia.

Russ Streiber appears to be a nice guy. His date of rank is greater than mine so I suppose he will get his choice of assignment within the battalion. Personally, I would prefer S-3 since it's more combat oriented than S-2. As luck would have it, Russ prefers S-2. Seems settled as far as we are concerned. All we need to do is convince the Sergeant Major. Sergeant Alvario, the battalion chemical NCO was in the hootch when we returned. He answered many questions for us and was very helpful in settling us in. Also bunking with us is SSG Blevins, the battalion ammunition NCO, SSG Olsen (job unknown) who just returned from an in-country R&R to Vung Tau, and SSG Camp, the battalion laundry NCO. (I never heard of a TO&E position for a laundry NCO and by the appearance of his fatigues he hasn't either.) Streiber and I turned in early but the H&I's (harassing and interditory fires) kept me awake all night. They are only 81mm mortars about a hundred yards from the tent but I just was not prepared for outgoing all through the night.

9 January 1967: Arose early - who could sleep! The mess hall, like everything else I've seen so far, was also covered in red dust. Not very appetizing. Reminded me of Korea. We hung around all morning with no word from the sergeant major. In the afternoon he finally sent for us to report to his quarters. Very nice house with a wooden porch, windows, the works. He really lives well but didn't impress me very much. He told us nothing but war stories. I was surprised to learn that he was a master sergeant and a commo chief at that. Why wouldn't they have an infantryman as the battalion sergeant major? I really don't understand. He did have a case of beer in the corner but never offered Russ or I one. He did claim that he didn't drink beer or water, only coffee. He said he was afraid of disease. In any event he did agree to give me the S-3 job and Russ the S-2.

10 January 1967: I slept somewhat better last night but still woke up with every H&I round fired. Even though it is early January, the tent was very hot to the point of being uncomfortable. The Sergeant Major has made arrangements for Russ and I to fly out to the battalion in the commander's command and control helicopter (Charlie-Charlie). We grabbed our weapons, steel pots and ammunition and climbed aboard. The Sergeant Major on the left door, made a big thing about not wearing the seat belt since he was so accustomed to flying. We got a good view of the Vietnamese terrain for the first time. It was nothing like I expected. Looking for jungle vegetation, all I saw was rolling hills, bushes, some sparsely located palm trees and a few villages. Except for the palm trees, it looked very much like Korea in the summer.

We flew east along highway 19. I was surprised once again to see a paved road in what appeared to be in good condition. It seemed to me that the pilot was flying very low, weaving in and out of the trees while maintaining a constant altitude above the ground with each hill and depression. I thought I was on a roller coaster rather than in a helicopter. This type of flying makes it more difficult for enemy antiaircraft fire to hit the chopper. I didn't see any people at all. This was a little disappointing. I guess I figured that every bush should have a VC behind it.

As we approached the fire base I couldn't help but notice how small it was. I saw one battery of 105mm howitzers (6 cannon), ten sandbagged bunkers around a barbed wire perimeter and several GP medium tents. Because of its small size, we landed outside the perimeter and walked through an opening in the wire to the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) where we were introduced to the S-3 Officer, Major Vogentanz and the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Granger. Vogentanz is a big, well built man with a commanding stature and equally commanding voice. The colonel, a much smaller man, was dwarfed by the S-3 but appears to be equally impressive. They both confirmed the assignments of Russ to S-2 and myself to work for Vogentanz in the S-3 TOC. That suits me just fine. I am ready to go to work!

11 January, 1967: Slept very well last night. The artillery battery of 105's fired H&I's sporadically throughout the night. Even though they are significantly larger than the 81mm mortars at Pleiku and much closer, I only heard them in the early part of the night. The biggest surprise was how cold I got. Now I know why I was issued that sleeping bag (which I left in Pleiku.) Most of the day was spent being briefed by Colonel Granger and Major Vogentanz. The TOC consists of two radios, one on the battalion net and one on the brigade net with a scrambler attached for secure voice communication. A large situation map, with our area of operations outlined with grease pencil on acetate pinpoint the companies in the field. During routine operations, without enemy contact, there is one radio/telephone operator (RTO) manning both nets along with a duty officer (LNO) and/or the operations sergeant present. The TOC is the command post from which all field operations are controlled by either the battalion commander or the operations officer. During periods of contact with the enemy, a second RTO is brought in supervised by the Ops Sgt and a duty officer while the battalion commander, accompanied by the Artillery Liaison Officer and frequently the Operations Officer flies in, around, and over the contact area in the C&C helicopter.

Normal operations consist of one company securing the fire base while the remaining two companies and the reconnaissance platoon are out. A rotational system for pulling "Palace guard" within the fire base has been established. The artillery battery is in direct support of the battalion and goes with us every place we go. Their six howitzers have preplanned concentrations on potential enemy targets as well as defensive concentrations around each of the companies in the field. They also maintain a good supply of "beehive" rounds on hand to be used as a flat trajectory defense of the fire base in the event of attack.

