

C Btry — Aug 1968—
Dec 1969
(1)

ANNUAL HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT

FOR

C Battery

4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery)

77th Artillery (Airmobile)

1 August 1968 to 31 December 1969

PREFACE

Although I was not one of the original Griffins, I also formed with an ARA unit in the States before coming to Vietnam. I joined C Battery shortly after their arrival at Camp Evans. I have attempted to write the history as I saw it, and as an aviator I recognize my limitations in this respect. All the photographs included were taken with a 35mm Canon FTQL camera with a 50mm, 1.8 lens, and I assume full responsibility for them.

I extend my thanks to Warrant Officer Stephen H Scheiding, [REDACTED] who prepared the Dedication; Chief Warrant Officer Billy R Hartbarger, [REDACTED] who wrote the section concerning the forming and training at Fort Bragg; and Chief Warrant Officer Richard W Freeman, [REDACTED] who handled the narrative of the ferry flight.

Specialist Five William S Hallock, [REDACTED], deserves a special thanks for the long hours he spent sorting and condensing information from the Operations Section. I also wish to thank Captain Robert B Williams, [REDACTED] and Warrant Officer Joseph J Milhorne, [REDACTED] for proof reading the drafts and offering helpful suggestions and criticisms. Last, but not least, my thanks goes to Staff Sergeant Thomas H O'Neil, [REDACTED], for typing the final copy.

Loren W. Gee

LOREN W GEE
OW2, AV
Unit Historian

DEDICATION

During C Battery's brief stay in Vietnam, the Griffins have accomplished, and exceeded, the goals established in the development of Aerial Rocket Artillery. C Battery's record is unexcelled. If taken at face value, credit might be given to the aviators who fly the aircraft and fire the rockets, but, behind each pilot there are several enlisted men who, together, form the backbone of the unit. Many a night, an armament man or a crewchief remained at his job until the wee small hours of the morning to assure that his aircraft would be mission ready for the next day. During major engagements, ammo personnel often had to work well into the night to keep pace with the munitions being expended. At our forward locations, enlisted personnel remained on duty to coordinate communications, supplies and provide aircraft maintenance. Maintenance and transportation working together as a precision machine kept the aircraft and vehicles operating; and, the clerk-typists maintained control over the massive amounts of paperwork necessary for the completion of C Battery's mission. Without these enlisted men behind the scenes, any mention of C Battery would be an afterthought.

For this reason, this history is dedicated to all the enlisted personnel who made C Battery, 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile) possible.

FORT BRAGG

Fayetteville, North Carolina, is a military town. One of those places where the civilian and the military meet. It is a good union with the town benefiting commercially from the soldiers and their families, and in return providing entertainment and shopping facilities. It was to this town one morning early in August that the first members of C Battery, 4th Battalion (Aerial Artillery), 77th Artillery (Airmobile) came - and the "Griffins" were born.

Time was a factor and none was wasted in those early days of C Battery's conception. Everyone had his share of duties, and many worked day and night. Spirit and cooperation were the words, and all problems were tackled with determination and willingness. One problem that required a lot of time was that of obtaining all the publications we would need. This job fell to our Publications Officer, Warrant Officer Richard W Freeman. It was rather humorous to watch Warrant Officer Freeman learn his job as he performed it.

Of course the biggest job, and one that concerned everyone was training. Captain Joe Coyner, our training officer, under the guidance of Major Edward J Miller, arranged our schedule.

Warrant Officer Billy R Hartbarger was sent to Fort Rucker for a three week instruction period, making him a qualified Instructor Pilot in the Bell UH-1C helicopter. After his return, he, along with Major Edward Miller, Major Craig Leyda and Captain Joseph Tison set about transitioning all the pilots into the UH-1C.

An ARA firing range was constructed near St Mere Eglise Drop Zone and training in the use of the aircraft armament systems was initiated. Each pilot was instructed on firing techniques, and

then given numerous chances to apply what he learned on the range. Day and night the range echoed to the blast of rockets and the chatter of machine guns as the door gunners, too, increased their skill. Time passed, the days grew cold and the Griffins evolved into a team with teeth.

December came, and C Battery readied itself for a week in the field, our first Annual Army Training Test. For winter, the temperature was comfortable and the skies were clear that first week. Major Edward Miller's birthday was on the seventh and we celebrated by moving into the woods bordering an isolated field in North Carolina. Our first night out it snowed, and the temperature dropped to nine degrees.

