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1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

Christmas 1967

The 1967 Christmas Season will find thousands of Skytroopers stationed at far outposts of democracy in Vietnam's Central Highlands. All will be united in a single effort to restore peace and stability in a country where tyranny threatens.

Our efforts and personal sacrifices bring us closer to that day when we can live in harmony with our neighbors, when man can work in peaceful assurance that his home will not be subjected to unlawful raid, and when his hopes for the future are vested in a prevailing Peace on Earth.

The daily contributions by men of the First Team have created hope and heartfelt gratitude in the South Vietnamese people whom we have been assisting. It is just for it is the spirit of Christmas demonstrated throughout all the days of the year.

This is the third Christmas for the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam. It will be celebrated in places named Bong Son, Landing Zone Baldy, An Khe, Phan Thiet, Landing Zone Geronimo and others just as those who passed before us celebrated their Christmases in the Admiralty Islands, the Philippines, and Korea.

Let us not forget that like those men, during this Holiday Season we find ourselves in the unique situation of not only celebrating Christmas but also helping to defend it and the ideas for which it stands.

—THE CAVALAIR STAFF

Merry Christmas - 1967

...For God And Country

No one in this world, including your First Sergeant, can make you do anything you don't want to do. You can choose to do what you want, be whatever kind of a man you want.

Certain foreseeable results accompany each choice. Choose one thing, this will happen; choose the other, that will happen. For example, you have a choice as to whether or not you will go on guard or K.P. If you decide to report for guard duty or to the mess hall, you have a relatively untroubled life; decide not to go, and you face an Article 15 or a court martial—two choices, each having its own foreseen result.

Because we live with guard and K.P. rosters, the results of our choices are very clear to us. We well know what will happen if we choose wrongly.

In our relationship with God, we have the same freedom of choice. God neither forces us to do that which we would rather not, nor does he force us to be a person we don't want to be. Here too, our choices have foreseeable results. To reject God means loneliness and meaningless wandering; to choose Him means, not an easy life, but one in which there is purpose and direction as well as his strength to lift us up when we stumble and fall.

What do you want in this life? What type person would you be? God has given you the freedom to choose. Only you can answer these questions. How do you choose? What is your choice?

JAMES C. GRANT, JR.
Chaplain (MAJ) USA
11th Aviation GP

Editorial

Illegal Explosives

Reports of servicemen carrying explosive devices in personal baggage have triggered grave concern about the possibility of disastrous situations aboard aircraft.

Commanders of U.S. Armed Forces elements in Vietnam have been directed to take additional steps to prevent U.S. servicemen from transporting in their personal baggage dangerous materials as explosive devices while traveling aboard aircraft.

The actions planned will include briefings, physical inspection of luggage and instructions to be included on individual travel orders.

Spokesmen at MACV say the practice of carrying explosive materials in personal luggage poses grave danger to passengers and air crews of both military and civilian aircraft.

Steps to be taken include:

1) Briefing of all Armed Forces members regarding prohibited explosive devices aboard aircraft, the extreme danger involved and the penalties associated with violations.

2) Physical inspection, to the maximum extent possible, of all personal baggage for explosive devices at processing centers and assembly points. Initial inspections most likely will be made at unit level.

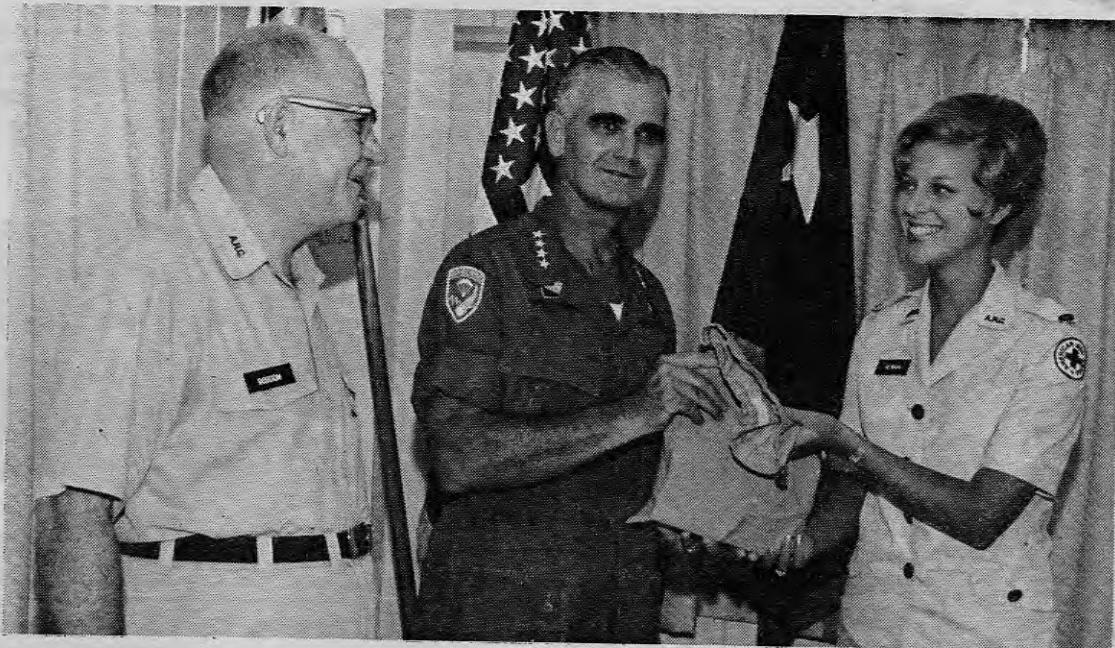
3) All travel orders will contain special instructions prohibiting the carrying of any type of explosive device in personal baggage aboard military or civilian aircraft.