### Background

The battalion had recently been in heavy contact with North Vietnamese Army regulars near the Ia Drang valley and Chu Pong Mountain area. (Hence, the reason our plane load of replacements flew directly into Pleiku.) Fitted with almost a full compliment of replacements, the battalion was given the mission of securing highway 19 from the eastern edge of the city of Pleiku, west to the Mang Giang Pass. East of the pass is secured by elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile) through to the western edge of the city of Quang Ngai located on the coast of the South China Sea. During the

French Indo China War, the French made a valiant effort to hold the pass but were forced to withdraw and consolidate to Dien Bien Phu where they eventually were defeated by superior Communist forces led by General Giap.

U.S. and South Vietnamese convoys of two and a half five ton trucks frequently travel this main east-west thoroughfare. The lead and trailing trucks in the convoy have armored plates attached to their sides. They are armed with .50 caliber machine guns and carry a squad of Military Police with M-60 machine guns, M-16 rifles and M-79 grenade launchers. The supply vehicles are protected with sandbags and have at least one "shotgun" rider for protection.

With tank support, small squad and platoon sized pockets of infantry, from our battalion, are strategically located just off the highway. Indirect fire support from the 105 battery, our own heavy mortar platoon and each company's 81mm mortars protect these isolated positions as best as possible. The remainder of the rifle platoons conduct search operations primarily north of the highway in an attempt to locate and engage enemy units attempting to attack these convoys. Our guys feel that this mission is a "cake walk." Most enjoy this period of rest and relative security; some itch for contact with the enemy.

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12 - 20 January 1967: Continued to secure Highway 19. Daily patrols from companies in the field continue to search the area north of highway with no contact.

21 January 1967: Major Vogantanz stepped on a toe popper while accompanying Recon Platoon on search mission. Battalion Commander evacuated him in C&C ship.

22 January 1967: Captain James Lanning assumed duties as S-3 officer.

23 - 28 January 1967: Administrative flight to Oasis vic ZA114284. Very dusty but has a shower point. First one since leaving Travis.

4 February 1967: Highway security mission terminated. Battalion conducted combat air assault into the Ia Drang Valley vic 940050.

8 February 1967: Flew to Chu Pong Mountain vic 940010. Remained during Tet (Lunar New Year). Located wreckage of Air Force plane with 20mm cannon still attached. Surprised the enemy didn't find and remove it.

9 - 12 February 1967: Conducted security patrols without incident.

13 February 1967: Report that 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry (4<sup>th</sup> Div) catching hell north of highway. 2-35 moved to LZ 27D

16 February 1967: Bn moved north to 787242 to support 2-8 Inf

17 February 1967: Combat assault to 642504. I took "jump CP" with B/2-35. We made contact at 726514. Enemy withdrew, no casualties.

18 February 1967: Road convoy of Alpha and Charlie companies from 787242 through LZ 3T vic 8545. Lead vehicle hit a mine - no casualties reported. 2-8<sup>th</sup> Inf (4<sup>th</sup> Div) ambushed vic 726514. Initial reports were that they lost 24 men from one company and 32 from another.

19 February 1967: Flew from 726514 to join with the convoy

20 February 1967: Reconnaissance platoon made contact with about 10 NVA. Chased them across the border. Company B vic YA684469 located 3 light machine guns, 3 each 60mm mortars, apx 7,000 rounds of small arms ammunition, beaucoup ammo pouches, 57mm recoilless rifle ammunition, C-4 w/primers. Men in the battalion looking for a fight - me too.

21 February 1967: At 1025H, Company C made contact vic YA676467 with estimated platoon of NVA. C Co in pursuit, B Co moving south to block enemy escape over the Cambodian border. 1-8 Inf still in heavy contact to the north. A 250 pound bomb was found close to where the road crosses a deep chasm over the river. The bomb had been dragged to the site where it was found. EOD called in to destroy bomb. Battalion commander wants the bridge secured with an ambush tonight. All companies out on missions. Myself and five volunteers from HHC directed to set up ambush site between where bomb was found and the bridge. Captain Lanning directed me to establish DEFCONS (artillery defensive concentrations) around my position. Battalion rule was that all defcons required first round smoke (in daylight) or illumination (night). After dark, I positioned the patrol and set up claymores. Not wanting to give away my position, I called for DEFCONS as first round HE, that I would adjust, so that any lurking enemy would think it was just H&I's. First round lost. Switched to one round illumination, adjusted and waited through the night without incident. At daylight we retrieved the claymores. One of the claymore wires was found to be cut in half, about 25 feet from Blankenship's position, by the nose cone of the DEFCON illumination round. Not only was that danger close, but made the claymore a dud. Glad we never had to use it.

22 Feb 67: Still in same location. Co C made contact. No details yet. Bn CO authorized all troops in the LZ to go in small groups the 800 - 1000 yards to the river for a bath. It was great. One group of 5-10 would secure the river bank while the other washed body and fatigues. When finished, the bathers would then secure the bank for the next group, and so on until everyone get a bath.

23 - 24 Feb 67: LRP from the battalion killed one NVA vic 6346. Oops - wrong side of the border.

25 Feb 67: All companies out of radio range with the battalion. CPT Lanning directed me to establish a field expedient radio relay station constructed from salvaged field

kitchen stove with two jeep batteries and a couple of jeep antenna welded to the sides. Left the KY8 (scrambler) in the TOC. Wouldn't want the enemy to capture it. C&C inserted us vic 677535. Am in contact with all companies and the TOC.

26 Feb 67: Commo reestablished directly between companies and TOC. C&C extracted my team and returned us to the fire base.

