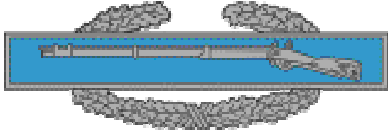


ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association



March, 2008

Cover Page

FROM THE TC HATCH

Jimmy Segars, President

Greetings from our home to yours. Speaking of home, it's strange how the paths of military personnel often cross, especially in the least expected places—in this case my own hometown area. A few weeks ago I was in a local restaurant and wearing my 1/50th shirt and hat. A gentleman approached me and asked how I was connected with the 1/50th. In the course of our conversation, I soon learned that I was speaking to a man who was a soldier who fought with and under Hal Moore in the renowned battle in Ia Drang Valley in Vietnam in 1965. We all feel a connection with Hal Moore, not only through the movie *WE WERE SOLDIERS* and having become familiar with where it was filmed at Ft. Benning, but more importantly with Moore and his bravery and contribution to the heritage of the First Cav to which our unit was attached during part of our deployment in Vietnam in 1967-68.

The gentleman further explained that he was wounded during the battle. The fact that he survived is a miracle in itself and a tribute to the bravery and character of the men who served in Vietnam. We are very thankful for such men. And to think that he has lived and worked near me all this time.

In June, there will be a change of command at Ft. Benning. Let us not neglect to remember the fine job done by LTC Paul Humphreys. Our Association appreciates all that he has done to make us feel a part of the military at Ft. Benning. LTC Humphreys, we wish you well. To the new commander, you have our continued love and support.

It is not too soon to start making plans to attend our 2009 reunion at Ft. Benning. As usual, you don't want to miss a thing. Thanks and have a great Easter!



Donut Dolly

She and other, patriotic and adventuresome women were known as Donut Dollies. Their job was to provide "a touch of home in a combat zone." They brought doughnuts, coffee, games, Kool-Aid and a respite from thinking about the war to men in the field.

In 1962, the Red Cross sent its first paid field staff to Vietnam to assist the growing number of servicemen at various bases and hospitals. At the height of its involvement in Vietnam in 1968, 480 field directors, hospital personnel, and recreation assistants served throughout Southeast Asia.

Five Red Cross staff members gave their lives, and many others were injured as they helped servicemen resolve personal problems or get home when emergency leave was granted due to death or serious illness in the immediate family.

IN MEMORY

Henry J. Quint

**PLEASE REMEMBER THIS
FAMILY IN YOUR PRAYERS**

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FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Ron Leraas

I hope this edition of the newsletter finds you all well and anticipating next year's reunion.

I don't have any central theme this time -- just a couple of observations:

Sometimes, things have a way of repeating themselves. I consider myself lucky (in a rather perverse way) that I came back to the World in a Medevac plane rather than a Freedom Bird, mainly because I was spared the mistreatment many received when returning through Oakland. I thought most of that idiocy had died out years ago, but here's a story from Chicago --

Marine Sergeant <name omitted> is on orders to Iraq when an anti-military lawyer vandalized his car. The Marine shows exceptional restraint and calls the police rather than taking matters into his own hands. It turns out the damage amounts to \$2400.

The lawyer offered to pay the deductible (\$100) and have the Sergeant's insurance cover the damages. The Illinois state's attorneys tried to coerce the Sergeant into accepting the offer by stating that it was not worth pursuing felony damages because they don't have the time and it would be difficult to recover damages from a lawyer. The Sergeant agreed with the state that probation for the lawyer would be fair, which the lawyer promptly declined, saying, "I'm not going to make it easy on this kid."

Then, there's the other extreme. Remember, in our era, how judges seemed to relish offering a choice of an Army enlistment in lieu of a prison term?

A California judge rejected a foster teen's request for early enlistment with the Marine Corps — and a \$10,000 signing bonus — on the grounds that the judge didn't approve of the Iraq war. "The judge said she didn't support the Iraq war for any reason we're over there," Marine recruiter Sgt. <name omitted> stated. "She just said all recruiters were the same — that they 'all tap dance and tell me what I want to hear.' She said she didn't want him to fight in it."

I am a member of a couple of online competitive shooting Forums, where most of us have some sort of cute signature line on our posts. So, the Forum moderators ran a short contest to identify the "best" signature line. The winner --

A veteran is someone who at one point in his, or her life, wrote a blank check made payable to "The United States of America," for an amount of "up to and including my life".

While on the subject of personalized signature lines, check out this website: <http://militarysignatures.com/>. You can use it to make a personalized graphical signature line for your e-mails or web postings. When I last checked, it was still free.

And, as my last offering, I stumbled on a televised interview of a Marine who was in the hospital at Camp Pendleton, who had lost both his legs in Iraq. He was asked the inevitable question as to whether he thought his service and sacrifice was worthwhile -- he answered that he was willing to do it again if it would help make his family safe. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

HELICOPTER AIR ASSAULTS: PUTTING GROUND FORCES ON TARGET

By Pfc. Monica K. Smith - 3rd Infantry Division Public Affairs

(Editors Note: This is from the Multi-national Force Iraq 3 March newsletter; it is a view of modern air assaults from the aviator's perspective)

CAMP STRIKER — Rather than moving Soldiers on the ground through difficult terrain sometimes littered with improvised explosive devices (IED), many infantry units in the rural areas south of Baghdad opt to use helicopters to reach their targets. "Air assaults extend the abilities of the ground units," said Capt. Joshua Karkalik, commander of Company B, 4th Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment. "A lot of times the purpose of an air assault is the element of surprise, or the target is not reachable by ground either because of the terrain or because of IEDs," Karkalik said. When the call comes for these air assaults, the Black Hawks of 4-3 Avn. Regt. take the lead role in transporting the troops to their destinations, but getting Soldiers from Point A to Point B is a complicated process. The ground troop commander prepares the mission, decides what targets to hit and then works with his aviation representative to create an initial concept of the operation where they lay out what they want, how many people they are trying to move and where they are trying to go.

