



IVY LEAF **FAMOUS FOURTH**

Donated by Roger Stitt
Bravo Co 1/35th 68-69
Please do NOT remove
from Hospitality Room.



23 Mar 1969 Ivy Leaf (get photo)

Caption " I looked back up and there they were – NVA passing my position..."
Roger Stitt was in this battle

Cacti Green Kills Six In Late Night Contact

SP4 CRAIG MACGOWAN

OASIS — "I lived ten lifetimes in about five minutes" was the way Private First Class Joe C. Crowley of Upton, Mass., described the late-night contact with a company-sized NVA Rocket Transportation group by the Famous 4th's Company B, 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry.

The action near Firebase Lily netted the "Fighting Gypsies" one detainee, six enemy dead, four 122mm rocket warheads and other miscellaneous enemy equipment including rucksacks and an AK47.

"We were, going to move to the west from our night location when a helicopter flew over and received some ground fire," explained 3rd Platoon Leader, First Lieutenant John C. Kelly of Bayside, N.Y.

"That evening, instead of closing on the rest of the company, we were to set up three individual platoon-sized look-outs.

"I set up furthest away from a village to the east on a trail running into the village."

That set the stage for the triangular-shaped contact by Bravo Company, with the 3rd Platoon facing the trail.

Private First Class Joe Crowley, the man who initiated the action, was concealed in a bamboo thicket.

"I was on guard. I looked down at my watch — 11 p.m. I looked back up and there they were — NVA passing by my position about six feet away, moving in column down the trail.

"At first I thought it was only a squad, but after a few minutes I had counted 40... then 62.

"I lived ten lifetimes 'in about five minutes."

When he was certain all the enemy had passed, PFC Crowley sprung the trap by throwing hand grenades at the tail of the enemy column.

Further up the line Sergeant Stanley Synstenlien of Ashby, Mass., was alerted by the noise of the passing enemy. They were heavily loaded, carrying rucksacks, small arms — mostly AK-47s slung over their shoulders.

"You could hear the water sloshing in their canteens," recalled the Ivy sergeant.

"They were carrying 122mm rocket warheads and every third man was carrying a rocket booster or an 82mm mortar tube."

Sergeant Synstenlien started throwing grenades at the same time as PFC Crowley.

At the end of the Ivy Unit was Private First Class Charles L. Neal of Montgomery, La., who detonated two claymore mines at the passing column.

As he squeezed the detonators at precisely the right moment, the NVA scattered into the dense bamboo near the trailside and the night was to be a long one for Bravo Company.

"There was a lot of movement around us most of the night," said Lieutenant Kelly—"they were trying to recover their people and the equipment they had dropped.

"When they started coming back about a half hour after the initial contact, we engaged them with M79 grenade launchers."

Again, at about 3 a.m. approximately ten NVA came back out of the bushes and were engaged, this time by small arms fire.

"I think it really shook them up when the 2nd Squad opened up," stated Lieutenant Kelly. "They thought they had something small, came up to see what it was, and found they were up against something pretty big."

At daybreak the next morning the Ivymen were in for another surprise: Four enemy 122mm rocket warheads were discovered near the sight.

A total of six enemy were killed in the action, in addition to the detainee who later revealed significant information about the NVA Rocket Transportation Company.

"It didn't matter to me if they were an infantry or a rocket company. "They were out to get us," recalled PFC Crowley. "But we just played *it cool at night and did* a good job."