27 Feb 67: Moved by dirt road to 666548. Bad road - thick vegetation on both sides of road. Not very comfortable. Good place for enemy ambush. Negative contact (thank God).

28 Feb 67: Arrived at new fire base. Built TOC bunker with help from Engineer Squad. A 105mm Howitzer round hit the trees and detonated. One serious stomach wound, two wounded in legs.

3 Mar 67: Made combat assault vic 762594. LZ nothing but high (elephant) grass surrounded by heavily vegetated, triple canopy woods. Pilots couldn't tell how deep grass was and would only hover while we jumped. Ground was further than we anticipated. Six casualties (broken legs/sprained ankles). Ten NVA came to recon us. Called in gunships. NVA flashlights during the night on hill to our east. Called in artillery and mortars. Lights went out. This is what is considered a "Free Fire Zone." There are no friendly villages in the vicinity. Therefore we shoot anything that moves.

5 - 6 Mar 67: Still clearing vegetation. Area bad with scorpions. S-2 reports NVA all around the area. Artillery fired DEFCONS at enemy 300 yards outside perimeter. Get work from CPT Lanning that we will be moving tomorrow to 2-8 Inf LZ at 676535. Beautiful position on top of hill. It would take a sustained attack of at least a battalion to overrun that position. I sure hope we stay for awhile, but I doubt it.

8 Mar 67: Located radio relay station to 676573. Had good position but stayed awake all night. Adjusted Co B & Co C DEFCONS

9 Mar 67: Returned to fire base. Visited by General Key (now President of Vietnam), his wife and Brigadier General James Stewart. He may be a movie star but he is still a general in the Air force Reserve. This fire base, built by 2-8 Inf, 4<sup>th</sup> Div is really nice. Has a battery of 155mm and 8" (big) guns. When they fire, the ground literally shakes. The TOC and CP, including the battalion commanders quarters are in a large, deep hole in the ground (probably 50x50 feet) complete with good overhead cover. No way an enemy 82mm mortar could penetrate. There are also sandbagged bunkers with overhead protection for all the men on the LZ with excellent fields of fire and observation.

12 Mar 67:

Got new S-3, Major Crosby-Lanning to Company C

Major Crosby saw the TOC of the Mechanized Artillery and fell in love with it. It is actually an armored personnel carrier with a higher than normal top. Inside is everything a commander and S-3 need - radios, wall space for maps, field desks, the works. He drew up the plans and got the old man's approval to have our motor pool build one by cutting one end of each of two CONEX containers and welding them together. He fitted the top with four jeep batteries, antennas, a power-slave receptacle to recharge the batteries by generator; mounted shelves at one end for radios and KY8 scrambler; a large map area covered with Plexiglas; and work space opposite the maps for himself, the duty officer and I. It will even have a custom made tent extension coming off the door end just like the APC TOC. It will be fitted with four rings on top and using the same type of slings used by the artillery to move their howitzers, will be air transportable by Chinook. Brilliant! Why doesn't the Army have more officers willing to show that kind of initiative. I can't wait until its built.

Webmaster Note: I added these entries for 12 to 15 March, from another document that Dave sent to me. I am sure he does not mind. (Jim)

12 March: Co A while moving south to check B-52 area got heavy contact at 657487. Lt K killed. NVA split the company up. Snipers in trees. Co C committed. Made CA from 666548 into 655478 and moving north to block. Co B committed. Making CA into 686482. One company (B/2/8<sup>th</sup> Inf, 4<sup>th</sup> ID) moving by ground along river. One company from 1/8<sup>th</sup> Inf, 4<sup>th</sup> ID ready to assist. Co A receiving small arms & mortar fire. Count at 1600, 3 KIA, 11 WIA. Co B pushing southeast, Co C pushing east. Co A needs reinforcements. Getting excellent support from Air force and artillery. Colonel wants jump CP with A Co.

(written w/grease pencil) On ground with Co A. Completely surrounded. Perimeter 100 meters. Thick vegetation. Must stick out the night.

13 March: Long night. Took many casualties. Co A worst. Lead platoon ran into NVA battalion size force. Snipers still in trees. Lt K hit in chest-died about 0300. Blankenship got out on first chopper (short-timer). Rhodes killed trying to get ammo to surrounded 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon. Bodies already beginning to bloat. Writing this by light of "Spooky". 2<sup>nd</sup> night with Company A. We took many casualties. Still don't know exactly how many dead and wounded. 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, 4<sup>th</sup> ID all around us. Our AO reduced to 1500 meters. Still have movement all around but can't fire arty because of 4<sup>th</sup> Div troops in such close proximity. Danny dead. 60mm mortar round-couldn't recognize him. 3<sup>rd</sup> plt Co A down to 15 men. Tonight quiet-no snipers. One poor NVA had a bunch of pictures in his pocket of his family. He was sniping from a tree. Lt K stuck his finger in his wound. Doc taped his hand in place to hold finger in. Mortar round went off close by-he took a piece in the leg and arm. His arm went numb & he just died (slowly). Men very tired, moral high but a lot of anguish over casualties. No one likes to see the dead carried out in ponchos. Now have a good foxhole with over head cover. Colonel sleeping on top. JC and Marty also sleeping. Co C closed to area where 3<sup>rd</sup> plt was. Should stay quiet for rest of night.

