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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
16TH MILITARY HISTORY DETACHMENT  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY, VIETNAM  
APO San Francisco 96375

AVHCS-MH

18 December 1968

SUBJECT: After Action Interviews, Tay Ninh, 3/17th Air Recon Squadron.

Command Historian  
HQ, USARV (Cmd Gp)  
APO 96375

1. Submitted for your perusal and file are copies of five synopses of interviews. At inclosure 1 is a synopsis of an interview with W2 Henry L. Hansen, W3157560, Aviator, C&C Helicopter, 1/25th Infantry Division. Inclosures 2 through 5, respectively, are synopses of interviews with CPT Robert M. Brown, 05328268, Air Rifle Platoon Leader of Troop 6, 3/17 ARS, 1LT James M. Ingraham, 05241033, Scout Platoon Leader, CPT Donald E. Jones, 103398, Operations Officer, and CPT Robert S. Heiser, 05229467, Section Leader, Weapons Platoon, all of Troop B, 3/17th Air Recon Squadron.
2. The interviews were all conducted by Major Paul W. Child, Jr., 089190, ADA, Commanding Officer, 16th Military History Detachment, Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam at Tay Ninh Base Camp on 30 September 1968.
3. The original and tapes of these interviews were presented to Major Pritchett, CO, 20th Military History Detachment, for inclusion in the composite Tay Ninh Report to be transmitted to you at a later date prior to forwarding to OCMH.
4. No restrictions were placed by any of the interviewees on the use of these tapes.

*Paul W. Child Jr.*

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as

PAUL W. CHILD, JR.  
Major, ADA  
Commanding

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*Tay Ninh*

*File*

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SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEW WITH  
W2 HENRY L. HANSEN, W3157560  
AVIATOR, C&C HELICOPTER  
1ST BRIGADE, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION

The interview was conducted by Major Paul W. Child, Jr., 089190, Artillery, Commanding Officer, 16th Military History Detachment, Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam, on 30 September 1968 at Tay Ninh Base Camp, Headquarters, 1/25th Infantry Division.

Q1 (10) Mr. Hansen, can we begin by you giving us a brief resume of your military experience before coming to Vietnam?

A: I had basic training, nine months of flight school, and then came directly to Vietnam.

Q2 (12) What type of assignment have you had since arriving in Vietnam?

A: My assignment in Vietnam is to the aviation battalion which gives direct support to the 25th Infantry Division. I work with the platoon that provides the command and control aircraft for the brigades, division artillery, and division staff. I have been flying in command and control for my entire tour which is just short of twelve months. During my first four months in-country, I flew as command and control for all the different brigades, division artillery, and the general aircraft. The last eight months in-country I have been flying as command and control for the 1st Brigade.

Q3 (17) Did you find that your flight school gave you proper preparation for your duties here?

A: It was the best preparation in the States. I fly a UH-1, a two pilot aircraft. For the first three months in Vietnam, you fly as second man to continue the education you get in flight school.

Q4 (21) Is the aircraft commander selected on the basis of rank or experience, or both?

A: He is selected strictly by ability. I made aircraft commander in less than two months. It also depends on availability of personnel to fill the slots. I had the advantage of learning many different types of flying in a short period.

Q5 (27) Could you discuss some of your typical missions, please?

A: In the 25th Division, the C&C aircraft is the direct support from the div-

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ision given to the brigade. It is under the command of the brigade commander. I've had C&C assignments, general support, have engaged targets and made Dust-Offs. We get a certain amount of every type of flying in Vietnam.

Q6 (30) Could you describe a day when the enemy is not involved in a large scale attack?

A: Yesterday, we took a resupply mission of water out to the field. Later, we took the brigade commander around to the fire support bases which he looked over. We flew a recon mission, keeping the MSR's open. We controlled troop movements on the ground while the battalion commanders were off refueling. We had an LNO type run to supply personnel and liaisons to the division.

Q7 (38) Would you now discuss your activities during the attack on Tay Ninh between 17 and 18 August?

A: The attack began the night before. A number of FSB's came under heavy attack and we began flying at 2300. We flew over areas, calling air strikes and artillery. We knocked out three 50 caliber gun emplacements by calling artillery from our aircraft. We also acted as a relay station and general control of the ground forces. The next morning we were relieved by a crew who flew into Tay Ninh City to make a recon of the area. Enemy forces were reported in the city and they received heavy automatic weapons fire, severely wounding the pilot with the aircraft sustaining five or six hits. A half hour later they returned. My crew then replaced their crew and we went back to the city and controlled and guided ground troops into the city. Later on, we were moving up the MSR's into the city. The ground troops were receiving heavy fire including RPG's. A company was pinned down and tried to withdraw from the area. I engaged the area with my door guns and we were almost able to stop the enemy fire, providing cover for our troops to withdraw, regroup, and reenter the area. The ambushing personnel ran and sustained numerous casualties, but the majority of them were able to withdraw further into the city. They hit us, ran, and finally we pushed them out of the city.

Q8 (56) Mr. Hansen, you were awarded the Silver Star in June. Could you discuss the actions that led to the award?

A: I have to give a lot of credit to the team that worked in the command and control aircraft. The battalion was sweeping a deserted village in which there were VC. In the initial contact, two personnel were wounded and support personnel were not able to withdraw them. We called in CS ships, smoke ships, and a gun team for cover. The ground command net was blocked with traffic. I took over control of the CS and smoke ships. We dropped CS into the area and numerous VC tried to run from the area. Gunships moved in. They caught five VC as they tried to break away in a rice paddy. The smoke ship provided excellent cover for the CS ship and we cleared everything except for two bunkers. The smoke ship ran out of smoke and we also ran out of CS, so we called artillery smoke in for cover to advance our troops. I took my aircraft down to 500

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feet and I was able to pin the enemy in such a way that they weren't able to return effective fire. They made a second attempt to rescue wounded personnel, but it was unsuccessful since Charlie moved back in after the CS cleared. We again withdrew. On the third attempt we coordinated the ground troops more with the artillery smoke and brought them within 15 meters. The gunships destroyed a number of hootches where the VC were located. At this time we had tactical air waiting to be used, but we weren't able to call it in because of the closeness of friendly troops to the enemy. However, about this time, the enemy was starting to withdraw. Then we were able to call in the air strikes and use napalm. During the fourth attempt, the ground troops were able to destroy the enemy bunkers and they withdrew the wounded troops. At this time, there was no MEDEVAC aircraft available and I went in with my own C&C aircraft. We had a thunderstorm overhead and wounded on the ground. I picked up the wounded personnel and brought them to the hospital. We set up a night leaguer. The next morning we moved back into the area and we had a numerous body count although the enemy had the advantage of removing the majority of bodies and weapons from the area.

Q9 (76) About how many Dust-Off missions did you perform during May and June?

A: We had over 60 Dust-Offs and we killed over 45 VC confirmed body count from my aircraft.

Q10 (77) What is the makeup of your aircraft crew and who else usually rides in the helicopter?

A: It consists of the crew chief as right door gunner and a regular left door gunner, my pilot, and the aircraft commander. The rest of the crew is the artillery LNO, the brigade commander, and a radio operator. We work closely with the artillery LNO. He coordinates between the commander and myself, calling artillery and getting clearances.