The actions described pertain to all who are traveling on permanent change of station, temporary duty, leave, R&R and permissive TDY orders aboard Military Airlift Command, MAC charter flights and all other military aircraft operating from or within the Republic of Vietnam. (MACV)



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Editor SGT Dan Stoneking



American Red Cross Photos

Westy Gets 1st Ditty Bag

General W.C. Westmoreland accepts a Red Cross "Ditty Bag" on behalf of all American servicemen in South Vietnam. Presenting the first of some 550,000 bags that will be distributed is Miss Gayle Newman and Mr. John W. Gordon, both Red Cross officials in the Southeast Asia area. The bags will contain recording tapes, stationery, ball point pens, books and other useful items.

In South Vietnam

World's Biggest Xmas Party

SAIGON — Preparations for the world's biggest Christmas party of 1967 are complete.

Host of the party will be the American Red Cross. Guests will be GIs around the world, with the heaviest concentration in South Vietnam.

Top Effort

The Number One Red Cross Christmas effort is the 550,000 ditty bags which volunteers in Red Cross chapters began filling last summer and which now have arrived in Vietnam for distribution during the holiday weekend.

The objective of this Red Cross project is to provide a

gift-bag for every U.S. serviceman in South Vietnam whom they are able to contact. The bags are made of red and green nylon and the men will be able to use them as carry-alls for their personal belongings, as their grandfathers and fathers did in World Wars I and II and Korea.

Useful Items

The bags contain such items as ballpoint pens, stationery, games, books, tapes for recording messages home, and other useful articles.

Patients in U.S. military hospitals around the world as well as in South Vietnam will receive gifts in ditty bags or Christmas

stockings which will be hung on every patient's bed on Christmas Eve. Christmas ditty bags will also go to patients aboard the U.S. Navy hospital ships REPOSE and SANCTUARY off South Vietnam.

Stress Xmas

Hospitals and recreation center-clubmobile units in South Vietnam are sponsored on a year-around basis by Red Cross chapters which monthly send them magazines, paperback books, musical instruments and other recreational articles. The shipments arriving this month will stress the Christmas note, with holiday decorations included.

Chieu Hoi Total Hits 24,646

SAIGON — The number of civilian and military members of the Viet Cong ranks who have rallied to the Government of Vietnam in the Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program this year continues to rise, as this year's total hit more than 4,200 above that for the entire year of 1966.

Recent reports show that 2,171 left the Viet Cong ranks between the dates of September 9-October 20, raising the 1967 figure to 24,646. The 1966 total for Hoi Chanh (returnees) was about 20,400.

Chieu Hoi is a program that encourages military and civilian Viet Cong, their political cadre and soldiers of the North Vietnamese Army to rally to the legitimate government of the Vietnamese. It offers the hand of friendship and the hope of a new life for those who do.

Included in the latest compilation of Hoi Chanh figures were 1,562 military, 494 civilians and 115 in other categories.

Since the program was started by the South Vietnamese government on April 17, 1963, a total of 72,733 of the enemy have become Hoi Chanh.

Highest monthly and weekly totals for the 4 1/2-year program were: 5,557 for March, 1967; and 1,198 for the week ending March 11, 1967. The average weekly rate of Hoi Chanh during the current year is 587.



Santa At The Throttle

A sleigh and reindeer aren't really suited to Vietnam so Santa Claus has taken charge of this Huey UH-1D to deliver some of the 550,000 Red Cross Christmas Ditty Bags sent to American servicemen in-country.

For Refugee Village

13th Signal Plans Christmas Dinner

By SP4 ROBERT KIRK
Cavalair Staff Writer

AN KHE—More than 300 Vietnamese refugees enjoyed a hearty day-after-Thanksgiving turkey dinner at a growing settlement east of the 1st Air Cavalry Division's An Khe base camp.

The food was prepared and served by men of the Cav's 13th Signal Battalion, who have been helping the refugees from the war-torn Bong Son Plain for over three months. A similar dinner is planned for Christmas.

Formed into three separate columns of men, women, and children by the village chief, with the older women going

first, the Vietnamese filed through the chow line and passed to dining tables set under a large tent. On the tent's center poles were festive cardboard turkey gobblers posters, which puzzled the diners, no doubt, but it's the thought that counts.

Before the Cavalrymen came with their bulldozers, the settlement area, set aside for the refugees by the government of Vietnam, was uncultivated brushland. Now, 56 buildings dot the land, and 72 families live in the developed area.

"They build their own homes," said Chief Warrant Officer Sidney D. Bruton, Denison, Texas, 13th Signal Battalion's civil affairs officer. "We try to furnish salvaged corrugated tin roofing and a few other raw materials. We expect to erect 18 more homes and a two-room school house shortly."

The 1st Cav soldiers hope to issue donated clothing to the needy refugee families at the Christmas dinner.



US ARMY PHOTO BY SP5 CHESTER SMITH

Easy On The Gravy, Please

Refugee children from the war-scarred Bong Son Plain pass through a chow line for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. The food was prepared and served by members of the Cav's 13th Signal Battalion who are also sponsoring a resettlement village near An Khe. The men plan a similar dinner for Christmas.