Elements of the 82d Airborne Division and Special Forces stationed at Fort Bragg were participating in FTX Gobblerwoods, a coincident field problem and C Battery worked in support of them for four days. Our last three days were spent conducting simulated fire missions, maintaining hot sections day and night, and being graded on such things as reaction time, accuracy, target effect, etc. Poor weather and hard work were combining to make it a grueling week, especially for the maintenance and support personnel; but, the Griffins were developing into professionals and perfection was their goal.

The Christmas holidays brought a short lull in our work, but after returning from holiday leave, our main effort was put into readying equipment for the move to the Republic of Vietnam. Finishing touches were put to training schedules, with the last period of

training consisting of the coast-to-coast aircraft ferry mission. All of the new pilots gained immeasurable experience in cross-country navigation, radio procedures and airfield operations. Flight planning and filing was spread among the pilots so each had a chance to practice. An important lesson learned was the effect that terrain, temperature, and weather conditions have on helicopter operation.

An actual account of the ferry trip from one of those who was there follows:

"On 24 January 1969, C Battery departed Simmons Army Air Field at 0730 hours Eastern Standard Time, two days behind schedule. There were eleven UH-1C helicopters in the flight with XM-3 armament subsystems mounted. Our final destination was Sharpe Army Depot at Stockton, California, where the aircraft would be packed for overseas deployment.

"When the aircraft and thirty-three crew members arrived at Fort Gordon, Georgia, the first refueling stop, the lead aircraft blew an engine reducing our troupe to ten. This aircraft followed ten days later after repairs were completed.

"Meridian, Mississippi, was reached without further difficulty except for a brief moment of terror while negotiating the approach to Lawson Army Air Field at Fort Benning, Georgia, with thirty knot crosswinds! With the first leg of the journey complete, the flight remained overnight at Meridian.

"The following day took us to Dallas Love Field. The high point of the day being engine trouble experienced by one bird in Longview, Texas. The problem was corrected in a short time, however. The night spent in Dallas was far superior to the previous one in Meridan and most of us hated to leave.

"The third night we spent in Odessa, Texas. I can not say much about that leg. Most of the pilots were tired and Odessa did not offer much. We needed rest for the next day, though, as the itinerary included El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Mexico.

"That leg was also uneventful. The flight made El Paso by noon and Juarez by 1400 hours.

"After spending the next morning rounding everyone up, the ships lifted off for Phoenix, Arizona, our fifth stop. By this time the weaker ships were having a hard time maintaining the pace, so the stronger ships took on part of their load. The higher altitudes cut performance greatly.

"At Phoenix, our Battery Commander met a student from Thunderbird International School of Foreign Trade. The student convinced him to land there the following morning for coffee and doughnuts. The school was on the old Thunderbird Army Air Field, a WWII training field outside Phoenix.

"The next morning around 0900 hours after departing Phoenix International, we made a high-overhead approach into Thunderbird Field. About fifty curious students and the Dean of Men met us. The Dean had served with the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Korea, and most of our returning pilots had served with the 1st Air Cav

in Vietnam. The Dean noticed their patches on their right sleeves. One thing led to another and we really did get our coffee and doughnuts! After brief explanations concerning our aircraft and mission, and inquisitive inspections by the students, many of whom were Vietnam veterans, we departed for Bakersfield, California.

"We arrived in Palm Springs after low-leveling across the desert chasing coyotes and one brief fuel stop. The trip from Palm Springs to Bakersfield took us through the San Fernando Valley where the visibility dropped to one-half mile because of the smog. We followed the road, and had planned on flying through the pass, but due to bad weather and icing rotor blades we retreated to Air Force Auxiliary Field 42 at Lancaster, California.

"On our last day we flew west to the coast, and headed north. Refueling at Santa Barbara, California and Fort Ord, we turned East for Sharpe Army Depot at Stockton.

"The trip was an outstanding experience, and provided good training for our pilots by going into so many new and different airports."

ADVANCE PARTY ACTIVITIES

CW2 Glenn G Farmer and three enlisted personnel departed Charleston, South Carolina on 28 February 1969 accompanying the battery and detachment equipment to Da Nang. They spent thirty days enroute to Da Nang Harbor, RVN.

CW2 William F Pilon and SFC Christopher N Holbrook accompanied our eleven UH-1C helicopters to Da Nang aboard the ship, Petula Gulf.