Q11 (83) What are the communications net you establish on a mission?

A: I have an advantage of using three FM's and a console, UHF, VHF, and a standard radio. We keep the artillery warning net on the aircraft radio. The UHF and VHF we use for tower clearances and flight following and we keep the console on the brigade net. Whatever unit we're supporting is kept on the remaining radios.

Q12 (85) Have your communications generally been reliable or have you experienced difficulty with your radios?

A: They are quite reliable and radio difficulties are easy to clear up. We have alternates to rely on. The maintenance has been very good.

Q13 (88) How has your helicopter stood up mechanically and how much maintenance is the aircraft given?

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A: I am TDY to the 1st Brigade. The majority of maintenance is pulled by my own crew. Maintenance has been quite good considering the fact that the aircraft is many times flown up to 18 hours a day. The aircraft has stood up remarkably well and it has taken a rough beating. I've never had any difficulty getting help, even though I'm away from my home unit. We are able to follow maintenance schedules. We try to keep intermediate inspections (every 25 flying hours) within two hours of the appointed time. Daily inspections are always pulled.

Q14 (101) Mr. Hansen, how much of a problem has the weather been?

A: It is a major problem. I fly a single ship. I've flown in weather that I wouldn't fly in back in the States. I have a small area which I am familiar with and point to point flying is really not affected. It is SOP in the 25th Division that aircraft follow roads as much as possible, and that they fly on the right side of the road. I've flown in weather where I didn't see the helicopter that passed until he was out my side doors.

Q15 (106) Can you discuss any special techniques that have been developed over here?

A: I think our flight following system is the most important new development. We report time of takeoff, time to destination or orbiting. If we miss a reporting time, they call you back. If they are unable to contact you, they initiate search and rescue. The standard procedure of following roads enables you to know exactly where you are going down and gives you a flat surface. In engaging targets with door guns, I prefer to set up an orbit around the target varying from 1500 to 1000 feet. Orbiting has been very effective.

Q16 (115) What type of evasive action do you take if you find yourself under the fire of an enemy 50 caliber machine gun?

A: Get away from it as fast as you can. Even when following roads, I never fly in a straight line and when engaged, I never follow a terrain feature.

Q17 (121) Do you use the same evasive technique when faced with an RPG threat?

A: RPG's are not a major threat unless you're on the ground. The RPG is not accurate as an anti-aircraft weapon.

Q18 (123) Are there any special problems you have encountered that tend to make it difficult to perform your missions?

A: Too often GS ships are not given enough information about the location and people they are supposed to support, but the flight following tries to supply this information.

Q19 (128) Are there any other comments you would like to make?

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A: There is much aircraft time wasted due to not enough planning before they get the aircraft in the air. Flying a single person in an aircraft is another problem. I don't think there is enough time or enough emphasis put on utilization of aircraft. I've enjoyed the type of flying I do. I think the important thing for any pilot is to watch what is happening with the ground troops, and developing a sense of understanding and safety. In my opinion, a slick ship (UH-1D) has poor utilization and poorly trained personnel. A very effective weapon is CS gas, especially on the VC, who panic when it is used. It does not affect the American soldier in this way.

Q20 (148) As I mentioned earlier, this interview will be used for historical purposes only. Do you wish to place any special restrictions on its use? Also, do you wish it classified and if so, what level?

A: I have no restrictions and I don't think it has any classification. It is my own opinion.

Major Child: Mr. Hansen, let me express my appreciation for your comments and good luck in your coming assignment in CONUS.

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## LIST OF QUESTIONS

Captain Robert M. Brown, 05328268  
Air Rifle Platoon Leader  
Troop C, 3/17th Air Recon Squadron

1. PAGE 1 (07) Captain Brown, can we begin by having you give a brief resume of your military experience before coming to Vietnam?
2. (11) Did you find that the service schooling and experience prior to your coming to Vietnam adequately prepared you for your job?
3. (15) Have you been the rifle platoon commander since Troop C has arrived in country?
4. (17) Could you briefly describe the organization of your platoon?
5. PAGE 2 (21) What are the types of missions normally assigned to your platoon?
6. PAGE 3 (36) Do you recall how many instances there have been where you were required to furnish security for downed aircraft?
7. (45) How is your platoon armed for this particular mission?
8. (49) Do you usually find yourself involved in a firefight after you set your perimeter up around a downed aircraft?
9. PAGE 4 (52) Can you discuss one or two more specific missions, not the mission of providing security for downed aircraft?
10. PAGE 6 (85) About what percentage of the time are your people out on some kind of operation?
11. PAGE 7 (90) Do you normally deploy as a platoon, or is it customary to break the platoon up into sections and put them out on different missions?
12. (93) Are there any other procedures you have developed that you think might be worth mentioning?
13. PAGE 9 (139) How high is the morale of the rifle platoon?

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List of questions continued.

14. PAGE 10 (150) Captain Brown, could you discuss the casualties sustained by your platoon since arriving in Vietnam?
15. (161) As I mentioned earlier, this interview will be used for historical purposes only. Do you wish to place any special restrictions on its use? Do you wish it be given a classification? If so, what level?

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Transcription of Interview With  
Captain Robert M. Brown, 05328268, Infantry  
Air Rifle Platoon Leader  
Troop C, 3/17th Air Recon Squadron

The interview was conducted on 30 September 1968 by Major Paul W. Child, Jr., 089190, Artillery, Commanding Officer, 16th Military History Detachment, Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam, at Tay Ninh Base Camp, Headquarters, 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division.

Major Child: Captain Brown, can we begin by having you give a brief resume of your military experience before coming to Vietnam?

Captain Brown: I went to the University of Alabama and got my commission through ROTC. After completing that, I went through the basic course at Fort Benning, Ga. After spending nine weeks of infantry tactics there, I went to flight school and spent nine months in flight school before going to Fort Knox, Ky. to the 3/17th Cav.

Major Child: Did you find that the service schooling and experience prior to your coming to Vietnam adequately prepared you for your job?

Captain Brown: I think the background I got at the infantry school plus the flight training gave me a pretty good background. Of course I had no combat experience, but the basic tactics and doctrine is pretty much the same and once you apply the lessons learned in a few combat situations peculiar to Vietnam, you do have a good background to work with over here.

Major Child: Have you been the rifle platoon commander since Troop C has arrived in country?

Captain Brown: I started out at Fort Knox as the lift section leader which is a part of the rifle platoon and had five H model aircraft. I kept that job for about three months in-country before I took over the rifle platoon.

Major Child: Could you briefly describe the organization of your platoon?

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Captain Brown: The rifle platoon consists of a platoon HQ commanded by--- It is a rated slot for a rated armor officer. The platoon itself---the infantry portion consists of 39 enlisted men (11B's) with a couple of attached personnel, an interpreter, and a medlo. The 11ft section is composed of nine warrant officer aviators plus one Lieutenant section leader, five H model arm chiefs and five deorganizers.

Major Child: What are the types of missions normally assigned to your platoon?

