

FCB Associates

30 November 1986

Lieutenant General Richard T. Knowles, USA-Ret.
[REDACTED]

Dear General Knowles;

The purpose of this letter is to ask you for recollections of your time in command of the 196th Light Infantry Brigade.

Background: I have been commissioned to write a book about the 196th as one of the titles in Bantam Books' forthcoming series, "The Illustrated History of the Vietnam War." The paperback series will be launched next summer, aimed at the mass market. Working title for this book is THE CHARGERS.

Writing THE CHARGERS is a special privilege for me. I served with you in the 196th in 1967-68; first as the assistant brigade S-3, and from mid-1967 to February 1968 as the brigade S-3. (In 1973, I commanded the 1st Bn, 9th Infantry, in General Hank Emerson's 2d Infantry Division when you commanded I Corps (Group).)

Your own role in the brigade's history is crucial: you took command of the 196th after its stuttering start in its first major combat action. Will you please answer several questions about that period, to lend your own personal perspective to the account?

The questions follow. If you prefer to talk rather than write, I would be glad to discuss them with you on the telephone.

1. What guidance did you receive from General Westmoreland as you assumed command?
2. Was the infusion of officers from the 173d Airborne Brigade under way before you took command, or did you request it?
3. What steps did you believe needed to be taken with the brigade staff and commanders right away, and what others could be accomplished later?

4. How did you set about your infusion of a mental flexibility in the staff and commanders. I arrived just before Operation Junction City began. My own most vivid first impressions were of a mobile "state of mind" in the plans, and in the key people. That was reinforced when the 196th stayed out in the field as the "floating brigade" when the other major units returned to base for a time.

5. How did you convince MACV and intervening headquarters of the utility of the "floating brigade"?

6. Task Force Oregon: The mental flexibility of the entire brigade showed up clearly on the rapid response to the order to head north to form Task Force Oregon. I clearly recall your briefing on the first afternoon, and your saying, "We are off on a great adventure..." And so it was. Will you provide your own comments about that rapid shift from contact far north of Tay Ninh, to disengaging, planning, outloading, and moving to Chu Lai so quickly? I have always been proud to have taken part in that action; it was a true showing of tactical aerial mobility.

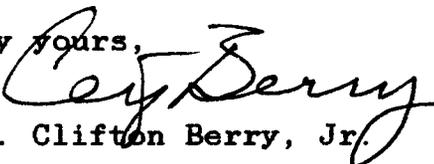
7. What guidance did General Cushman of III MAF give you on arrival at Chu Lai? And what was the guidance from General Rosson of Task Force Oregon?

Those are the main questions. You may wish to emphasize other topics, and that is most welcome.

Also, if you have photos you would like to see used in the book, I would be glad to look at them and make copies as necessary. A sketch of your career would help, too.

I hope you will share your recollections, General Knowles. They will help make the book more complete. I will be very grateful for your efforts.

Sincerely yours,


F. Clifton Berry, Jr.