El Toro! Er...Ah... Buffalo?

By SP4 DOYNE COLE
Cavalair Staff Writer

CHU LAI—"A bullfight in the middle of Vietnam was the farthest thing from my mind," said Private First Class Charles W. Smith, a 21-year-old Cavalryman.

Smith, with Charlie Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division, was knocked down by an angry water buffalo while his company was searching a village in the Que Son district.

Smith and Specialist 4 Dennis D. Green, were taking a break while last searchers were sweeping through the village. An enraged water buffalo broke loose from his pen and headed straight for them.

"I heard Green yell to run and we both took off," Smith said. "I ran a short ways and stopped to see what was happening when the buffalo knocked me over. The next thing I knew he had me pinned to the ground with his horns hooked in my flak jacket. Then Green shot the buffalo and got him off of me."

"I saw the buffalo had his horns in him," said Green, "and even though it was a risky shot, I cut loose on it. It took nine or ten shots before the fight went out of the buffalo and it died."

The flak jacket took up most of the shock of the attack, and Smith escaped with minor cuts and bruises, and a healthy respect for mean water buffalos.

"Whenever I pass a water buffalo now," Smith said, "I'm going to give him plenty of room."

228th Wins Boeing Award

AN KHE—The 228th Assault Helicopter Battalion has been presented an award from the Boeing Aviation Company for accumulating 50,000 flight hours in a Chinook CH-47A.

The award was presented the battalion in ceremonies here recently.

It is believed to be the first award of its kind ever presented to an Army aviation group.

The 228th accumulated the time while flying with the 11th Aviation Group at Ft. Benning, Ga., and under the rigorous testing of combative conditions in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

For 1st of the 12th

Record Equals Motto: 'We Charge Harder'

By SP4 RICHARD HAWKINS
Cavalair Staff Writer

DAK TO—What's it like being an infantryman in Vietnam? Ask the men of the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division.

For seven and one-half months the 1st Air Cav unit had been away from its base camp at An Khe in the Central Highlands. Except for a 30-day jump to Kontum Province during Operation Horace Greeley, the bat-

talion patrolled the Bong Son Plains in Operation Pershing in a series of cordon and search operations designed at routing out the Communist infrastructure in northern Binh Dinh Province.

Bested Enemy

During that period—in places such as An Qui and Binh De, obscure on the map but important in the struggle for Vietnam—the men of the 1st of the 12th showed they were better

than the best the enemy could match against them.

Finally the word came down that the battalion would head back to base camp and the relatively easy job of patrolling the An Khe area and securing highway 19.

No 'Easy Life'

But the 1st Brigade Skytroopers had little chance to become accustomed to an "easy life." After just two nights at Camp Radcliff, they were loaded aboard C-130 transports again and set out for a new mission at Dak To. A new North Vietnamese Army offensive was shaping up in the jungle-covered mountains near the Cambodian border and the 1st of the 12th was going in to aid the Fourth Infantry Division and 173rd Airborne Brigade to stop it.

The next day one company of the battalion was air assaulted

onto Hill 724, scene of a fierce battle between determined NVA attackers and immovable Fourth Infantry Division Ivy-men defenders. The other companies of the 1st of the 12th dodged mortar rounds to bolster the defenses of the U.S. Forces base camp at Dak To and searched the surrounding hills for the elusive NVA.

High Morale

As the battalion moved out to stake its own territory in Operation MacArthur, officers commented on the lack of complaints among the men.

The spirit of the 1st of the 12th is easy to find on the uniforms worn by the men of the unit. A small but confident red and white button proudly declares, "We Charge Harder."

The record leaves no doubt as to the validity of that claim.

A Christmas Wish From Mother Dorcy

(Editor's Note: Mother Dorcy is the original designer of the 1st Air Cavalry Division patch and honorary mother of all Skytroopers. The following article is in the form of an open letter to the men of the First Team in which Mother Dorcy expresses her wishes for all Skytroopers during this Christmas season.)

Washington, D.C.
Christmas, 1967

To My Beloved First Cavalry Division—

Your identifying sleeve insignia or patch was my brainchild in 1920. You — each one — have made it famous.

I watch every paper and broadcast I can find to have news of you. For 47 years you have been my consuming interest and I glory in your individual greatness, and each conquest. I glory in your courage and personal sacrifice. That great esprit has been lavishly expressed.

This Holiday Season—1967—I reach out to each member of this great and far known Division, as I know your own mother would, with warm deep wishes that your Christmas is filled with overflowing love and your very own Star of Bethlehem leads to a great and shining New Year.

God keep you always.

Your proud, honorary,
Mother Dorcy



Skytrooper Country

The All-American City of Columbia, S.C. puts up one of many signs showing they have adopted the 1st Air Cavalry Division and demonstrating their support for our efforts. At left is Dr. J. David Palmer, the founder and coordinator of RSVP (a Columbia group that has worked with the Cav on many civic action projects), Columbia Mayor Lester Bates (center) and Carey C. Burnett, city manager (right).



Looking For Action

US ARMY PHOTOS BY SP5 DON GRAHAM

Captain Dennis Lenhart (above) peers over the top of a sandbank near Chu Lai, keeping an eye out for enemy troop movement. Lenhart is the company commander of Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, with the 1st Air Cavalry Division's Third Brigade conducting Operation Wallowa. Below Charlie Company makes a contact as a machine gunner and his assistant open up with an M-60. Below center a Skytrooper of Charlie Company braves a hail of automatic weapons fire to fling a grenade towards the NVA positions.