Major Craig H Leyda and 1SG Oscar L Svenson led the advance party consisting of SSG Pete Reyes, Supply Sergeant; SP5 Ralph Farris, 1st Cook; SP5 Dale L Bowen, Carpenter; SP4 Albert L Pena, communications; and SP4 Paul M Mangman and SP4 Sam Bass served as "material expeditors". Much of the success of this early operational capability was due to the advanced party who arrived approximately ten days ahead of the rest of the battery. Their first night in Vietnam was an exciting one as they experienced their first rocket attack shortly after dusk at Camp Eagle. Upon arrival at Camp Evans, they quickly organized the battery area, deciding what would go where. When the main body arrived they found their hootches ready and waiting and the mess hall functioning.

The first week in May was occupied with plans for Operations Apache Snow. On 7 May 69, the forward operations base was re-located at LZ Ann. Problems at LZ Ann were the same as those at LZ Blaze with the addition of dust. It became even more serious when one of the C-models made a precautionary landing due to fuel contamination. Consequently all the ships were grounded for a day while the maintenance personnel pulled all the fuel filters in each ship and checked them. As soon as this problem was cleared up, C Battery was ready for the kickoff of Operation Apache Snow.

OPERATION APACHE SNOW

The first day of this operation, 10 May 1969, five landing zones were established along the Laotian border at the western edge of the A Shau Valley. C Battery fired the "preps" for the combat assaults and capped nearly all the LZ's. Enemy contact was made on or near two of the LZ's that day, and it was a prelude of things to come.

C Battery was the first unit to maintain a section of aircraft in the A Shau Valley overnight to react to missions in that area. A pad was constructed on FSB Currahee complete with a refueling capability and armament points. POL and armament personnel did an outstanding job in their support roles, working around the clock on many, many occasions. Many times ARA was called to react to an attack on a friendly position in the valley in the middle of the night. If further support was required, sections were launched from Camp Evans, and a "round-robin" tactic was employed so at least one section of ARA was on station at all times to provide fire for the threatened position.

To support this capability, a forward operations base was set up at FSB Currahee, and a POL crew and an ammunition crew were required in addition to the operations personnel. During a night attack on Currahee itself, both the POL dump and the ammunition storage area were destroyed. Three thousand gallons of JP-4 fuel and eleven hundred rockets were destroyed. Cleanup took several days and the final event was destruction of the damaged rocket warheads and motors.

Currahee was the forward operational base that was used by the Griffins in support of the assault on Dong Ap Bia, or Hamburger Hill as it was termed later. During this period the ARA traffic in and out of Currahee was almost steady. Close coordination between the forward operations and "rear" was a must, and all during the operation, everyone worked very hard to maintain this coordination. In the night attacks on Currahee itself, infantrymen on the perimeter even volunteered their services to help the hard-working ammo and POL sections to rearm and refuel ARA aircraft to keep them on the job with as little ground time as possible.

LZ 2 on this operation was located on the Northwest slope of hill 937 (Dong Ap Bia). It became the focal point of operation Apache Snow from 10 May 1969 until 23 May 1969 when a large enemy force was encountered by the 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry. The Griffins fired over 400 rockets on the first day and as the action on Dong Ap Bia continued, over 4,400 rockets were fired in the thirteen day period in support of the three US infantry battalions on the hill as well as one ARVN battalion.

On 12 May 1969, WO1 Carl A Rajotte, [REDACTED] and WO1 Richard W Freeman, [REDACTED], both received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 13226 and 12554 respectively) for actions in support of the 3d Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry, on Dong Ap Bia when receiving fifty-caliber antiaircraft fire, and after rearming and refueling, answered a call to Fire Support Base Airborne which was under attack by sappers shortly after dusk. The same day, Captain

John M Moore, [REDACTED], received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 8503) when he experienced a loss of power with his UH-1C helicopter, yet continued to attack the hostile force until he could no longer maintain altitude in his crippled aircraft. While enroute to a secure area the engine failed completely, and Captain Moore found himself and his crew on the ground in hostile territory and 11½ miles South of Camp Evans. The crew of the UH-1C consisted of Captain Moore, Aircraft Commander; WO1 Donald Bissson, Pilot; Specialist Four Hal Stone, Crewchief; and Specialist Four Herbert a Grisso, Door Gunner.