14 March: Battalion FSB got mortar fire last night and attacked 1<sup>st</sup> light today. Since we are still w/Co A don't know what casualty situation is. All out of water-low on chow. FSB attacked for 3<sup>rd</sup> time. Direct hit on medic tent. Doc Hoover, Forrister (3 days left), Jarrells & Furman. Sorry-they were all great medics. 1320 hours-chopper finally brought us water and C-rats. Co C got another sniper in trees. 1700 hours-Pulled my men and I out. Arrived FSB. It got hit bad-300 mortar rounds (official). Direct hit on Co A mortar position, medic tent, 105mm How ammo truck and an 8in gun emplacement. Total count-friendly 14 KIA, 42 WIA; NVA 53 KIA by body count, 30 more estimated by observation.

15 March: Slept hard last night. So tired didn't even hear H & I's. During the day, got new S-3 (Maj Crosby). Shammed most of the day.

16 Mar 67: Other units within the brigade still getting heavy contact. Nothing here - getting rested.

20 Mar 67: G-2 reports NVA Regiment near our LZ and may attempt to attack.

Webmaster Note: Again, I added these entries, for 20 to 26 March, from another document that Dave sent to me. (Jim)

20 March: Intel reports NVA Regiment nearby-Will attempt to take FSB

21 March: Co C, while sweeping southeast from 664585 made contact with enemy battalion. 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon stopped human wave attack. Most of the platoon are casualties. Co A moved northeast to assist. NVA broke contact before Co A could reach Co C. CPT Rykowski, although seriously wounded in stomach and both legs, stayed on radio for three hours directing the fight. Sounds horrible to hear a dying man talk on the radio. Battalion commander landed & got him out. One chopper took direct hit from rocket launcher while about 25 feet in the air. Pilot lost both eyes, co-pilot seriously wounded, both gunners dead. Initial reports 16 friendly KIA, 52 WIA, 11 MIA. Most casualties from 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon and Co C Hq. Choppers did tremendous job pulling wounded out during darkness in very bad LZ.

22 March: didn't get much sleep last night. Now pulling friendly KIA's and remainder of Co c back to FSB. Co B flew in to relieve Co C. Medic told me it looked like a graveyard out there. Battalion commander estimates 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt, Co C took at least 150 NVA with them.

23-25 March: Making close search of battle area. NVA body count now up to 52.

26 March: Easter Sunday. Battalion Chaplain conducted combined Easter Sunday and memorial service for Charlie company. Real nice. *(I have a picture of the service)*

Found Regimental Hq of NVA. Also found GI equipment from 12 March action. Same bunch of NVA. Hospital area with 5 more NVA in graves & many bloody bandages.

21 Mar 67:

Recruit walking to sounds of big guns.

Bunker collapse from vibration of big guns. Trapped several guys. Pure panic

27 Mar 67: Preparing to move by convoy from hill to Check Point 7 on highway 19 vic 033313. Company A & B walked in from the contact area (6755)

28 Mar 67: Departed fire base by convoy into Pleiku. No contact enroute.

29 Mar - 1 Apr 67: Base camp stinks. I would rather be in the field. Too much bull-shit. Just like garrison duty anywhere else in the world. Drank beer after beer every night. Cleaned equipment and prepared to go back to the field.

2 Apr 67: Got drunk last night - picked a fight with Russ Streiber. (Sorry about that.) We're headed for Bong Son tomorrow. Where the hell is Bong Son?

3 Apr 67: Departed Pleiku by convoy. Will travel east on highway 19 to Qui Nhon, then highway 1 north along the South China Sea coast to Bong Son. Myself and driver in  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton truck with most of the TOC equipment. About halfway between east side of Mang Giang Pass and Qui Nhon the water pump went on the truck. I radioed the convoy commander and told him the problem. We decided the convoy would continue on while I limped into Qui Nhon to get the truck fixed. Even though my driver and I were armed to the teeth (M-60 LMG, 1 M-16, 1 M-79, 4 grenades each and plenty of ammo) we were more than a little apprehensive. We drove until the radiator belched nothing but steam, stopped at a rice paddy, filled our steel pots with water and continued on. After repeating this process a number of times, we finally reached the outskirts of Qui Nhon.

I have a cousin (Paul Crotty) stationed in a maintenance outfit of some kind somewhere in Qui Nhon. I stopped the first MP I saw and asked him where this outfit was located. His response was "a block from the ice house." Wow! - city blocks and ice houses too. What a way to fight a war.

Since neither the driver nor myself knew our way around the city, the MP's kindly led us there. It was a relatively small, fenced in compound, with a gate, guard, swinging barrier and all. Finding the maintenance officer, I told him who I was, the fact that my cousin was in this outfit and that I had to get a new water pump on the truck so I could rejoin my battalion laggard overnight just north of the city.

Well let me tell you that nothing was too good for us "Grunts." The motor officer guaranteed he would have my truck fixed before morning even if he had to take a water pump off one of his own vehicles to put on mine. He then proceeded to take the driver and I to the "CLUB" for COLD BEER that wasn't even in rusty cans. Boy, am I impressed.