Captain Brown: The rifle platoon is assigned a pretty wide variety of missions and something that is unique about the platoon is that you really don't know what type mission you are going to have. One of our primary jobs is damed aircraft security for the scouts and gunships that pull VR missions every day. That is one of the primary jobs. Besides that, we work with larger infantry units, conduct sweep operations with them, serve as a blocking force while a larger force, possibly a company, sweeps an area. We pull what we call a "snatch mission." The scouts might pick up a suspicious male or female or somebody they might think is a possible VC. They would call back in---the way we normally run it, if it is just one or two people, we load up one slick with five or six infantrymen and go out and land as close as possible to the suspect. The operation usually takes about 15 to 20 seconds on the ground to get this person on board and back for interrogation. Another type---the platoon reacts to finds that the scouts come up with. We picked up quite a few weapons caches in the past couple months. The finds have been 29 120mm mortar rounds, a cache of AK47 rifles and things of this nature. Anything the scout finds on his VR mission that requires a closer look, something that he can't fully determine from the air, even though he has to hover, is a possible lucrative target for the rifle platoon. Other missions we've had were reactions to IRRP contacts. The slicks have put out IRRP teams and once they have made contact the platoon is either used to help them break that contact or react to what the IRRP's have found. Also a platoon has been used to set up night ambushes. This is something we haven't done much of, but the times we have done it, it has been very effective. Another operation---we've conducted operations in a lot of different types of terrain; we've worked in the Delta, the jungle's War Zone C, in the rice paddies around Saigon and Cu Chi. We have swept through villages checking for caches, VC suspects and things of this nature as well as conducting sweep operations trying to locate and pinpoint enemy base camps in the jungle, primarily in War Zone C.

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Major Child: Do you recall how many instances there have been where you were required to furnish security for downed aircraft?

Captain Brown: Talking about downed aircraft, this is one of the primary missions of the platoon and we're pretty proud of the record we've had—our people have a lot of spirit and realize the responsibilities that they have got to the scouts and the gunships and the troop, that if they go down they've got to have help right away. Our reaction time is about ten minutes. Once we get the word that an aircraft is down, we are on the way to the area, depending on how far the area is from our home base and how long it takes us to get there. Usually the crew has already been extracted before we get there. If a scout goes down, normally the gunship covering the LOH will pull the crew out before we get there and once we get on the ground we immediately set up a 360° perimeter in close to the aircraft and wait for a chinook; if it's an LOH we can get it out with one of our H models. Normally, this whole operation from the time we hit the ground usually doesn't take very long—just the time it takes the recovery ship to get there and extract the aircraft. This would probably be anywhere from 15 minutes, to possibly half an hour, depending entirely on the time it takes the recovery aircraft to get there. Almost all the aircraft—aircraft that have burned, of course, there is not much you can do with them. Besides getting the aircraft out, you police up a lot of maps, ammunition, weapons, radios and stuff like this that possibly came loose from the aircraft when it went down. I'd say in the year I've been over here, we probably had to go in on about 15 downed aircraft missions—all of them so far have been really successful.

Major Child: How is your platoon armed for this particular mission?

Captain Brown: Normally, I go on the ground with 24 people. I use three sleds carrying eight in each sled, so probably I've got a little more firepower than a normal rifle platoon. Due to the small number in our type mission, I carry three machine guns, one in each squad, and each squad has one M79 grenade launcher, two LAW's, plus each man's normal supply of grenades and other weapons. Most of the other people would be armed with an M16; a couple people, primarily my point man, like to carry a shotgun.

Major Child: Do you usually find yourself involved in a firefight after you set your perimeter up around a downed aircraft?

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Captain Brown: On most of the downed aircraft missions, we haven't had any contact. A lot of this is due to our quick reaction; the gunship warbling overhead keeps Charlie away from the ship until we can get there, get right in, secure it and get back out before he has a chance to react. There have been a couple times that it's been a pretty hot area - we had one aircraft shot down in the LZ. It was a pretty hot area - it had 50 calibres on about three sides of the LZ. All four gunships were hit within two minutes and were forced to leave the area. Two of them - their engines quitting before they could get back to the base. Normally, we haven't run into too much contact on these downed aircraft missions except for that time in particular and possibly one or two more with very light contact.

Major Child: Can you discuss one or two more specific missions, not the mission of providing security for downed aircraft?

Captain Brown: One operation I recall was -- we haven't worked very much at night - this was one of the occasions that we did have the opportunity to get out and work at night. Up in War Zone C we were inserted in an area in the jungle approximately five to ten miles north of Dau Tieng. We went into the area about 1000 and moved off the LZ and started sweeping, looking for signs of enemy activity, base camps, caches, things like this. We swept for the greater part of the day finding some signs of enemy activity, most of it not too recent. We had no contact. About 1700 we started moving into our ambush site for the night at a trail intersection. We set up an ambush that night and I expected to find something worthwhile out there. The scouts had reported VC using this trail pretty frequently, but either they knew we were out there that night or just didn't come by - we made it through the night with no contact. We continued our sweep the next morning and after we moved about 200 meters from the ambush site, we did run into two VC that were moving pretty quietly from the ambush site. They were walking down the trail and never saw us coming, so we did get two that way. On another operation, we were working down in the Delta. The terrain is pretty open down there, but Charlie has got his base camps so well camouflaged that it is really hard to spot them from the air even though a scout is hovering right over them. So, the scout spotted an area with real heavy activity and the platoon was inserted and we swept approximately 500 meters. The scout ship overhead spotted two people diving into a bunker and we started moving into the area using a canal line for cover. We got within 50 meters of the area before they opened up. What we'd found was a battalion size base camp and what we had actually done is dropped right in the middle of

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It and actually walked right up on their headquarters and we got a pretty heavy firefight—they had their camp well defended with a company. Our backup force was called in they were inserted in the area and the only problem we had was that it was starting to get dark. Before the company could get in there and do any good, we had to be extracted. We had about 15 minutes of light left in the area and the scouts were plating up reports of groups of 50, 70, and 100 people in uniforms, web gear, and weapons trying to move into the area from all four flanks—so, a decision was made to get us out of there. We were extracted and we had a few casualties, but as soon as we got out, air strikes were called in on the base camp, completely destroying it. I don't remember the final body count, but it was pretty high. Another one of the really quick type missions that the platoon reacts to—back in July one of our primary missions was the defense of Saigon. We expected another offensive and the big concern was the rockets that were hitting Saigon. An all out effort was put out to try to stop these rockets and quite a few times the scouts came up with rocket sites that they destroyed. On this particular day, the scouts spotted the fins of the rockets—they only saw a couple of them, but it looked like it might turn out to be something. The platoon was inserted in there and we wound up finding about 15 122mm rockets, which were positioned very close to Saigon and probably would have been used in the next couple of days to hit TSN or some area like that. We've been pretty successful with small quick operations—the total operation only took about half an hour to sweep the area and evacuate the rockets. Another type operation, one we've been doing for the past week, is somewhat of a snatch mission, using just one aircraft and five people, is "snatch" a suspicious individual out of an open field, rice paddy, etc. It's been along the same lines, but it's on a larger scale and we're after bigger people, mostly with military intelligence personnel out of the division and an interpreter. In the past few days, it's been a former VC who is Chieu Hoi and has volunteered information that he has on his home village, the big VC cadre leaders, recruiters, and people like him (Chieu Hoi) that were trying to break down the infrastructure. Our area of operations west of Saigon has been successful in the last few days. The way we normally run this—we take the Chieu Hoi (Hoi Chuan) out on a recon with the rifle platoon leader and possibly a couple squad leaders to look at the area and make a couple of quick passes at high altitude and let the man point out houses and specific targets within the village that contain known VC. Once the recon's been made, we go back and hit the platoon. The whole thing has to be well coordinated because these people live in the area and if you don't get them the first time—you can't give them two or three minutes—they'll be gone and