Major Edward J Miller, [REDACTED], earned the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12558) for actions on 12 May 1969 by going into the hostile area and picking up the crew of Captain Moore's aircraft. Major Miller's UH-1C was heavily loaded, and while on the ground draining fuel to lighten his load, he came under heavy sniper fire. He continued to drain fuel until the aircraft was able to hover, then executed the hazardous night take-off with Captain Moore and his crew safely aboard.

From 10 May 1969 to 1 June 1969, C Battery was credited with 19 enemy killed and 12 structures damaged or destroyed.

During this time changes were taking place in the battery area at Camp Evans as the heliport area was enlarged and penaprined, the aircraft hanger was completed, the road system in the area was completed, the Day Room and mess hall were improved and movies were acquired and shown. Major Thomas J Glenn, [REDACTED], assumed the Executive Officer's position on 21 April 1969.

OPERATION MONTGOMERY RENDEZVOUS

This operation was a continuation of Operation Apache Snow. Inclusive dates were 8 June 1969 to 14 August 1969. C Battery continued support in the same area of operations. The forward operations base remained at Fire Support Base Currahee. ARVN elements were supported throughout the Northern I Corps tactical area. Operational outlook was extended as visual reconnaissance missions and convoy cover missions were accepted by the Griffins, which added considerably to the flight time totals for the operation. More flight time meant more maintenance, yet the ground crews continued to keep the aircraft flying. Meals for maintenance crews and pilots often came at odd hours, so mess hall schedules were often interrupted, but mess personnel continued to provide excellent food, none the less.

On 9 June 1969, PSB Currahee received incoming mortar rounds followed by a ground attack estimated at two North Vietnamese Army Companies. C Battery reacted quickly to the attack firing counter mortar targets and direct fire missions. Logging over thirteen hours of flight time, the attack helicopters fired 390 rockets to break the attack. The UH-1C's used by the Griffins came under heavy enemy fire, yet continued to press the attack, firing in close support of the friendly forces. Receiving the Air Medal with "V" Device for their actions were Captain Daniel J Petrosky, 2/4-38-1004 (General Order 12540); CW2 Gee, Loren W. [REDACTED] (General Order 12379); and CW2 Edward G Wenner III, [REDACTED] (General Order 9723).

First Lieutenant James R Smith, [REDACTED], received the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12369) in the same action.

Earlier the same day a convoy was ambushed on Route 547, and Captain Daniel J Petrosky, [REDACTED], earned the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Order 12602) for his valorous actions in protection of the convoy while flying his aircraft low over enemy positions in order to mark them for the section of ARA aircraft arriving on station to relieve him.

14 June 1969, C Battery answered a call from FSB Berchesgaden which was engaged with an enemy ground force. The Griffins were credited with breaking the attack. The next day in the early morning hours, FSB Currahee was once again assaulted by an unknown-sized enemy force. During the attack the operations bunker was hit by a 60mm mortar shell, and the Noncommissioned Officer in charge sustained a severe head injury. Neglecting his wound Staff Sergeant Robert R Kafton, [REDACTED], continued to coordinate ARA fires until he was ordered to be medically evacuated. Sergeant Kafton received the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device (General Order 10384) for his efforts in the successful defense of the fire base. ARA was credited with breaking the attack, firing 144 rockets.

FSB Currahee came under a heavy mortar barrage on 17 June 1969. Despite mortar rounds falling all around them, the crews of the ARA ships left the safety of the operations bunker and manned their aircraft. All of the ships effected successful take-offs, and once

airborne, placed accurate rocket and machine-gun fire on the enemy mortar positions, silencing them. For their courage and determination under fire, the pilots and crewmembers were awarded the following medals: The Distinguished Flying Cross to Major Edward J Miller, [REDACTED], (General Order 12359); the Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device to First Lieutenant William H Campbell, [REDACTED] (General Order 13174); the Air Medal with "V" Device to Specialist Four Hal Stone, [REDACTED], (General Order 13227); and Specialist Four Jerry E Taylor, [REDACTED] (General Order 13224); and the Army Commendation Medal with "V" Device to CW2 Edwin D Billet, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], General Order 13158), CW2 Richard W Freeman, [REDACTED], (General Order 12997), and CW2 Thomas A Johnson, [REDACTED] (General Order 12939).