Bad news: My cousin is on R&R to Thailand. Worse, my truck won't be finished until late tonight and there is a curfew in Qui Nhon. No Americans off their compounds

after midnight! We would have to stay the night but had to lock our weapons and ammunition in the arms room. The supply sergeant took us to the (real) barracks with (real) GI bunks and mattresses that had (real) sheets, pillows and blankets. Now this is the life.

The motor officer informed me that the truck would be finished around midnight. With that, I informed the supply sergeant that he had two choices: (1) Get woken up at midnight to reissue our weapons and ammunition, or (2) Return it to us now and we will secure it under the bunks until we leave. He chose the later but a few of the other guys looked very uncomfortable with those grenades hanging off our ammo pouches. We understood their plight. In fact we were so concerned for them that we even slept on top of the blankets so we wouldn't get the sheets dirty.

At 0330, the driver and I grabbed our gear, quietly slipped into the truck and headed for the gate where we were stopped by the guard with a resounding "Halt, who goes there!" We stopped. "Advance to be recognized" he shouted. Now I knew this poor sentry was only doing his job but wouldn't know me from Jack Shit. So, I approached exactly as I taught troops in basic training at Ft. Dix NJ. I explained to the sentry who I was, what had happened, and that I had to rejoin the battalion somewhere north of the city before they departed. "But you can't leave the compound until after 0600" replied the sentry. "There's a curfew." "Private," I replied, "I know your only doing what you were trained to do but I must get back to my battalion." "Now you have two choices: (1) Open the gate, let me out and re-close the gate and nobody will be the wiser, or (2) I will just direct my driver to crash through the gate." True to his excellent training, the sentry began shouting "Sergeant of the Guard, Sergeant of the Guard." With a nod from me, the driver put the truck in gear and away we went. I really felt bad about smashing their gate barrier particularly since they were so great to us - but you've "gotta" do what you "gotta" do. We re-joined the convoy, still crashed, near Phu Cat Air Force Base (LZ Hammond) before dawn and were back in the fold.

4 Apr 67: Flew from LZ Hammond with Company C into LZ Illini vic BR787673. I can't even say it let alone spell it. Found out later that the University of Illinois are called "Illini." Co B flew into LZ Corral vic BR735701. Both were 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division fire bases. Beautiful fire base. No dust, green grass and prepared bunkers. TOC underground. Nice stream 100 yards west. Terrain flat, sandy and open. Some outfit is here with a couple of quad-fiftys. Major Crosby had a blast firing them.

5 Apr 67: Continuing to improve LZ. Recon made CA into LZ Bill vic BR727687. While guiding in a HU-ID, Lieutenant Harry Davis was struck in the head by the main rotor blades. Sergeant Smith rushed to his aid and was also struck in the head. Smith died enroute to Qui Nhon hospital, LT David died that night. The chopper was secured for the night pending investigation. Co A OPCON to 1-35 Inf at LZ Anchor vic BR958865. (3500 meters from ocean and 500 meters from large salt lake.)

6 Apr 67: Continued setting up. Everything under control. Received new S-3 Air, Captain Newman.

7-8 Apr 67: Received SPAR report of VC CP located vic BR765735. Watched A-1E Skyraiders pound hell out of it. The battalion commander and I flew over the area to draw enemy fire. We didn't get any. Then flew over each company area. Still no fire. Flew back to Hammond after dark. I must say that for the very first time since I have been in country, I was scared. I don't like playing sitting duck in a helicopter begging for someone to shoot at me.

9 - 14 Apr 67: Absolutely nothing in this area.

15 Apr 67: Moved TOC by Chinook, north to Duc Pho vic 814385. Saw South China Sea for first time. Flew right up the beach. Battalion will be OPCON to 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division at LZ Montezuma. (The Marine Corps held the area prior to turning it over to the Cav.) Major Crosby had an engineer outfit bulldoze out a hole to fit the TOC into. Great idea. For the first time we don't have to sandbag the sucker.

16 Apr 67: 1-9 Cav made contact vic 8048. 1A/2-35 committed with 1-9 Cav. Company C made combat assault north of contact point vic 785495 and pushed south trapping about 50 VC. They got 21 VC KIA, captured 11 and had only one friendly WIA. However, we did lose one helicopter gunship from ground fire. Five dead. Two poor souls trapped in wreckage. Couldn't get bodies out until after wreckage was airlifted by Chinook back to LZ Montezuma. Except for the gunship and the loss of its crew, it was a very good day. We just have to remember that fighting out here is significantly different than Pleiku/Kontum Province. The terrain is flat, much more open with dangerous hedgerows and numerous rice paddies.

17 Apr 67: Ash and trash day

18 Apr 67: 3A/2-35 caught 35-50 VC at 823409. Two friendly WIA ON INITIAL CONTACT. Killed 5 VC. Couldn't do much because of heavy rain. Artillery and gunships got all five. Rained all day filling foxholes with water and collapsing poorly constructed bunkers. TOC flooded. I guess Crosby's idea of bulldozing a hole for the TOC wasn't so good after all. Had to get the bulldozer to drag the TOC out of the hole. Everything soaked. What a job! Ended up sandbagging anyway.