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you'll probably never find them again. There is absolutely no indication of an operation until you're actually on the ground. The slicks normally lead the thing in - they have spotted the area on a recon. They land as close to the suspect's house as possible, with the Vietnamese who know the area leading the way. The platoon reacts very quickly to this. At the same time the platoon is moving up on the house, you've got a scout (OI) overhead to make sure that nobody can leave the house, get out the back door and possibly get away. As the platoon moves up on the house - unless he's got a tunnel within the house that leads away, (we've run into this), normally with the scout hovering over the house, the people haven't been able to escape and we were able to capture some pretty important VC cadre and political officers. I think this type of operation is a good mission for the rifle platoon because it takes a small number of people. You can't have a large operation - you wouldn't have time to pull it off. In the past two days, we placed up one man who was in charge of all the military weapons and ammunition caches in the entire area for the VC. The platoon will probably go back to check out these areas once they've been confirmed and they've gotten all the information they can out of this man. I think this mission is very important. What we're trying to do is break down the infrastructure in these villages. In this whole province that we're working in right now, the VC are very well entrenched - these people have lived in the village all their lives and it is just one of those areas that is strongly sympathetic toward VC. These people are vital to the NVA and VC on something like an offensive on Saigon. They have to come through these areas where they get food, instructions and guides and this is where these guides come from. So, if we can break down the infrastructure in these villages by gradually going out and capturing these cadre personnel, and then lead us to still further suspects, I don't think it will be very long before we have the entire infrastructure broken in this one particular district, and then we'll probably move on to other areas. The other Vietnamese in the village will be able to operate more freely without fear of retaliation from the VC living next door to them.

Major Child: About what percentage of the time are your people out on some kind of operations?

Captain Brown: Normally, we operate out of a base camp, such as Tay Ninh, and react from there. We're always on a five minute alert, any time we have aircraft out that are on a VR mission. What we normally do, when the scouts have found something, we go out, check it out, and sweep the area.

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These operations are normally not too extensive. We might be on the ground for an hour, maybe 20 minutes, or four or five hours, and sometimes you might get two or three missions in one day. Then the scouts won't have anything of interest for two or three days -- then you might go out every day for a week. When you do go out, usually you run short, quiet resupply missions.

Major Childs: Do you normally deploy as a platoon, or is it customary to break the platoon up into sections and put them out on different missions?

Captain Brown: Sometimes, people have tried to give us missions -- they don't realize our capabilities -- and have asked for something that would require one squad to go to one location and another squad somewhere else. This might work most of the time, but the times that it didn't, you'd really be in trouble with only one squad out there. I make it an SOP within the troop that when I go on the ground I have all three squads or my whole platoon with me and that way you are always prepared. The times we've gotten hit and needed them, they were there.

Major Childs: Are there any other procedures you have developed that you think might be worth mentioning?

Captain Brown: One of the big SOP's that we developed when we got to Vietnam, that has kept us out of trouble -- the only time we really had had trouble was when we didn't have it -- is the necessary reaction force. One advantage the 1st Cavalry Division has over our operation is that once a rifle platoon has found something, they have their own assets to react with. We've got to go to the division for backup force -- the rifle platoon is all I've got. We've got an SOP that when we're given a mission that we'd like to react to ourselves, the first thing we do is get on the horn and call whoever is our higher and require him to give us a reaction force before we go out on the operation. You've got to know that these people will go and be able to keep you out of trouble. With only 24 people on the ground you can get in trouble and get in deep very quickly. Some of the other SOP's we've developed within the troop and the platoon that have kept us out of trouble deal with the aircraft before we go into the LZ with the slots. I will give the scout at least five minutes in the LZ to look it over and if there is anything there, the scout will find it -- he gets right down there and hovers around, checking out bunkers, making sure they are not occupied. In that way it saves us from getting hit badly right on the LZ with the aircraft go-

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ing in. Once the platoon gets on the ground, it requires continuous coverage. If you have an area you suspect you might make contact in, you use a scout and two gunships overhead at all times. You wouldn't do much good without the one scout up there because while we are sweeping an area he can screen to our flanks, front, and rear, or if you try to pick up personnel they'll try to get out the opposite way and it's pretty easy for the scout to pick them up right away. The scout can take care of them with his own armament on the aircraft or let the platoon sweep that way and we'll either capture him, or if we have to, kill him. An example of the good these scouts can do and how you can get in trouble by not following some of these SOP's was laid down in War Zone C near the Cambodian border. We got a mission to go into a suspected enemy base camp just after the last bomb from a B52 strike. In the haste to get the strikes and platoon on the ground, the scouts weren't given time to look over the LZ. I got my platoon on the ground (first lift) with no contact. As the second lift was bringing in another platoon, about 30 seconds after we got on the ground, the ship was hit with 50 calibre fire and crashed in the LZ. It turned out that there were at least four confirmed 50 calibre surroundings the LZ. Things like that would have been really easy for the scouts to have picked up if they were given three or four minutes to look the LZ over - the SOP wasn't followed. Another type mission - several times a platoon is called out to perform a BDA, bomb damage assessment, primarily after a B52 strike. Normally, the scout and the LHM's do a pretty good job from the air and can give an accurate assessment, but once in a while, the area is a little bit thicker and it might be desirable to put the platoon on the ground so you can check some of those bunkers that were destroyed by the B52's. On one occasion there were enemy personnel still in the area, but the B52's do such an outstanding job that the people were so dazed by the bombs that they were not effective fighters. Although they did resist, they were ineffective, and it was easy to overrun them. By going through on the ground, we can give an accurate assessment of how many bunkers were destroyed. The bombs saved them in so bad that you can't see anything from the air, but we can go in there and see that it has killed certain number of personnel in the bunkers, destroyed weapons etc. One thing I've noticed, on a mission like the B52 BDA, is the enemy in that case was NVA. There is a big difference between the VC and the NVA. Up in War Zone C, primarily we're up against NVA who fight a lot more like we do than the VC, well equipped, uniforms, web gear, steel pots, and very modern weapons. As opposed to the VC we've run into, in one operation in Dong Tam, the NVA have equipment and modern weapons. The VC tactics are different in that they know the area much better than the NVA. The NVA

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are more like we are, not caring to police up the battlefield or concerned with what they leave behind. The VC are a lot more psychological. After we were extracted from the area of a base camp that we pinpointed on the ground, air strikes and artillery hit the area all night, completely destroying it. Going in the next day to check the area, we found that the VC, through all the artillery and airstrikes, had somehow managed to get in and get all their dead and wounded personnel out of the area or far enough away that they could be well hidden. Not only that, they went through the area and cleaned up everything that would indicate that there had been a military operation there at all. They went as far as to pick up brass they had fired from their automatic weapons. The only places that we found brass were in places that were unnoticed, down in bunkers, in water, and areas that were hidden. Wherever they were in the open, where brass had fallen, they cleaned all this up. It was really amazing. This does have a definite psychological factor - sweeping through the area, we knew they had been there - we don't know how many, but we know we had killed a bunch of them and we had destroyed equipment, but going back in the next day we couldn't confirm it.