In A Firefight With Charlie Company

By SP5 DON GRAHAM

Cavalier Staff Writer

LZ BALDY — The difference between a hard-fought, confusing, close-intervals firefight and a disaster, is courage and control.

Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division, had plenty of both one day during the second month of the Cav's Operation Wallowa, and, as a result, the company was able to beat back a large North Vietnamese Army force.

Secure Choppers

For two days, the company had been securing two downed helicopters and now they were moving, trying to find the enemy's heavy weapons that had shot the choppers down.

That afternoon, they found them. Sweeping east through a series of houses and rice paddies, the company left one village. The 1st Platoon, on the right and slightly in front, had gone up one rice paddy bank and turned left onto another. The point man, Specialist 4 Alvin Henry, carefully crossed a dike and moved out into another paddy. One other man had crossed with him when an NVA soldier opened fire with an AK-47, killing the second man. Henry hit the ground with two holes in the Claymore bag on his back.

Contact Made

By now other weapons were firing, but no one could see where the enemy rifleman was located. In fact, he was just a few feet away from Sp4 Henry, dug into the bank of the rice paddy, and when two soldiers tried to bring back the mortally wounded second man, they were shot too. One was killed and one wounded.

Three men were down, one was trapped, and the company was under heavy fire. At that point, Specialist 4 Francisco Castro got up from behind the paddy dike and low-crawled towards the wounded men. His platoon leader, Lieutenant Michael Lane, remembers that

he crawled so low the enemy soldier could not have seen him from his hole on the elevated dike.

Throws Grenade

Castro's first intention had been to bring back the wounded men. But while crawling to them, he saw freshly dug dirt in the paddy and knew that there was an enemy position nearby. He made his way to it, fired a magazine into it, and then threw a grenade that landed between the bunker and another, neutralizing both.

Castro's incredible bravery—he received the Silver Star for it ten days later—relieved the initial pressure on the company.

Enemy OP

Captain George D. Lenhart, who had run to the front line with the 1st Platoon, called to the 2nd Platoon to move up on the left. It was then Lenhart's impression that he was facing an enemy observation post, or a position set up to delay his company, and that all the enemy were to his front. But when the 2nd Platoon came up, a North Vietnamese in a bank to the left fired and killed one soldier.

The platoon sergeant, a man whose boldness under fire made everyone in the company wonder how he had survived eight months in Vietnam, grenade the position and killed the sniper. But as he crawled to the front to radio the news of his casualty to Lenhart, he was shot and killed.

Large Force

The company's executive officer went to take over the platoon. As he reached the place where the dead sergeant lay, a shot, presumably from the same rifleman, killed him.

Both the platoon sergeant and the exec had been admired, respected men. Their loss hurt everyone in the company, and it might have been an occasion for panic. But Captain Lenhart, who now knew that he was facing a very large enemy force, crawled over the paddy dike to



wards the leaderless 2nd Platoon and ordered the 1st Platoon to lay down a heavy base of fire while the 2nd withdrew to form a tighter perimeter.

Medevacs Arrive

While the first Medevacs were coming to the LZ, a 60mm mortar dropped half a dozen rounds into the carrying party, wounding some of the men. Some of the soldiers were reporting seeing NVA dug in between the front lines and the LZ, within the company's perimeter.

But no one broke.

Air strikes were coming in now, three of them in all, dropping napalm 40 meters from the company's positions, bombs 100 to 150 meters out. Helicopters cruised overhead looking for enemy who might be trying to escape. Artillery fired constantly.

NVA Withdraw

At last, when darkness had

fallen and it seemed that everything was over, the NVA did something they have done before in the Wallowa AO: they mortared the company while breaking contact. Two 81mm rounds landed smack in the middle of the LZ while Company C was unloading a resupply helicopter. No one was killed, but eight men were wounded. It fell to Specialist 4 Jerry Sheffield and Sergeant Robert Rathburn to guide in the medical evacuation helicopters. There was only one way to do it: Sheffield stood on the LZ, knowing that a mortar tube was sighted in on it, held up two flashlights, and brought in the first Medevac.

The company narrowed its perimeter, picked a new LZ, and this time Rathburn led in a medevac with the flashlights.

Charlie Company had seven men killed—more than it lost in the three-day battle for An Lao

Stayed Together

Charlie Company had been hit hard, but it had stayed together.

"I never saw a company react better under fire," said First Sergeant Charles Harrison. "They couldn't make any mistakes, and they didn't. And a lot of it was the old man's doing. He never lost control of himself, or of the company."

Ten days later Captain Lenhart, like Sergeant Castro, received the Silver Star.





age in April, previously the battalion's biggest fight in a year. The battlefield could not be searched until the next day, and then the bodies of seven Americans were found within a few meters of the U.S. lines. If others were killed, they were evacuated. A prisoner taken the next week told interrogators that his battalion suffered more than 100 casualties in the attack.

Stayed Together
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Calling In Artillery, ARA, and Airstrikes

Plugging one ear to keep out the noise of the firefight, Charlie Company CO Captain Dennis Lenhart calls for supporting fire with his RTO. Above center a member of Charlie Company takes aim with his M-16 at North Vietnamese Army positions during the firefight near the coast of the South China Sea Quang Tin Province. Below two members of Charlie Company take a break after the NVA broke contact and retreated. Moments like these are used to catch up on the latest and catch a wink or two of sleep.