19 Apr 67: Gunships caught 5 VC attempting to carry body off C&C. Killed one. Female VC attempting to carry dead dink was WIA

20 Apr 67: Company C found large cave and tunnel complex vic 845376. Blowing tunnels. Found one M-60 and one M-14. Looks like they came from downed chopper since the weapons were scorched.

21 - 25 Apr 67: Contact just about every day. Small, but effective for us. Cumulative body count in this AO is 83 KIA, 95 POW. We have 5 WIA and 1 DOW from the battalion. Flew observer mission for target marking with recon platoon. Area was north of river from 8041 NE to the north side of the inlet. Using big 16" naval guns. VC

sneaking up to water point just outside the perimeter and placing booby traps. Also they are planting many mines on the road

26 Apr 67: Recon ran into a squad of VC at 808408. Company A sent to reinforce. Received intel report of high VC officials at 835415. CA'd one platoon from C Company who made contact. A second platoon was sent in. I was on the hill behind the CP observing. As I came off the hill, snipers just outside the perimeter began firing. Mucci, Glynn and I maneuvered around left to engage. Gunships came in and finished the job.

27 Apr 67: 1<sup>st</sup> Squad, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, B Company left LZ Semper vic 875320. Made contact 874307. 1KIA from 1<sup>st</sup> Squad. CA'd one platoon from Co C and a second platoon from LZ Guadalcanal with 3 tanks.

28 Apr - 3 May 67: Continued search and destroy operations north of Montezuma. AO appears to be loaded with VC. Can't seem to pin them down. Night of 3 May made airborne gas attack (CS) over 4 VC in trench. Couldn't land. Came back to Montezuma. I loaded 15 men on 2 APC's and went back to trench area. Found the trench, VC gone.

4 May 67: Moved CP from Montezuma to hill top a couple of thousand clicks north vic 755431. Good view of the war. Had to move the TOC twice. First location too exposed. On closer observation this location is not as good as I had first thought. It consists of a large hill connected by a saddle to a smaller hill to the north. The artillery battery fit just perfect in the saddle. The north hill would make a good OP. The bad part is just to the west is the largest hill. It has a commanding view of the entire fire base. An enemy OP on that hill could direct mortar or recoilless rifle fire on us with no problem. I hope we put something up there. LZ was named LIZ by the battalion commander. His wife is Elizabeth. Finally got the TOC sandbagged half way up and on top. Get the troops to dig in after dark. Was totally exhausted. Russ and I just plopped down on the west side of the crest of the hill without even digging a hole for ourselves. Sometime later I felt like my body was on fire but I was too tired to completely wake up. Finally I sat up, got my flashlight with a red lens and saw that we were both completely covered with ants. We had fallen asleep on top on a large colony of ants that were chewing us alive. You never saw two men strip so fast in your life. We brushed the thousands of ants off each other, shook our fatigues, emptied our boots, moved a couple of hundred yards around the hill and went back to sleep.

5 May 67: Enemy continuing to engage us with small arms in small numbers. One kid in B Company triggered a large (probably 250 LB bomb) booby trap. APC loaded with a squad from reconnaissance platoon hit an even larger explosive device (maybe as large as a 500 LB bomb). All killed including track commander and driver. Largest piece of vehicle we found intact was a road wheel.

6 - 10 May 67: Continued S & D operations. 1LT Chase, Battalion S-2 killed when ground fire hit a grenade inside the chopper and blew him out. Made an amphibious

landing into VC village vic 785505 with tanks and a platoon of infantry from Company B. Company A CA'd to the north side, Company C ambushed from the southwest. Took everyone by surprise with the landing craft. Picked up 250 refugees and a sack full of VC. Cumulative count now 126 enemy KIA, 48 POW, 459 VCS and 1 informant. Friendly casualties: 9 KIA, 16 WIA, 1 DOW and 8 NBI. Gun ships caught eight VC on the large hill to our west. Killed 1, wounded 3. I knew that hill was going to hurt us. Intel reports that a large VC force is forming to attack LZ LIZ.

11 - 12 May 67: Still scoffing up VC. Intel estimates LIZ to be attacked soon. Company C continuing to make contact. Large contact vic 8047. Killed 32 more, captured one BAR (which I kept), 4 M-1 rifles, 1 M-1 Carbine, 2 French assault sub machine guns. I took the wire stock off one of the sub machine guns and had the motor sergeant weld in to the receiver of my Thompson. Makes it much lighter.

13 May 67: LIZ finally was attacked. At 2350 (12 May) we got hit by mortar fire. They started in the saddle where the artillery is and landed a direct hit on one of the 105 ammo bunkers. I was asleep and never heard the initial rounds hit. (Big difference for the H&I's that kept me awake all night my first day in country.) Somewhere in the dark regions of my subconscious I heard wooshing sounds but couldn't figure out what it was. As I got closer and closer to consciousness I realized that it was large chunks of shrapnel from the exploding 105 bunker wooshing over my head. Now I could see the fires and hear the incoming. Realizing we were under attack, I ran towards the 106mm recoilless rifle position to begin returning fire. About 75 feet away I heard someone from the 106 position yell "Fire." I dove for the ground with the full realization of the back blast effects from a 106mm recoilless rifle. Sgt Carswell, the artillery FO ran over thinking I was hit. Other than the fact that I couldn't hear very well, I was all right. Carswell & I continued to the 106 position and found Lieutenant White, the new Assistant S-3 already directing fire. We looked for the muzzle flashes for the mortars but couldn't see them. We fired at possible locations but was totally ineffective. The attack did a lot of damage, more so to the artillery in the saddle than the CP area. Must dig a hole for myself. Haven't done that yet. (Do as I say, not as I do)

