

Mike: As background, I was Maintenance Officer for the 93rd at Ft Devens, until the company went to Vietnam. (I was one of those selected to go to Germany, on what was then called the Berlin buildup.) Approximately thirty days after I arrived in Germany the 93rd left for Vietnam). I was Maintenance Officer for the 91st at Finthen Army Airfield, when the combined helicopter companies in Germany, had a fly by of one hundred helicopters near Munich. (A first for Army aviation.) (I believe it was in 1963). I was also Maintenance Officer for the 41st battalion until I rotated to the 11th Air Assault Division in 1964. I knew many maintenance officers and pilots who were in country before during and after the Cav arrived, and from what I heard the size of the assaults etc., were on a much smaller scale than the Cav's; at least until the end of 1966.

Your comment about remembering that people were shocked at the aircraft damage, accident and loss rates in the first half year comes as a real surprise to me. I suspect there was a lot of rumors and or misinformation floating around. The Cav certainly did receive battle damage that probable exceeded any thing that had been seen in theater before, but you have to remember that we were operating as a division with a lot more aircraft than the average helicopter company. Certainly there were accidents, but I doubt if they were any worse on a percentage basis than any other unit. I will mention a couple of accidents in my narrative.

We were operating day and night in unfamiliar terrain in a hostile area, and like the original H21 Companies, did not have the advantage of new people being integrated with those who had in country experience. (who knew the territory etc.) I believe that the pure accident rate was a lot higher when I returned to the Vietnam in 1969.

**THIS NARRATIVE IS WRITTEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AND AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE OFFICER, NOT AN OPERATIONAL PILOT. I AM ALSO LOOKING BACK ALMOST THIRTY SEVEN YEARS, AND AM WRITING ABOUT "B" COMPANY OF THE 15TH T.C. BATTALION ONLY .**

**Narrative**

We arrived at An Khe O/A 09/01/65 with 210 enlisted men and 21 officers in mid afternoon. Our home for the next twelve months was about eight hundred yards deep and four hundred yards wide. The area for parking and working on aircraft was about half that size, and faced the inside of the golf course. Initially we had only what each individual carried. The rest of our equipment arrived in Conex Containers.

"B" Co. was in direct support of the 229th and also the OV1 Mohawks. To support the Mohawks we had additional Conex Containers filled with electronics gear, and a number of civilian tech reps. We also had the additional mission of recovering downed aircraft, that were not recovered by the owning unit.

Clearing an area that had been inhabited by snakes, tarantulas, scorpions and large ant hills was no easy task with hand tools. For reasons that I no longer remember we could not dig latrines, so all human waste had to be burned. Any one who was with the Cav while at Camp Radcliff, will never forget burning time; especially when the wind was from the wrong direction. Nor will they forget living on Korean war C-Rations.

At first we lived in pup tents, but later moved into larger ones. One of my most vivid memories of the first year was watching the Huey's load combat troops and head to the operational areas. We would watch them take off knowing that we would soon be receiving battle damaged helicopters.

An Khe was between Qui Nhon and Pleiku along the Mang Yang Pass surrounded by some pretty dense jungle. Shortly after arriving a Huey took off in marginal weather and crashed within minutes. To the best of my knowledge it had not been found when I rotated. An Airforce C123 loaded with troops returning to An Khe from an operation, struck the top of the mountain ridge on the eastern approach to the golf course killing all on board.

We arrived well stocked with spare parts but were forced to do a lot of cannibalizing before the pipe line caught up with our needs. Our biggest problem was learning to maintain helicopters outside in the heat, humidity, dust and during the rainy season, which started not long after we arrived.

"B" Co. recovered numerous battle damaged aircraft, mostly Hueys. On one occasion, one of our hook up

men volunteered for a particularly dangerous extraction at night in a hot area. During the hookup he was illuminated by the search light of the recovery helicopter and was the target of numerous snipers. He was later awarded the silver star. To my knowledge that was the highest valor award received by any member of the 15th T.C. during the first year in country.

"B" Co. did not have an accident of any kind during it's first year in Vietnam and to the best of my recollection neither did the 15th Battalion, in spite of flying hundreds of test flights (a good many of which were done at night) numerous resupply missions, and direct support missions, as well as many recovery's. We did have casualties from rocket and perimeter attacks, and suffered a friendly fire KIA, when a 105 short round fired from inside of the golf course impacted on our area of the perimeter.

Mike: I know that this is a little misjointed, but feel free to rearrange or use any part that you want. I would ask though, that you not put words in my mouth.