



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

'Fire Mission!' 9th Arty Is Ready



OASIS—"Fire Mission!" The alert broke the stillness of the night with the impact of an incoming round.

Ivymen of the Famous Fourth's "Mighty Ninth," 2nd Battalion, 9th Artillery, came boiling out of their bunkers and began swarming the howitzers. Dust covers flew from muzzles and sights and wheels spun in a blur of men and motion as the tubes reared back and swung in unison to the east.

A battery fire mission in the middle of the night always produces a sense of urgency, but with this one you could almost taste it.

Moments earlier Sergeant Richard Scheier, section chief on gun number three, the hot gun, had seen a flash of light in the direction of Pleiku City.

FROM LZ LILLIE, Pleiku appeared as a string of lights in the distance. The LZ, high above the central plain, offered a commanding view of the surrounding highlands. The 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry had occupied the fire bases only a few days before in anticipation of an offensive against sprawling Pleiku.

Only two days before an attack set up by the Fighting Gypsies had taken a company size NVA force by surprise during the night.

The enemy was moving down a trail, every third man carrying a cylindrical object similar to a mortar tube.

During the contact six NVA were killed and one was detained. Four 122mm rocket war heads were found along with several rocket casings.

From that time on the men on LZ Lillie had been alert for any signs of a rocket attack.

Sergeant Scheier knew immediately that the flashes he saw were proof of their expectations. Without hesitation he alerted the battery fire direction control center (FDC), who in turn alerted the counter battery radar.

In a matter of minutes the exact location of the suspected enemy rockets had been pinpointed.

"WE COULD SEE the long orange trail of the rockets as they went toward Pleiku," commented Charlie Battery Commander, Captain John C. Rose. "The radar had spotted the fourth round as it left the pad. We fired our first volley and got a large orange fireball that hung over the impact area.

Radar confirmed the secondary explosion with scope sightings of shrapnel after the initial shell burst.

"I had a ringside seat," commented Captain Rose. "I grabbed my binoculars and continued the fire mission, playing the role of forward observer as well as battery commander."

In all, approximately 200 rounds were poured into the area of the suspected launch location.