14 - 16 May 67: Finally dug a foxhole. Moved from the west side of LIZ to the south side. I figured it was better to get away from the four-deuce mortars. They make a good target for "Charlie's" mortars. I now have a full complement of RTO's. Blankenship, Carter and Doyle all gone home. I still have McCourt who extended for six more months, Sharp, Mucci, Boydell, Otts, Pellerito (Pepper). Willie Roberts and myself. This will provide 2 RTO's with shifts of four hours on and eight hours off with Willie and I alternating each shift. That will work just fine, at least until August when most of them DROS out.

Everyone pulled perimeter guard last night. All companies are out on ambushes. Only Recon and us on the hill. C/3-4 Cav is in the saddle with the artillery. Keeping my BAR ready although I still don't think Charlie would make a ground attack. Intel reports the 101<sup>st</sup> got into a big fight vic 7049. They possibly broke an attack on us. Thanks Screaming Eagles.

16 May 67 (Con't): Company A sweeping back to LZ LIZ and will pull "Palace Guard." I know they like the relative security of the fire base but really hate being here. Charlie Company moved to 804497 and will set up ambushes. They have been very successful for the last two nights. They got one machine gun, one more BAR, two M-1's, one carbine and one French sub machine gun. Unofficial cumulative count is now: 185 KIA, 52 POW's, 555 VCS. Friendly stats: 5 KIA, 41 WIA, 2 DOW and 11 NBI.

17 May 67: Company A, while on search and destroy vic 7744, ran into about a company of VC. Recon moved from LIZ to secure an LZ at 7644 for Company C. C/3-4 Cav and Company A hit the village from the west, Company C hit them from the northwest. Just like Korea. They had them pinned in their holes and literally had to dig them out with bayonets and grenades. Total count 72 enemy KIA. Company C lost a few killed and wounded - don't know exact count yet. During the night, Company A got hit. "Charlie" overran a LP. Sweep revealed nothing the next morning.

18 - 26 May 67: Contact every day with all elements. Small but effective

Webmaster Note: Entries for 27 to 30 May were added to this document from another document sent by MSG Butters. (Jim)

27 May: Received SPAR report of enemy battalion vic 7343. Didn't believe it because it's only 2000 meters in plain view from LZ LIZ. What a mistake! Blue team (Infantry platoon 1/9 Cav, 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Div) made combat assault. They made contact and immediately pinned down. Company B was RRF (Ready Reactionary Force). They made combat assault southeast on contact while C/3-4 Cav and Recon Platoon moved south into north side of village. Almost immediately all elements surrounded. Two choppers shot down during the CA. One blew up and burned. Fighting furious. Set up in night position inside village. Appears enemy withdrew into the mountains to the west. Enemy POW said it was the heavy weapons company of the 90<sup>th</sup> VC Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> VC Regiment.

28 May: Received C/1-35 OPCON to us. They made a combat assault north of contact area. Company B moved up to draw enemy that may have withdrawn. Made contact. Recon CA'd to top of mountain vic 7146 sweeping down draw to meet Company B and C/3-4 Cav. Light contact. Set up in ambush positions.

29 May: VC attacked ambush sites. Completely camouflaged himself. Moved into perimeter. Mortars, recoilless rifles - the works. Captain Penn, C/3-4 Cav dead. Captain Walker, CO B/2-35 dead. Platoon of Company B and Company Headquarters would have been wiped out but friendly troops got to them before dawn. Total stats to date: Enemy KIA 115. WIA 3, POW 1, VC suspects 167, weapons 43. Friendly losses: 6 KIA, 41 WIA. Walker lived almost an hour after back blown out by mortar. Thought only of his men right up to the minute he died. Told me over the radio, "If I don't make it, remember 30 Sierra (*RTO 3d Plt*) called in all airstrikes." I will really miss his frequent quips with me. He was a real gentleman.

Sweep in daylight found location where enemy withdrew after initial contact. Between contact of May 17<sup>th</sup> and last three days have just about wiped out 90<sup>th</sup> VC Battalion. Total for contacts with 90<sup>th</sup> - 451 enemy KIA by body count, 75 POW, 892 VC suspects. Friendly losses, 18 KIA, 132 WIA, 5 DOW, 17 NBI. We now know Charlie was going to try to take LZ LIZ but we got him first (at a high price). Really sacked up the crew served weapons. 7 light machine guns, two heavy machine guns, one recoilless rifle, one B40 rocket launcher. Total weapons captured to date in this AO: 14 SKS rifles, 17 AK-47's, 16 sub machine guns, 17 M-1 and M-14 rifles, 12 BAR's, 4 pistols, 26 carbines, 3 M-79's, 1 60mm mortar. All quiet now.

30 May: Very quiet Memorial Day. However, from 2230H on, we have had no contact with LLRP located vic 707447 (the larger hill just west of LZ LIZ.)