Major Child: How high is the morale of the rifle platoon?

Captain Brown: The morale is high - it has to be because you've only got 24 people on the ground. We're a small number and each man has to depend on the other man. I know that the man on my left and right know their job and they've also got to be trained to take over each other's jobs. They are a little bit different from a line infantry unit, mainly due to their size. We are a recon platoon - the main mission of the air rifle platoon is reconnaissance. Our mission is not so much to close with and kill or capture the enemy, although we do this on occasion. The scouts and gunships perform aerial reconnaissance and the things they can't see from the air, the rifle platoon goes in on the ground and checks out a little closer. One advantage the rifle platoon has over a line infantry platoon is that we have our own organic aircraft - we are a complete team. We've got gunships, scouts, infantry, everything contained within the unit. Whereas another unit might have trouble requesting gunships, getting scout aircraft support, etc., I don't have this problem because they are right in the unit. The main disadvantage is that is as far as it goes. We've got the scouts, gunships, and rifle platoon with no backup after we've committed all those resources. There have been a lot of times in which we could have developed the situation to a greater extent if we had a ready backup force contained in our unit. At one time this was possible when the entire squadron was working as a complete

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unit, but since then the various troops in the squadron have been OPCON to different divisions and brigades and we don't have the backup capability within the squadron.

Major Child: Captain Brown, could you discuss the casualties sustained by your platoon since arriving in Vietnam?

Captain Brown: The casualties have been very light. Since I've been with the platoon we've had two killed and about 12 wounded. For the type missions we run this might be considered light, but some of the SOP's and tactics we employ, that I discussed previously, is the reason for this. With 24 people and the missions we get, a platoon could get in real deep trouble within minutes if it is employed wrong. Any time you work with a rifle platoon you've got to know what you are going to do, how you are going to do it, have all your aircraft doing their job, a backup force, artillery, the whole thing. If you are lacking some of these vital parts, that's where you'll get in trouble. These policies that the troop platoon follows are what has kept us out of trouble. The scout going in and checking the LZ's before the slicks land has kept us out of a lot of hot LZ's. If they've spotted the enemy in the LZ before the slicks have landed, they can abort the landing and call in artillery and air strikes on the area, but had they just gone in it would have been a much different story. Another thing we use is time of day for insertions. If you go out and try to put a platoon on the ground pretty close to dark when you don't know the area and are just inserting them in there, if they make contact there is a real critical time. You were going to leave them on the ground overnight with just 24 people - if it is a very hot area, they don't stand much of a chance to last a situation like that overnight. So, you have to be very careful in inserting them late in the day and if you do, you've really got to check the area out and have your backup, airbornes if possible, right over the area, rather than back on call somewhere. If you need a backup, you are going to have them right there before it gets dark or you'll never be able to get them in there. What we try to do is insert the platoon no later than 1700, unless it is for a certain reason like a stretch of one of these political areas. That's about the only time you can do it because he doesn't get home until 1800.

Major Child: As I mentioned earlier, this interview will be used for historical purposes only. Do you wish to place any special restrictions on its use? Do you wish it be given a classification? If so, what level?

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Captain Brown: I think we should put a CONFIDENTIAL restriction on this due to the discussion of some of the operations which are going on right at this time.

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SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEW WITH  
1LT JAMES M. INGRAHAM, 05241033  
SCOUT PLATOON LEADER  
TROOP B, 3/17TH AIR RECON SQUADRON

The interview was conducted on 30 September 1968 by Major Paul W. Child, Jr., 089190, Artillery, Commanding Officer, 16th Military History Detachment, Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam at Tay Ninh Base Camp, Headquarters, 1/25th Infantry Division.

Q1 (06): Lieutenant Ingraham, can we begin this interview with a brief resume of your service experience prior to Vietnam?

A: After high school, I joined the Navy and was in UDT and submarines. After the Navy, I went to college and joined the Army in 1960. I spent six years in missile artillery, then went to OCS and flight school and after that Vietnam.

Q2 (10) Did you find your training at flight school adequately prepared you for your present assignment as platoon leader?

A: Not really. The training is oriented to armed helicopters in assault helicopter companies. There is no real cavalry training. Captain Jones, my platoon, prepared me for scouting, a complete new concept of warfare—the LOH makes it possible to cover more ground than at any time before. Consequently, there aren't any set procedures and they must be learned or reasoned out.

Q3 (15) How long have you been with the troop now?

A: Since 8 January. I was a scout most of the time and then a lift section leader.

Q4 (16) Can you discuss the missions of your platoon and also the organization of it?

A: I have ten aircraft and two sections in my platoon. Each section has four aircraft assigned and I have two in the headquarters section. My section leaders have three men. There are ten ships and ten pilots in the scouts and nine are TOE. Our mission is to find and fix the enemy and give timely and accurate information to ground commanders in the area.

Q5 (19) Do your TOE structure is appropriate for the missions you are required to accomplish?

A: No, I don't. The TOE structure is made so you fly in teams like the Air Force. We operate with one scout and one cobra overhead, so the team concept

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Isn't that important. We've flown as teams, but it puts too much time on the aircraft, and you can accomplish as much with one scout and an overhead cover ship.

Q6 (23) What have been the nature of your specific missions since you've arrived here in Tay Ninh?

A: Our primary mission has been convoy escort between Dau Tieng and Tay Ninh and between Tay Ninh and French Port. Our best results, though, have been here when we just had an area, made visual recon, and found and fixed the enemy.

Q7 (26) Can you recall any particular operations you feel were especially noteworthy?

A: One operation that was most noteworthy was the one around Duc Hoa during the Second Offensive in the Saigon area. We had a large area around the Oriental River and found and destroyed more enemy soldiers than we did since we've been in Vietnam. We also stopped the supply and re-arm runs to Saigon.

Q8 (29) Did you use your hunter-killer procedure for this operation?

A: We did. We used the LOH and the cobra and alternating teams in different areas. We feel this was instrumental in stopping the Second Offensive.

Q9 (30) Can you recall any operations that have not been successful and the reason they were not?

A: We haven't had one operation that hasn't been successful. We received plaudits from ground commanders. The only mission that was unsuccessful, as a troop, was the night flights around Saigon, when the only thing we did was fly in a given area to detect mortar and rocket fire into the capital city. When we detected these we were not authorized to fire. They would get the coordinates we gave them and fire artillery. We felt that as soon as they fired, we could have a cobra fire into the area. It only takes about 60 seconds to mount, fire, and dismantle the VC tripod rocket. We feel that we would have gotten more out of it if we could have brought immediate fire on them.

Q10 (35) Can you go into more detail on the Duc Hoa operation?