Later that evening, the ammunition dump at Currahee was set off by a white phosphorus shell. The resulting fire and explosions spread to the fuel dump. 1,100 rockets and 6,000 gallons of fuel were destroyed. During the holocaust, the pilots raced to their helicopters, started them, and flew them to safety, orbiting above the fire base to provide cover against attack. For their personal bravery, the following medals were awarded: the Distinguished Flying Cross to Captain David H Barkes, [REDACTED], CW2 Glenn C Farmer, [REDACTED]; CW2 James A Jennings, [REDACTED], WO1 Kenneth M Havran, [REDACTED], (General Orders 12497, 12498, 12360, 12496 respectively).

The priority of the Aerial Rocket Artillery was found to be quite high on "Charlie's list of targets as an attack was mounted against

ARA helicopters on C Battery's "Hot Spot" at Camp Evans the night of 23 June 1969. The enemy fired fifteen to twenty rocket propelled grenades at the helicopters just as they were shutting down. Four casualties were sustained, several helicopters were damaged and minor damage was inflicted on a few hootches.

ARA was credited with saving Phong Dien on 16 July 1969 when the District Headquarters there came under a sapper attack. Major Edward J Miller, [REDACTED], received the Distinguished Flying Cross (General Order 12467) for his valorous actions while serving as Aircraft Commander of an AH-1G helicopter. Also on 16 July 1969 the Griffins attained their 100th enemy kill since arriving in Vietnam.

Later in July, one UH-1G became the target of an enemy .50 caliber weapon. It received four hits, but no one on board was injured.

During a combat assault in the A Shau Valley on 18 July 1969, the first two troop ships into the LZ received intense ground fire, thereby disrupting the assault and leaving a small group of soldiers stranded. The ARA ships supporting the assault engaged the enemy at close range to provide close support for the stranded element. Even after the aircraft had expended their ammunition they continued to employ diversionary tactics so the landing zone would not be overrun. Awards to these crewmembers for their precise flying ability and personal bravery were: The Silver Star to CW2 Thomas P Workman, [REDACTED] (General Order 11623); and the Distinguished Flying Cross to Captain Daniel J Petrosky, [REDACTED], CW2 Roger C Sadler, [REDACTED], WO1 Steven R Wood, [REDACTED], and Specialist Four Jerry E Taylor, [REDACTED], General Orders 11623, 11925, 11609, 11611 and 11617 respectively.

On 25 July 1969, CW2 Richard W Freeman, [REDACTED], completed jungle jungle survival school at Subic Bay, Phillipines.

During a three day period in August, ARA received credit for destroying thirty hootches, seven bunkers, six sampans and one foot-bridge.

On 10 August 1969, C Battery flew sixty-one hours in support of 3d Brigade operations. Ten landing zone preparations were fired and troops in contact were supported on six occasions. On one of these contact missions on hill 937, Dong Ap Bia, Captain James T Barnett, [REDACTED], was awarded the Silver Star (General Order 197) for personal bravery when he hovered near a friendly unit in contact to mark their position while his wingman expended his ordnance on the enemy.

The second week in August was spent preparing for Operation Louisiana Lee (Division name was Richland Square).

During Operation Montgomery Rendezvous, ten aviators from C Battery graduated from A11-1G Transition School at Vung Tau. Night and weather training also continued for the pilots.

In the battery area, the aircraft hanger was completed, which helped the maintenance personnel a great deal. The mess hall and dayroom were both improved and movies were shown five times weekly with the advent of a better film program.

During Operation Montgomery Rendezvous the Griffins chalked up quite a record. The final tally shows 1,914 hours flown on 3,965 sorties. Ammunition expenditures were 21,245 2.75" folding fin

aerial rockets, 170,273 rounds of 7.62mm and 6,228 rounds of 40mm. The results of these expenditures were 53 enemy killed, 39 enemy probably killed by ARA, 1 enemy wounded, 12 sampans destroyed, 113 structures destroyed, 7 structures damaged, 1 mortar damaged, 1 AK-50 assault rifle captured, 1 footbridge destroyed, 1 122mm field gun destroyed, 1 truck destroyed and 6 secondary explosions.

OPERATION LOUISIANA LIFE

The operation dates from 15 August 1969 to 28 September 1969, and started off with the Griffins firing the "preps" on seven LZ's.