US ARMY PHOTO

The Pickup

Skytroopers make a dash for a helicopter that has come into a landing zone to take them out after successfully completing their mission. These troopers are members of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, operating near Chu Lai.

Now An Infantryman

He Was Once 'The Other People'

LZ BALDY — There are two classes of soldiers in Vietnam. There are infantrymen and there are Other People.

Leaflets Give VC Warning

By SP4 ANDREW RUST
Cavalier Staff Writer

CHU LAI — A leaflet has been developed by C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Aerial Rocket Artillery, which will probably not hurt the NVA and Viet Cong if it makes a direct hit, but will surely cause trepidation about moving at night.

The ARA battalion is unique to the 1st Air Cavalry Division. Its arsenal is varied 2.75-inch rockets, SS-11 wire-guided missiles, 81mm mortar aerial delivery system, riot-control agent and smoke delivery systems. Battery C is currently supporting the Cav's 3rd Brigade in Operation Walla, 30 miles south of Da Nang.

"ARA is the first unit to fly extensively at night in this area," said Major Ralph Floyd, Battery C executive officer. "The NVA are learning quickly about our ability to place accurate rocket fire on them from a helicopter in the dark. We thought we would help the educational process along a little bit."

"With the psychological operations people, we developed a leaflet. On the front, one half is a day scene with an ARA ship rocketing the NVA. The other half is shaded as though it is night, but the identical situation. On the back we describe our rockets as having the ability to see at night and seek out the NVA and VC."

The ARA ships have dropped over 200,000 leaflets so far and plan to drop many more. After completing a firing mission, the helicopters gain altitude and send hundreds of leaflets tumbling to the ground in the area they just fired on.

Near Dak To

Firepower Gives Cavalrymen Edge

By SP4 RICHARD HAWKINS

Cavalier Staff Writer

U. S. base camp.

Race For Hill

After three days of fighting, Company C, 2/8th occupied the first of a series of jungle-covered hills that command a sweeping view of the large allied installation and sit directly above Highway 14—land supply route to the camp.

Tactical air strikes, armed helicopters and conventional artillery pounded enemy positions almost constantly as the 1st Brigade's 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry advanced up a ridge line nine kilometers east of the

Skytroopers' 'Long Move' Sets Record

DAK TO — Massive firepower is making the difference as elements of the 1st Air Cavalry Division's 1st Brigade struggle to blunt the latest North Vietnamese Army offensive near here in Operation MacArthur.

The longest move by land ever made by an element of the 1st Air Cavalry Division has been completed as the Cav's 1st Brigade and attached elements entered their new base camp at Dak To after three days of travel.

The 250-mile journey which involved two overnight stops—An Khe and Kontum—began at Bong Son and wound down Highway 1, back up Highway 19, and finally north along Highway 14, to a position not far from the Cambodian border.

"This was the most demanding task I have faced as Headquarters Company commander," remarked Captain Edward A. Parsons, who had the unenviable task of convoy commander. Parsons described the hot dusty trip as simply "hellish."

With only 30 hours notice to prepare, Parsons whipped his company into shape despite having to conduct a convoy of advance party personnel to Phu Cat Air Force Base the day before the main convoy departed.

"One of my biggest problems was engine trouble and flats. Not all the vehicles were in top shape due to the short notice," said Parsons. But considering the pot-holed, bouncing, bone-shattering roads, Captain Parsons was glad to get by with as little trouble as he did. Road security was provided by 1st Brigade scout ships.

Enemy Advances

Late in the day, one Cavalry element succeeded in beating the enemy to the objective.

Taking up positions in the NVA bunkers that dotted the hilltop, they could see a group of enemy soldiers advancing through the dense undergrowth about 30 meters away. "I don't know if they were trying to hit us again or just coming back for their dead and wounded," said Specialist 4 George A. Poston, a squad leader. "We just started picking them off."

Rescue Comrade

One Cavalryman was wounded in the brief firefight. Specialist 4 Ralph E. Mango, Jr., volunteered to go after him. Crawling over fallen trees while his companions on the hilltop provided cover fire, he reached the wounded man, but was unable to move him. He in turn fired cover while two other Skytroopers came to his aid. Together they managed to hold the enemy at bay and carried their wounded comrade back to the hilltop.

Low on ammunition, the Cavalrymen had to withdraw from their hard-won position for the night. The next day, as they advanced again, they received enemy rocket fire and grenades from the hilltop. Calling for an air strike to blow away the thick jungle growth, they assaulted again, this time virtually walking behind their fire support from ARA ships firing as close as 20 meters to their front.

Four Bodies

When they reached their objective for the second time, the Cavalrymen found the enemy had abandoned the position for good, leaving behind four bodies and trails of blood leading into the jungle.