A: We had 481 VC kills by body count and 105 possible. We had 133 military structures destroyed, 53 damaged, 33 sampans destroyed and 12 damaged. We made immediate BDA's after a strike, going into the area while the smoke was still there. The total figure of the 41 day Duc Hoa operation comes to about 1000 body count. We expended about 600,000 rounds of ammunition, rockets, and smoke grenades. These smoke grenades are used by the scouts to mark targets

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for the gunships. We have called in bomb strikes after finding targets. Since we are able to get immediate BDA's, the Air Force cooperates with air strikes. These figures are for our troop, only one fourth of the squadron.

Q11 (44) You've indicated that your primary duty at Tay Ninh consists of escorting convoys. Have you also been required to perform bomb damage assessments here?

A: Yes. When we don't have a convoy we perform BDA's. There have been very good in this area.

Q12 (46) I understand the troop came to this area on the 17th and 18th of August as the Tay Ninh battle started. Can you describe some of your activities during its early phases?

A: The first call was that a convoy had been hit on Highway 26 and the team engaged the enemy. We got eleven kills and when we were out of ammunition, we returned to Oi Chl and another gun team from an air assault company went to the area. Shortly after that, we came to Tay Ninh. From then on, we had contact every day on the roads. We found and sprung three ambushes on the roads. In this area there were NVA regulars who were excellently camouflaged and well disciplined. When we flipped into the area, we received no response. I was hovering over them and did not see them, and later when a convoy came into the area, it was hit from that exact spot.

Q13 (51) How many casualties did your platoon sustain in the last six months?

A: We've had quite a few. We've had four observers and two pilots injured. One had engine trouble at low level, crashed in a rice paddy, and injured his back. Another received intense automatic fire shattering his and his observer's legbones. Both were bleeding heavily, but managed to bring their aircraft safely back to Oi Chl. One pilot was shot in the foot. Recently, at Tay Ninh, an aircraft was shot, the pilot slowed it down, and it crashed in the trees. The pilot has some broken toes and the observer suffered from smoke inhalation when some of the smoke grenades went off upon impact. In the troop we've had four killed since coming to Vietnam. The procedures we've developed help keep the casualties down. The IOH is about the safest aircraft and if you've got to crash, crash in an IOH. You have a few basic rules for scout flying. A man should know how to fly in Vietnam before he takes a scout mission. You have to get the feel of it. We were out on a recon over a road and I had Colonel McDowen of the 25th Infantry Division with me. Over an area of grass and shrubs, we were detecting quite a bit of activity. I told the colonel that there was someone around. We flew into certain areas with no response. Later, as a convoy approached, it was hit from that area.

Q14 (66) Have you experienced difficulty in going into an area because of

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artillery being fired in and around the vicinities?

A: Yes, to a certain extent. Usually, we first call the ground commander to inform him. However, we have forces on the ground and the ground commander will call for mortar and artillery fire, without warning us. This is our biggest problem. We're usually on his frequency. We've had rounds fall in and around, but if we have a ground commander who has worked with the scouts before, he'll usually ask us where and when he could fire artillery.

Q15 (69) What communication facilities do you have in your platoon and how adequate have these been?

A: In each aircraft we have an FM and UHF plus our 80F for navigation. During the wet season they give us the most difficulty because of the water collected in and around the radios themselves. Our maintenance is quite good. A long range radio should be incorporated in some of our ships. We are cut off by range as we are quite mobile, having moved our location in Vietnam eight times. Helicopters require quite a bit of maintenance. If an aircraft requires second echelon maintenance, the crew chiefs are not authorized to do it in the field, so we have to call Di An and we lose a lot of time waiting for the mechanic to get here. A KD team, new in-country, presents a problem as to slow maintenance and we've had a hard time getting replacement parts. Also, the aircraft is tested in the US and not under Vietnam criteria.

Q16 (79) How many aircraft has your platoon lost since you've been with it?

A: We've had only six complete losses in-country and two of the aircraft had to be completely destroyed in the areas they crashed. In my instance; I was flying an LOH at 40 knots and 20 feet when the aircraft engine stopped. I made my slowup after I reached the ground. We feel that these losses are a very good record considering the type of flying we do along the ground.

Q17 (84) How do you go about retrieving one of your downed aircraft in hostile territory?

A: We have a platoon of infantry with each troop. If we can get at least one UH-1H model into the area, we can let off our infantry. They set up a perimeter around the ship and each H model has an aircraft sling aboard. We hook it on the cargo hook and wrap the sling around the LOH. For any other aircraft it requires a chinook.

Q18 (86) About how many hours do you fly a day? And a month?

A: We average around 100 hours per month per aviator. As platoon leader, I only average between 70 and 100 per month.

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Q19 (87) About what percentage of your flying time was at night?

A: The LOH is not a night flying aircraft due to the location of the lights and the way the bubble is constructed. You have a lot of glare and is pretty hazardous.

Q20 (90) As I mentioned earlier, this interview will be used for historical purposes only. Do you have any special restrictions you would like to place on the use of this tape? Also, should this tape be classified, and if so, what level?

A: None. This information should be used. One LOH and one cobra can give reconnaissance to a division force. In five minutes we can cover all the area that a platoon can cover in a day. If they keep us covering a platoon for an hour and a half, an hour of it is wasted. The ideal situation would be one scout team for a battalion size.

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SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEW WITH  
CPT DONALD E. JONES, OF103398  
OPERATIONS OFFICER  
TROOP B, 3/17TH AIR RECON SQUADRON

The interview was conducted on 30 September 1968 by Major Paul W. Child, Jr., 089190, Artillery, Commanding Officer, 16th Military History Detachment, Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam at Tay Ninh Base Camp, Headquarters, 1/25th Infantry Division.

Q1 (08) Captain Jones, I wonder if we could begin this interview with a brief resume of your service experience prior to Vietnam?

A: After two years in the Reserve, I came on active duty in 1964 and after the basic course of Armor at Fort Knox, I attended jump school. Then I went to Fort Stewart with a tank unit for fifteen months. After this I went on to flight school and joined the 3/17th at Fort Knox. I was with it in April 1967 until it departed for Vietnam in October 1967.

Q2 (12) What have been your jobs with the 3/17th since coming to Vietnam?

A: When we arrived in-country I was a team leader in a scout platoon and then I assumed a platoon leader job in the scouts. Since March I have been the Operations Officer of B Troop.

Q3 (14) Did you find your previous schooling and training adequately prepared you for your jobs here?

A: The five months of practice air time at Fort Knox served as adequate training before coming to Vietnam.

Q4 (19) What are the types of missions that B Troop has had in Vietnam?

A: Our missions are reconnaissance type missions and armed aerial reconnaissance. The different types are route recons to protect convoys, convoy escorts, aerial reconnaissance with the Cobra and the scout, river security missions and rocket surveillance at night with both the scout and gunships flying at altitude.

Q5 (27) Can you in brief terms discuss the organization of B Troop?

A: The troop has three separate platoons, the headquarters section, the scout platoon having two sections of four aircraft and four pilots each, and the weapons platoon with two sections of four aircraft each. We have the lift platoon which is five aircraft and we have the rifle platoon with ground elements for downed aircraft recovery and recons. There is a direct maintenance

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support which is new and it can follow us wherever we go.