On 21 August 1969, the forward operations center was established at FSB Rendezvous on the East ridge of the A Chau Valley. Facilities for AAA aircraft were meager at Rendezvous. A small bunker for the forward operations section was constructed from used rocket boxes on the landing pad which was outside the perimeter of the fire base. This meant all the equipment used there had to be moved into the fire base itself every night. There were no provisions whatever for night operations for AAA aircraft, so night support had to come from Camp Evans. The refuel pad at Rendezvous was also located poorly in relation to prevailing winds if loaded, armed aircraft were considered.

While AAA was still operating out of Gurrahee, a rocket attack was made on the fire base on 16 August 1969. The pilots left the safety of the bunker while one crewchief prepared his helicopter for flight. Both aircraft launched as more rockets landed nearby--so close that one aircraft flew through shattered boards and debris from the blast. Once airborne, the crewchief/gunner aboard the UH-1C spotted a rocket being launched. The section engaged the target forcing the enemy to flee, and halting the attack. Cited for heroism were the following: Captain Daniel J Petrosky, [REDACTED]; CW2 Neal P Hupper, [REDACTED]; CW2 Richard W Freeman, [REDACTED]; WO1 Stephen H Scheiding, [REDACTED] and Specialist Five Roger M Olsen, [REDACTED] who each received the Army Commendation with "V" Device (General

Orders 380, 524, 378, 532, and 443 respectively).

During the extraction of a long range reconnaissance patrol West of Khe Sanh on 22 August 1969, one of the troop ships for which an ARA section was providing cover, encountered an engine failure. The section reacted immediately firing rockets into the intended landing zone of the stricken aircraft, and flying low in increasing darkness and intense rain showers to cover it until the crew could be extracted. The extraction completed, the section continued its mission in the extremely hazardous weather and returned only after the patrol had been recovered safely. Cited for valor were: Captain Daniel J Petrosky, [REDACTED], CW2 Thomas P Workman, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] CW2 Glenn C Farmer, [REDACTED], and WO1 Steven F Wood, [REDACTED] who each received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Orders 66, 305, 71 and 70 respectively).

On 23 August 1969 another long range reconnaissance patrol was extracted. As the troop ship hovered above the dense jungle and lowered ropes to the patrol they came under heavy fire. The ARA ships reacted immediately firing rockets with skill and accuracy in close proximity to the patrol and hovering aircraft. The Air Medal with "V" Device was awarded to Captain James T Barnett, [REDACTED]; CW2 John B Sorrells, [REDACTED], CW2 Billy R Hartbarger, [REDACTED], CW2 Loren L Gee, [REDACTED], WO1 Stephen H Scheiding [REDACTED]; and WO1 Steven F Wood, [REDACTED] (General Orders 300, 573, 568, 567, 69, 14462 respectively).

The next day action centered in the A Shau Valley for the Griffins

as they supported both FSB Currahee and FSB Berchesgaden. Several enemy were killed as targets were fired upon near Berchesgaden. Again early in September, Berchesgaden called for the ARA. Five aircraft were utilized to complete the mission, with the end result of several more enemy killed. Troops in contact were supported several days later and as the infantry swept the area they found some bodies and a large hootch complex destroyed.

Attempting to insert a long range reconnaissance patrol Northwest of Khe Sanh, the unarmed helicopters to which the ARA section was providing support came under intense fire. The insertion was attempted three times with the Griffins displaying outstanding courage while protecting the unarmed aircraft. The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded to Captain James T Barnett, [REDACTED] (General Order 14778) and CW2 Loren W Gee, [REDACTED] (General Order 15349).

In mountainous terrain West of FSB Vandergrift, despite nightfall, poor weather and heavy enemy ground fire, an ARA section provided very close support to a besieged long range reconnaissance patrol so that it could be extracted. Making dangerously low firing passes to cover the lift ships, the AH-1G's were highly vulnerable to enemy fire. For their outstanding display of courage in the face of intense ground fire, CW2 Edwin D Billet, [REDACTED], received the Distinguished Flying Cross (General Order 14776); and CW2 Billy R Hartbarger, [REDACTED] and WO1 Charles J Racine, [REDACTED] both received the Air Medal with "V" Device (General Orders 15009 and 299).

During the 44 days of Operation Louisiana Lee, C Battery flew 1,097 hours on 2,231 sorties firing 10,136 rockets, 130,110 rounds of 7.62mm and 9,663 40mm grenades. Results were 33 enemy killed, 20 structures destroyed, 2 pigs killed and 12 water buffalo killed.