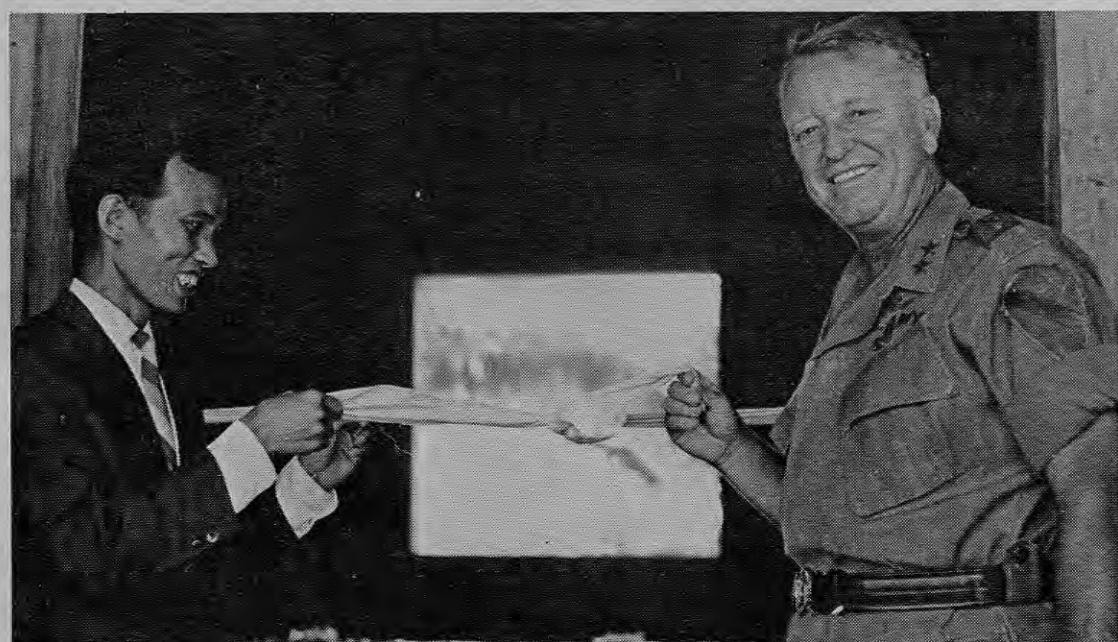
Lions Club Sponsoring 'Mail Call'

HAMPTON, Va. (Special) — The Mercury Lions Club of Hampton, Va., is sponsoring "Project Mail Call," making arrangements to supply students in the city's school system with names and addresses of men in Vietnam.

All interested Skytroopers wishing to correspond should send their name and mailing address to:

"Project Mail Call"
c/o Curt Sinclair
11 Southerland Drive
Hampton, Va. 23369

The Hampton students are currently writing some sixty men in Vietnam but are seeking an additional 200 names.



US ARMY PHOTO

Cav Opens Bong Son School Addition

Mr. Huynh Huu Dung (left), headmaster of the Bong Son High School and Major General John J. Tolson, commanding officer of the 1st Air Cavalry Division, untie cloth to officially open a new three-classroom annex to the high school which was designed and constructed by men of the division's 8th Engineer Battalion. The new annex will alleviate overcrowding at the school which is located three miles from the Cav's forward command post at Bong Son.

Saves Six Lives

2/7 Cav Captain Dives On Grenade



CPT OSCAR L. O'CONNOR
And Everyone Waited

PHAN THIET — A tin can knocked off its perch atop a five-foot high bush has touched off one of the Vietnam war's most heroic acts.

Captain Oscar L. O'Connor, commander of Delta company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Air Cavalry Division, was leading a platoon through the Le Hong Forest, 12 miles northeast of here, when one of his men picked up a tin can driven into the ground. Out fell a grenade.

"I hollered, 'Grenade!'" recalls O'Connor. "Everyone scattered before it exploded, and no one was hurt."

"We had found a number of bunkers, caches, metal cans sticking in the ground, and this

was the clincher. We decided to call the engineers and sit tight until they got there."

Fort Sierrn, a nearby ARVN outpost, had received fire all night, and in case some Viet Cong were still in the area, O'Connor began organizing a few small scouting and ambush squads. He was getting together the initial scouting party when his radio operator brushed a small bush, knocking a tin can from a top branch. The can bounced off the ground, popping a hand grenade into the midst of six soldiers.

"We were still a bit jittery from that first grenade going off," O'Connor said. "Now I saw this second one, lying there

with its pin pulled."

O'Connor dived on top of the grenade while the men around him scrambled for cover. O'Connor remained motionless on the grenade.

Everyone waited.

When his RTO started coming back, O'Connor waved him off, hollering at him to stay out of there. The RTO got back down.

Feeling the grenade against his lower chest, O'Connor laboriously inched his hand under his side toward the grenade. He forced his hand between the ground and his shirt until he felt the grenade against his fingers above the grenade. His men watched anxiously as he

reached around the grenade with his fingers and squeezed.

Motioning his men to get down, O'Connor looked around to find a safe place to throw the grenade, drew himself up, and hurled the grenade hard toward a nearby hole.

"About one second after I let go of it," he said, "the grenade exploded. I tried to scramble away as soon as I threw, but a fragment caught me in the left foot."

"I'm still a bit nervous about the grenade," he smiles. "I must have shook for four hours afterwards. But we all have our lives, and that's what really counts."

LARSON

That Christmas Dinner

Cav Cooks Work Everyday 'Miracle'

LZ BALDY — One of the least known miracles of the war in Vietnam is performed everyday by the cooks of the 1st Air Cavalry Division. They prepare two hot meals daily for the Cav's infantry troops in the field.

That may sound simple, but it is not.

No Roads

The infantrymen are often miles from base camp, forward command post areas, in country where there are few usable roads. Trucking meals to them is out of the question.

So the Cavalry uses some of its 450 helicopters to lift breakfast and supper to Skytroopers all over the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

One of the men who makes it possible is Staff Sergeant Rob-

ert Ensign, a veteran of 13 years of Army service. Sergeant Ensign is an assistant mess sergeant of the First Team's 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry. His story is typical of all the Cav's cooks.