Q6 (32) Do you find that the organization of the unit is appropriate to accomplish the missions you are given?

A: The TOE is designed to function so that two scouts go out in pairs and two gunships go out in pairs. By trial and error we've come to the conclusion that it works better with one scout and one gunship. We tried the idea of two scouts working, both flying at low level, and we lost complete contact with our base camp. We eventually had to keep one scout high and one low. If we found something, we called in and two gunships were sent. Then we tried working with two scouts low level and one gunship high. This made firepower immediate. Then we found it was hard for one gunship to cover two scouts, so we wound up using one of each.

Q7 (38) What have been some of the specific missions of the troop since arriving at Tay Ninh?

A: Since 19 August, our primary mission has been convoy escort and opening the road between Dau Tieng and Tay Ninh Base Camp from the west and northwest. This continued for 14 days and we kept a team on the western side of the base camp for about four hours a day, just prior to darkness. We did find a couple rocket launching sites. However, rockets sporadically came in. Since they were hit, we sent out an H model and we dropped flares until Spooky, which was well equipped, could arrive, drop flares, and use his miniguns. We have conducted armed aerial reconnaissance missions in War Zone C. On one occasion, we located 22 enemy at 0630 trying to get away from FSB Buell which they had just attacked. We got a body count of 15 personnel. We continued following the trail and called in air strikes. It was pretty hard to perform a BDA because the jungle canopy was two layers with 150 to 250 feet of trees. There have been numerous B52 strikes in the area and we have performed some BDA's.

Q8 (51) As an operations officer, how do your missions come down to you?

A: The troop is controlled by II Field Force and it has been a tendency to move us from one hot area to another. IIFV will make us OPCON to divisions which will in turn OPCON us down to brigade level. We've worked with the 2/1st Infantry Division, 1/1st Infantry Division and 1/25th Infantry Division. We set up our forward CP at the brigade headquarters, as close to the TOC as possible. If it is not feasible, we leave a liaison officer at the headquarters. We operate under the 2 or 3 office.

Q9 (58) When you have located a target suitable for artillery, how do you go about requesting artillery?

A: We use the organic firepower on the Cobra, artillery, and air strikes.

The scout ships usually call in artillery. We use artillery more often in the jungle than in a flat area.

Q10 (64) Have you found it difficult to coordinate activity when you wish to fly in an area where artillery is firing?

A: If it seems to be a hot area, they will have artillery already going in there. They ask us to obtain a check fire. Sometimes, when friendly ground troops are involved, they call in artillery and air support and we have to use caution. To prevent artillery falling around the scout, all it takes is to check with the ground commander and tell him he is going into the area.

Q11 (102) What were some of the techniques developed in the troop?

A: The Cobra has the advantage over the C model to attack at a greater angle and attains a higher rate of ascent. Working with an Air Force FAC, the scout is able to mark the target with smoke and the jets make runs over the area.

Q12 (107) Captain Jones, could you discuss one or two operations that you think have been particularly successful?

A: The Duc Hoa operation during the May Offensive was most successful. We worked with the CP and were based out of Tay Ninh since Duc Hoa doesn't have the facilities to remain overnight. It was such a large area that it took us three or four days to completely cover it. The VC were attempting to use the area as a main offensive route to Saigon. We found action daily. Besides the body count, the pilots appreciated the response from the 25th Division and the 25th ARVN Division. They would sweep through the area. An economy of force operation took place when we were based at a forward CP at Quan Loi working for the 1/1st Division. A large road network out of Cambodia was being built by the VC in the jungle. We were asked to locate the exact position of the road and harass the enemy as much as possible. It was so remote that no friendly troops would be committed until the position of the road was known. We plotted it and the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment moved up the road, about three quarters of it, but when the May Offensive began, they were called back to Saigon.

Q13 (116) Have you found that the units under which you are placed know how to properly employ your assets?

A: There are four air cav squadrons here now. Being such a new concept, it is difficult in some areas to explain to the ground commander our capabilities. We explain what our TOE is, what we are capable of doing, and what we like to do best.

Q14 (121) I wonder if you could give us an outline history of the 3/17th?

A: It was formed as C Troop, 17th Cavalry back in 1916. It has gone through eight different name changes, activations, and inactivations up to the present. The last time it was activated was at Fort Knox in 1966. From 1916 it has been changed to tanks, reconnaissance and many other things.

Q15 (124) Are there any other comments you would like to make?

A: I think it would be a tremendous asset if each infantry division were provided with an air cav squadron. After working with a unit on one mission, anytime trouble develops in their area, they request an air cav troop to find out the enemy strength.

Q16 (126) This interview will be used for historical purposes only. Are there any restrictions you would like to place on it? Also, do you think it should be classified and if so, what degree?

A: There is nothing classified and nothing that should be restricted in this interview.

SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEW WITH  
CPT ROBERT S. HEISER, 05229467  
SECTION LEADER, WEAPONS PLATOON  
TROOP B, 3/17TH AIR RECON SQUADRON

The interview was conducted by Major Paul W. Child, Jr., 89190, Artillery, Commanding Officer, 16th Military History Detachment, Headquarters, United States Army, Vietnam on 30 September 1968 at Tay Ninh Base Camp, Headquarters 1/25th Infantry Division.

Q1 (08) Captain Heiser, could we begin this interview by having you give a brief resume of your service experience prior to Vietnam?

A: I graduated from Pennsylvania Military College and entered the service in February 1967. I went to Armor AOB and then had about two months with USAFI before going to flight school. After flight school I went right to Fort Knox and joined the 3/17th Air Cav.

Q2 (11) Could you discuss briefly your aviation training?

A: There were eight months of flight school. You started out with OH 23's and then went through transition to the Huey. The major part of the training, I felt, was tactics. The major unit training I had was with the 3/17th before we came into Vietnam. We had a lot of ATT's and training exercises, spending time in Georgia and West Virginia and training for the types of work we'd be doing over here.

Q3 (15) Captain Heiser, did you feel that the schooling and experience you received in the US properly prepared you for your duties here in Vietnam?

A: I believe they did, and maybe more so because of the training I had with the Cav. We operate over here basically the way we trained in the States. I never went to an air mobile unit and that's what the training in flight school was for. I think this is all necessary.

Q 4 (18) What positions have you held with the 3/17th, both back in CONUS and here in Vietnam?

A: I was a team leader with a weapons platoon and it wasn't until shortly after we got in-country that I was a section leader. I've held a section leader job down until the current time.

Q5 (20) Can you briefly discuss the missions of the weapons platoon?

A: The weapons platoon has a greater variety of missions than the other platoons of the Cav. Of course, we work in our troop mainly as a one gun and one scout team and our main object is to do the navigation, watch out for the scout, cover him if he takes any fire or generally work right with him. We are also concerned with anything the scout finds that we might be able to shoot up. We also have a lot of standby missions for various units, night or day. Also, we'll be scrambled or be sent on a mission to give fire support or close in fires.

Q6 (26) Would you outline the organization of the platoon, please?