Captain Robert E Smith, [REDACTED], assumed the duties of Battery Executive Officer on 9 September 1969. Major Thomas J Glenn departed the battery to assume command of D Company, 158th Assault Helicopter Battalion located at Camp Evans.

OPERATION NORTON FALLS

This operation was in effect from 29 September 1969 to 8 November 1969. Mai Loc, a village and small airstrip West of Quang Tri was the focal point of Operation Norton Falls. Here C Battery established their forward operations base. Ammo personnel were brought forward as well as an operations section. As the operation got underway, the Griffins covered nine combat assaults.

On 21 October 1969 an AH-1G received one .50 caliber round in the main rotor blade. No injuries were received and the ship was flown back to Camp Evans.

During this operating period, the Griffins covered the insertion and extraction of many troops. Much of their artillery fire was in support of ARVN units. C Battery also worked closely with the 2d Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, in operations along the Demilitarized Zone.

The airfield at Mai Loc was the best forward area that C Battery had seen since its arrival in-country. The POL area was excellent, until it was relocated, and a control tower was even constructed for the Pathfinders. The parking area was adequate and the rearming also proved workable. C Battery's hard-working ammo people were always on the pad ready to re-arm the incoming ships. Night operations were possible as lights were set up on the runway each night and a non-directional beacon was erected. The Griffins spent many nights at Mai Loc, though few missions came down after dark.

Training for weather flying was increased during this period.

Classes were held on all phases of instrument flight and practical experience in the form of hood flights, ground controlled approaches and automatic direction finder approaches. Lists of frequencies for the various radar facilities in the area were provided to the pilots. All in all the training was comprehensive and proved very valuable on isolated occasions.

Demonstration classes to the infantry maneuver battalions were expanded to more thoroughly acquaint them with ARA so they could more fully utilize the potential at their disposal.

WO1 Steven F Wood, [REDACTED], completed jungle survival school at Subic Bay, Philippines and passed on survival information to the pilots at informal discussions.

Ammunition expenditures during this operation were 8,192 rockets, 98,150 rounds of 7.62mm and 7,518 rounds of 40mm grenades. A total of 730 flying hours was recorded on 1781 sorties. Surveillance included 14 enemy killed, 31 structures destroyed, 2 sampans destroyed, 1 ferry destroyed, assorted automatic weapons and small arms captured (including one 60mm mortar), and 3 secondary explosions.

During this operation there were two major changes in the chain of command. Major Craig H Leyda, [REDACTED], assumed the position of Battery Commander on 3 October 1969. Captain Robert E Smith, [REDACTED] departed the battery on 23 November 1969 to assume command of Headquarters Battery, 101st Airborne Division Artillery at Camp Eagle, and Captain Henry C Miller Jr, [REDACTED], became the Executive Officer on 24 November 1969.

OPERATION REPUBLIC SQUARE

Inclusive dates on this operation were 9 November 1969 to 6 December 1969. C Battery continued its general support-reinforcing role to the 3d Brigade. During the first portion of this operation the Griffins worked out of Mai Loc, but later returned to Camp Evans with no forward operations base.

The early part of November, C Battery supported the 1st Battalion, 5th Mechanized Infantry near the Demilitarized Zone. ARVN units were also supported in this same area and elsewhere in the area of operations. Several enemy killed were credited to the Griffins in these actions.

On the 1st of December an artillery raid was conducted and many hootches and bunkers were destroyed. Two days later the 200,000th rocket was fired by ARA while attacking an NVA 5-ton truck. CW2 Edwin D Billet fired the rocket in the vicinity of Khe Sanh Valley.

Instrument flight training continued during this operation. Two aviators renewed Standard Instrument Qualifications and continued to provide instruction to other aviators in the unit.

Summary for Operation Republic Square shows the following totals: 636 flying hours were logged on 1,386 sorties; 6,249 rockets, 86,850 rounds of 7.62mm, and 8,261 rounds of 40mm grenades were fired; Results were 7 enemy killed, 49 structures destroyed, 9 structures damaged, 2 water buffalo killed, 2 elephants killed, 1 5-ton truck destroyed and 7 secondary explosions recorded.

OPERATION RANDOLPH GLENN

This operation began 29 December 1969 and is presently in progress. The kick-off date is so near the beginning of the new year that this operation will be covered in the next annual supplement.