Sergeant Ensign, who has been an Army cook for 11 years (he was an airborne infantryman during his first two years) agrees with most of his fellow cooks that duty in Vietnam is the roughest he's seen in the Army.

Open 24 Hours

His average work day is 16 to 17 hours and his battalion's mess hall is open 24 hours a day to prepare food for the four infantry companies and one headquarters company in the unit. When additional companies are attached to the battalion for operational purposes, the mess hall may have to prepare 3,500 meals in just a single day.

It all starts at 0200 hours when the first shift of cooks begin to prepare a breakfast to be flown by helicopter to the companies in the field. If the company has some time before it starts that day's operations, a full breakfast of eggs, bacon, toast and jam and hot coffee can be flown to them in insulated containers.

"No-Backhaul"

A helicopter hauls the cans back after breakfast. If the company has to move out in a hurry, they can have a "no-back-haul" breakfast of boiled eggs, juice, and sometimes toast, bacon and coffee, placed in disposable containers that do not need to be carried back to the messhall.

The battalion's specialty — offered whenever a company has a secure landing zone and some extra time — is a breakfast cooked on the spot by a cook who is flown to the area with a stove. To a tired, hungry infantryman, the sight of someone cooking breakfast eggs to order is a pleasure on a scale with mail from home, rest and recuperation leave and rotating to Vietnam.

Supper, Too

During the remainder of the day, Sergeant Ensign and the battalion's two other cooks prepare breakfast and lunch for the headquarters company and the company defending base camp. At 3 p.m., supper has to be in insulated containers and ready to go to the companies in the field as soon as they are secure for the night. Later there is supper for the base camp troopers. If they are lucky, the cooks get off by 2130 hours.

—GRAHAM



US ARMY PHOTO BY SPC DON GRAHAM

Providing Cover

A 1st Air Cavalry Division machine gunner provides cover for his comrades as they cross an open field to root out a North Vietnamese Army sniper near Chu Lai. These troops are members of Alpha Company, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, engaged in operations near Chu Lai.

Vietnam, South America Guerillas Activities Similar Says Major

LZ UPLIFT — Major Teddy J. Hardy will concede that there are similarities between guerilla activities in Latin America and in Vietnam. He is somewhat skeptical, however, about too easy comparisons.

Around the world, from Caracas to Phu My, he has spent the last four years in direct support of counter-guerilla activities.

The tall, lanky, Texas-bred major came to Vietnam over four months ago and took charge of the civil affairs program for the 1st Air Cavalry's 2nd Infantry Brigade.

Before that, he had served with the 8th Special Forces Group based out of Panama. He was on frequent missions to Bolivia and Venezuela, where he served as advisor to newly-formed "Ranger" and "Hunter" units organized to fight against the rising small Communist-trained guerilla bands.

His civic action work was only part-time in Latin America, he says, and along the lines of developing "rapport" with the indigenous population.

After arriving in Bolivia, the major and his team of Special Forces advisors helped the

troops there construct a neat new outdoor latrine. The Bolivians were so proud of the outhouse that it was always included in a VIP tour of the base camp.

He has brought much the same touch to Vietnam. "Civil action

He's Really 'Hard Core'

AN KHE — A 1st Air Cavalry man has proved how hardcore he really is.

During a recent firefight, PFC Roger Poupore, Kinston, Mich., a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, was pinned down in a creek bed, by heavy enemy automatic weapons fire and hand grenades.

Suddenly Roger heard a grenade go off near by, and moments later felt something hit him in the chest. "It just bounced off my chest," said Roger. "I looked down and saw a piece of shrapnel about the size of a silver dollar cut in half. I don't know why it bounced off me like that, but I'm not complaining".

is really made down at the grass roots level," he says. He and his assistants research for him information concerning the traditions and culture of the military groups and civilian residents in the area he works. He is as scrupulous as a diplomat in learning what actions would be considered offensive by the Vietnamese.

He speaks fluent Spanish and says that this was a great advantage to him in Latin America. He does not speak Vietnamese and considers this a major problem.

The Vietnamese National Police attached to the 2nd Brigade have agreed to teach him and his staff Vietnamese. They, in turn, have promised to teach the National Police English.

Now it would appear that there will be almost insurmountable difficulties in this kind of language instruction. Perhaps. Major Hardy never shouts, "Drive on!" but this spirit is implicit in his talk. No doubt he will soon learn Vietnamese and the National Police, English.

Cavalry Smashes NVA Force



Wins Safety Award

Major Paul B. Robinson (left), commanding officer of the 228th Assault Helicopter Battalion's Alpha Company, receives an award for two years of accident-free flying by his company. Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Kerner, 228th commanding officer presents the award.

Over Two-Year Span

Alpha Sets Flying Mark

By SP4 MIKE LARSON
Cavalair Staff Writer

AN KHE — In South Vietnam, where heavy rains and dust beat incessantly against helicopters, where Viet Cong shoot at them, and where the least neglect by ground crews could be fatal, occasional accidents are bound to happen.

Yet, in two years of combat flying, Alpha Company of the 228th Aviation Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Division, has not had an accident, even a minor one.

During the two years, the company has flown 16,857 hours.

Alpha Company flies Chinooks. The huge duo-prop helicopters are attractive targets for enemy sharpshooters. Yet, Captain Robert Deppey, 228th safety officer, believes, "it is doubtful that any comparable aviation unit in Vietnam and possibly in the U.S. Army can lay claim to such an outstanding safety record."