A: The headquarters section, the platoon leader and his pilot, has one aircraft. The other two sections have four aircraft each. Each section is broken down into two teams and two section leaders. As far as maintenance crews, we have a platoon sergeant who is responsible for scheduling the aircraft times and keeping the platoon leader informed on just what he has maintenance wise.

Q7 (29) Do you find the TOE structure appropriate for the type of missions that you are given?

A: The TOE has fit in very well with what we do. We haven't had any trouble moving from location to location and getting set up to perform missions. We usually have the assets available almost at any time.

Q8 (32) Are you usually deployed by platoon section or team?

A: We're usually deployed by troop. The scout platoon is always with the weapons platoon on missions and the lift platoon stands by. Very rarely do we ever deploy ourselves just as a platoon.

Q9 (35) Do you find that the enlisted men you've received are generally well trained for their jobs?

A: The mechanics who were with us before deployment to Vietnam were well trained. We had a lot of trouble training in-country because of the lack of time and personnel. We have been taking them right out of school and of course they have a lot of training as far as the operation of the unit and what their job is, but they aren't as familiar with the aircraft as a more experienced crew chief.

Q10 (39) You have mentioned maintenance. How well has your equipment held up, especially the aircraft?

A: I think our maintenance held up very well. We've had an outstanding maintenance crew and with this KD team now, our ships aren't down as long. They are

going down as often, but they are coming out much quicker. I was amazed at the amount of work that these people could actually get done over here.

Q11 (42) How many serious mechanical failures do you recall having had?

A: We've had very few and I don't believe that we've lost any aircraft due to mechanical difficulties. We had one engine fire and the aircraft landed safely. Most of our damage or in-flight emergencies have been from battle damage.

Q12 (45) Would you discuss further the battle damage, how many aircraft you've had downed this way and the final disposition of these aircraft?

A: We've lost four C models. One was hit on the ground by an RPG. Two others were lost in a scramble in the dust at night. We get a lot of battle damage, but we don't lose the aircraft and there is a lot of down time for combat loss, even though the aircraft isn't lost.

Q13 (51) Would you discuss casualties in the weapons platoon? How many, and the nature of the casualties?

A: We've had four. Of these, two were killed, one was evacuated to the States, and the fourth one was retained in the unit. A crew chief and a gunner were killed when their aircraft was shot down and crashed in the trees. The pilot and co-pilot got out with minor injuries. Flying at low level, one of the co-pilots got hit in the chicken plate and to the side of his mouth. He was evacuated and I understand he is in pretty good shape. The only man we've had injured in a cobra was patched up the same day. They just don't seem to hit our people too often.

Q14 (55) What type of enemy weapons do you feel are the greatest threat to your aircraft?

A: The fifty caliber and the hand held VC automatic weapons that inflict most of the damage. It depends on what they have in the area as to what you figure your biggest threat is and how you're going to attack the target and exactly what you are going to do to counteract their weapon fire.

Q15 (58) What type of evasive action would you take in the case of a 50 caliber machine gun?

A: If a 50 caliber is firing on you, the best action is to return as much fire as you can and try to make him stop shooting. Because we can only fire forward, if you're already by him, you can try to outdistance him by pulling on all you've got and climbing out of the area. I would not attack a 50. Generally, you make higher runs and break off higher and you stay away because his

reach is so much greater than regular small arms.

Q16 (62) Have you found the sighting systems on your aircraft accurate and easy to use?

A: Sighting systems are extremely accurate and of course they're very simple. We lose very little time training somebody to use these. In the cobra the sighting system for the flex guns is much more accurate. You have a compensator for deflection from the aircraft and air speed that brings you closer to the target. The rockets are as accurate as the bore sight and then after that just as accurate as the position of the aircraft in relation to the target. You can usually tell when they're out of bore sight as soon as you shoot and it is a twenty minute process to put them back in bore sight.

Q17 (65) On the average, how many hours a day do you fly?

A: About three to four hours a day on the average. It varies. Some days as high as nine or ten hours and some days as low as one or two hours. Of course, this time depends on the availability of aircraft. When we were working around Saigon, it was as high as 140 hours a month for some people. The scouts usually per pilot, fly more than we do. We'll do a lot of fire team flying at night. I have about 350 hours total night time up until now and that includes school and Vietnam.

Q18 (72) How much of a restriction has poor weather been on your operations?

A: Most of the weather that bothers us is ground fog or any low ceiling because of the fact that we do work with one high ship and one low ship. If the high ship can't get at least a minimum of 500 feet above the low ship, then there is not much use of working that way. Of course, the isolated thunder storms and the heavy rain, we just work around. When we had the C model, the weather restricted us very little, even at night. We worked a lot on radar and radio navigation to get places. We had a real good aircraft to fly with instruments. With the cobra, however, the weather holds us down. We have to avoid bad weather at night and storms that we wouldn't have avoided before in the C model.

Q19 (77) Can you discuss one or two specific operations that you feel have been significantly successful?

A: Our most outstanding operation was, I believe, when we were operating out of Duc Lap. We had quite a few kills. There was a movement toward Saigon at that time through the pineapple which is down around Duc Lap. We were finding them in their bunkers and sleeping positions. The scout would either throw smoke or else we'd see where he flew over and if he couldn't shoot them as he flew over, we'd roll in and shoot them and go back and count the bodies. They finally realized that the move was on Saigon and they started to bring down

quite a few units. The ground units started reacting to what the LOH units had found. As far as a second successful operation, I think we are on that right now. We're working up here with 1/25th, helping them with their road clearings and other operations. We're seeing quite a lot of action and I think that they are learning how to use us effectively. We are getting some kills and doing some good.

Q20 (83) Can you describe the techniques you use in assisting in opening a road?

A: Generally, the LOH, flying at low level, will sweep the entire length of the road. Then we'll contact the road clearing team, usually a company, and screen to their flanks as they move down the road, making sure that they get through without anybody sneaking up behind them.

Q21 (85) Can you think of any instances when you felt your platoon was not properly employed?

A: I think that anytime they employ the weapons platoon excessively in a fire team manner, without working with the scouts, they are misusing us because they cut down on our ability to take these other missions that we are basically trained for. Unless they are going to use us to shoot or for quick reaction, I feel this is a misuse.

Q22 (88) Although you've cited how the platoon can be misused, I get the impression that in most cases you are properly used for what you have been designed for. Is that the case?

A: I'd concur with that. Basically, they can't misuse us if the use is in conjunction with the troop and with the mission the troop is designed to carry out.

Q23 (89) Has your platoon developed any special tactics or techniques that have been particularly sound?

A: I think our employment of one gunship with one LOH has been particularly successful. If the LOH finds something, we have something there to shoot at it right away, and he always has help right there. Our whole concept is based on working with the scout.

Q24 (92) Captain Heiser, are there any additional comments you would like to make?

A: The Cav itself proved that it is needed and can look over an area much faster and with less cost than ground units could.

Q25 (94) As I mentioned earlier, this interview will be used for historical purposes only. Do you wish to place any restrictions on its use? Do you feel we've discussed classified material and it should be given a classification? If so, what level?

A: No, I don't think that we had anything in here classified and I wouldn't restrict it in any way.