31 May 67: Still no contact with the 5 man LLRP. I requested to take a patrol up the hill to investigate. Colonel said "No!" Sent a patrol from C/3-4 Cav. Around 1030H they found two dead and buried. Appears as though the other three are captured or killed somewhere else. Evidently they put up a hell of a fight because of the numerous expended cartridge cases and blood trails. Followed trails but no luck. "Charlie" got one ANPRC-25, one complete brigade SOI, one M-14 rifle with sniper scope, one M-60, two M-16's and one M-16 with a grenade launcher (40mm) underneath the barrel. Assuming that all are dead. Company A got three moe kills in the LLRP area later in the day. I've been saying all along that the dominance of that hill, in such close proximity to LZ LIZ, makes for a perfect OP. Sure hope the old man does something about it.

1 Jun 67: Very quiet - no significant contacts

2 Jun 67: Company A received small arms fire trying to cross a bridge northeast of LIZ. Pulled in the other companies but missed closing the trap. Captured a letter from the VC Battalion Commander stating that the 92<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 2<sup>nd</sup> VC Regiment was to attack troops in our area of operations. We must have broken it up before he got a chance to launch.

3 - 25 June 67: An armored personnel carrier hit a 250 pound bomb

26 Jun - 6 Jul 67: SitRep no change. Small VC activity around the AO. We keep getting intelligence reports about the 2<sup>nd</sup> VC Regiment going to attack us. Captured maps and plans to attack our battalion during the period of the new moon from KIA VC Company Commander. This calculates to be from 7 - 11 July.

7 Jul 67: Still nothing more on the 2<sup>nd</sup> VC Regiment. (SIX MONTHS TODAY - Even "Lifers" count.)

10 Jul 67: At BS804427 captured one VC with BAR who led us to a well concealed spider hole. Killed two in the hole that wouldn't come out.

11 - 31 Jul 67: Thanks to Alpha Company and Recon we finally figured out how "Charlie" vanishes. The battalion is literally digging up the entire AO. Picking up many kills and captures. Unofficial cumulative counts to date: 883 enemy KIA, 276 weapons captured, 281 POWs and 2246 VCS. Friendly: 55 KIA, 2 DOW, 257 WIA, 3 MIA.

1 - 3 Aug 67: Continuing to find many spider holes. The battalion is chewing "Charlie" up.

4 Aug 67: Departed field for R & R

5 - 11 Aug 67: Remained at Pleiku awaiting orders for R&R

12 - 18 Aug 67: Wow! Barbara met me in Hawaii. Best six days of my life.

19 Aug 67:

I have not finished transcribing my journal (19 Aug 67 - 6 Jan 68) One of these days, when I get some time, I will complete the job. Working two jobs in preparation for retirement just takes a lot of my time.

Dave

DFB cacti A-M. doc

AAA. for 16 Apr. 67 ✓ Thach Thonk 85794489  
OAH-Jeune (part)

(1 sketch - not incl.) to Co ~~1st~~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde, 1<sup>st</sup> Cav Div  
(airmobile)

21 Apr. LeJeune and self  
& Butler Bogan

(2) AAR - 21 Apr - 11 May 67 <sup>OP</sup> Baker ~~OP~~ sitrep report,

21 Apr units at  
2/35 CP: Montezuma  
A Shoup  
B Guadalcanal  
C 85837364  
C/3-Cav Guadalcanal  
platoon A LZ Semper RF/PF-LZ

APR 11 May 67 Battle of the Pursuit

(3) OFFLIZ  
(incl Annex 1 and 2) not incl.  
armor/troups fair Cav

(4) mortar attack on LZ Liz 12 May 67  
Post <sup>OP</sup> already (Op. Maineur)

DFB cacti Aug. doc

posted already

- (1) Battle of An Ba - 8 Aug 67
- (2) Battle of An Thuch 20 Aug 67
- (3) 2/35 OAH for period ending 31 Oct 67

DFB cacti OB, doc

✓ (1) Daily Journal of Dave

DFB cacti H, doc

(1) Note Hunt' by Ben Crosby  
(10 July 67)

DFB cacti J-M

✓ (1) AAR 31 Mar 67 (sem Houston) 2 Jan to 31 Mar 67  
(ORLZ)  
- comments by Dave at end.

21 Jan - Feb 67 at  
western Aleutian Prov.  
Feb - 28 Mar at  
S.W. Kamtun Prov.  
28 - 31 Mar at  
Bdr Base Camp at Aleutian

1-12-01 - used DFB via email for annex etc copies.

over

DFB - cacti men.doc . opening comments by Dave

② unit citations

③ AAR 11-12 Mar 67 Acc & Medic... posted @ pic

④ AAR 12 Mar 67 (San Houston) (part) 2nd Lt. Stephen Karapczyc

⑤ epilogue by DFB

⑥ Medal Honor Karapczyc COA 2/35th (12 Mar 67)

⑦ comment by Dave

⑧  
Hauer, Ferrister  
Jarrells, Furman

⑨ Journal 12 Mar / 13 / 14 / 15 / ✓

⑩ AAR - 21-22 Mar 67, Aottle One-Niner

⑪ Epilogue of 21-22 by DFB

⑫ Journal 20-26 Mar ✓  
( picture of service? )

DFB cacti men MOH.doc - Karap...

cacti men.doc  
already posted (Tom Phony 30 May 67)

✓ Journal 27-30 May ✓