Participating in all 1st Cav operations since November, 1965, the record was established in

all kinds of weather and over all types of terrain. Pilots flew both days and nights, during the dusty dry season and during monsoons, even those approaching typhoon proportions.

"The pilots are familiar with the biggest part of Vietnam," added Deppey, "after operating in the Phan Thiet sand, the mountain peaks and rain forests of Pleiku and Kontum, the jungles and elephant grass of An Khe, the sometimes wet and sometimes dusty Bong Son Plain, and the coastal plains and low mountains from Chu Lai to Da Nang."

Ground crews must be commended too, Deppey said. "The Chinook is a tremendously complex aircraft, maintenance-wise. This, with the almost always adverse conditions we are forced to operate in, are a true tribute to the unit mechanics and direct support element."

The award, a plaque presented to Company A commander, Major Paul B. Robinson, will leave Alpha Company only if one of its Chinooks has an accident.

Teamwork Key Word For Two 227th Flyers

By SP4 JEFF MCCRACKEN
Cavalair Staff Writer

BONG SON — People working together as a team have been the key to the 1st Cavalry Division's success in Vietnam.

Typical of that team work are two aviators of the 227th Assault Helicopter Battalion, who have the responsible positions of flight leaders. The flight leader leads the First Team's famed air assaults on enemy positions.

First Lieutenant Larry E. Read and Herbert L. "Jim" Lawton have alternated on a day-by-day basis as flight leaders for C Company of the 227th.

Warrant Officer Robert Eastland, Alpha Company safety officer, doesn't see that happening soon:

"It's sort of unfair to the other companies for us to receive this award. The other companies will just have to do without, since the only acceptable accident rate for Alpha Company is zero."

Antenna Reveals Enemy Positions

AN KHE (Special) — Elements of the 1st Air Cavalry Division smashed Communist hopes of a major victory in Vietnam's Central Highlands last week as Skytroopers outbattled a large North Vietnamese Army force near Dai Dong (1), (2) and (3) about eight miles north of Bong Son.

After four days of heavy fighting Skytroopers had killed 307 enemy while elements of the 40th ARVN Regiment, acting as a blocking force in the action, reporting killing 167 enemy.

APCs Used

The engagement involved two companies from the 1st of the 50th Mechanized Infantry, the unit which has been working with the Cavalry since late September to clear Binh Dinh Province of Viet Cong and NVA influence; three companies of the Cav's 1st Battalion 12th Cavalry; and elements of the division's unique 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry.

It was the first major battle in Vietnam involving the extensive use of armored personnel carriers (APCs), tactfully employed by troopers of the 1st of the 50th.

Artillery Support

The Cavalry's supporting artillery units had also accounted for 23 enemy dead during the first four days of the action.

The contact started when the antenna of a North Vietnamese Army radio — peeking out of a well-camouflaged bunker — was spotted by a Cavalry helicopter recon pilot.

The sighting sent in a platoon of the 1st of the 9th — the "Blue Team" — which immediately tangled with what was

believed to be elements of the 22nd Regiment of the 3rd NVA Division.

Dense Palms

More than a battalion of Cavalrymen were thrown into the melee, fought in dense stands of palm groves between Highway One and the South China Sea.

Major General John J. Tolson, the commanding officer of the division, visited the battlefield only hours after the fighting died down and consulted with the officers and chatted with men, many of whom wore tattered jungle fatigues, torn during the fierce fighting.

Prevented Victory

"I feel we prevented an old adversary from making a victory in an attack on U.S. and South Vietnamese units in the area," General Tolson said, "The last major fight on the northern Bong Son Plain was with this same NVA unit last July. I think they decided to stay and fight this time because they were under orders to get a good victory and get it now."

A total of 16 Skytroopers were killed during the engagement while ARVN forces reported their losses as "light."

Tough Fighting

The fighting was made tougher due to the dense palm groves and the deep mud caused by the monsoon rains.

The abandoned village complex where the fighting took place was about 500 by 2,000 meters in size, criss-crossed with hedgegrows and thickets, contained about 40 bunkers (each about four feet deep) and was laced with two-foot deep trenches.

Only five 'hooches' were in the area when the Cavalrymen moved up for the fight. There were no civilians in the area and the five structures as well as scores of three were leveled in the battle.

Xmas Cards Designed for 'First Team'

By SP4 MARVIN NEELY
Cavalair Staff Writer

AN KHE — 1st Air Cavalry Division Skytroopers will be sending home some 300,000 personalized Christmas cards this year.

The card was designed by Specialist 5 James McGath, Combat artist for the Division Information Office, and was selected by the chaplains of the division.

The face of the card shows the traditional 1st Cav patch with the inscription 1st Air Cavalry Division Christmas 1967. The message written in script above a pen sketch of the three Wise Men reads: "May the Peace and Happiness of Christmas be yours today and throughout the New Year from the FIRST TEAM in Vietnam."

The cards are being distributed to Skytroopers at allotments of 15 per soldier. The chaplains are distributing them to all in-country hospitals so that every man will have the opportunity to send a Christmas card to friends and loved ones.



US ARMY PHOTO
Piggyback Style

One of the Cav's 478th Flying Crane's carries a Huey and OH-13 into An Khe for some repair work. Chief Warrant Officer Tom Carlisle flew the unusual mission for the famous Crane Company.