During the first meeting with the aviators, the Aviation Mission Coordination Meeting, aviators look at the ground commander's intent and try to create an arrangement that would facilitate his plan. With a plan in place, the aviators present it to the ground commander during an air mission brief. "This is the 'good idea' cutoff point," said Chief Warrant Officer Joshua Gunter, Co. B, 4-3 Avn. Regt., from River Fall, Ala. "This is where we tell the ground units, 'This is what the aviation unit can give you,' and we finalize the plans," he said. Finally there is an air crew brief, a detailed brief describing all events and actions down to the second, including show times, landing times and even who calls for refueling when the aircraft return. "We get detailed because air assaults are the most difficult," said Karkalik, a Jasper, Ind., native. "There are so many variables included. Everything can change. There are a lot of elements, a lot of moving pieces. What seems to be a simple mission can become complex," Karkalik said.

(continued on page 3)

HELICOPTER AIR ASSAULTS (continued from page 2)

A conditions check is performed on the night of the mission, which includes weather reports and a preflight inspection of the aircraft and equipment. The infantry unit is picked up, and an operations and intelligence report is conducted to keep all Soldiers, both aviation and infantry, on the same page. "Sometimes the information is three or four days old and we need a refresher to make sure we all have the same information based off the current and correct details," Karkalik said.

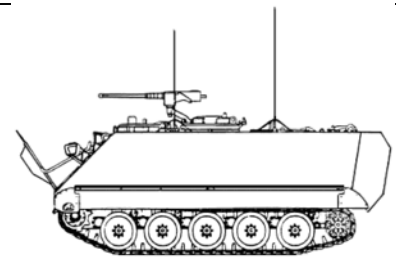
During the mission each person has an assigned job. The flight leaders get the Soldiers to the target on time, while the air mission commander looks at the big picture and makes decisions in case of contingencies. "With multiple aircraft trying to land and take off in one area, it can be very difficult," said Karkalik. "That is, unless you're Bravo Company."

Since deploying to Iraq, 4-3 Avn. Regt. has conducted more than 160 air assaults with Company B. The sheer numbers mean they've gained experiences they can apply to other missions. "With the experience we learned out there with other units, we are able to apply them to new missions," Karkalik said. "The ground units have come to expect (aviators) to provide input on the aviation side such as with landing heading and which way they should exit the aircraft." The aviators' expertise helps the infantry Soldiers catch their enemies unaware. "It gives the ground troops the element of surprise. It doesn't give the enemy a chance to run because we're there and they have nowhere to go," said Spc. Rolando Rodriguez, Company A, 4-3 Avn. Regt., from Barstow, Calif. "They're being blocked off to the north and south and we have Lighthorse (Kiowa Warriors from 3rd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment), and Vipers (Apaches from 1st Battalion, 3rd Aviation Regiment) keeping watch overhead. We're there and we're quick; there's nothing really to it," Rodriguez said.

Despite the hard work involved, many aviators say air assaults are the most enjoyable of their missions. "(Air assaults) might get tough but you never get bored," said Chief Warrant Officer Joel Fonseca, Co. B, 4-3 Avn. Regt., from Salem, Mo. "Everything happens quickly and the missions are so different you are always doing something new... and it's not as mundane as VIP missions," Fonseca said. Gunter says he enjoys air assaults because of the direct impact they make on the enemy. "They know that at any given night we can land in their backyard and snatch them," he said. "It's got to be a humbling experience to be 'Mr. Big and Bad' and then it changes really fast."

EVOLUTION OF THE M113

M113 Armored Personnel Carrier - The original M113 Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) helped to revolutionize mobile military operations. The vehicles were able to carry 11 soldiers plus a driver and track commander under armor protection across hostile battlefield environments. More importantly, the new vehicles were air transportable, air-droppable, and swimmable, allowing planners to incorporate APCs in a much wider range of combat situations, including many "rapid deployment" scenarios. The M113s were so successful that they were quickly identified as the foundation for a family of vehicles. Early derivatives included both command post (M577) and mortar carrier (M106) configurations.



M113A1 Armored Personnel Carrier - The first major upgrade came in 1964 with the introduction of the M113A1 package which replaced the original gasoline engine with a 212 horsepower diesel package. The new power train was soon incorporated into the existing vehicle family as the M113A1, M577A1, and M106A1, as well as several new derivative systems. Some of these new derivatives were based on the armored M113 chassis (the M125A1 mortar carrier and M741 "Vulcan" air defense vehicle) while others were based on an unarmored version of the chassis (including the M548 cargo carrier, M667 "Lance" missile carrier, and M730 "Chaparral" missile carrier).

M113A2 Armored Personnel Carrier - Continuing modernization efforts led to the introduction of the A2 package of suspension and cooling enhancements in 1979. As with previous enhancements, these upgrades resulted in further proliferation of the FOV.

M113A3 Armored Personnel Carrier - Most of the M113 family that saw service during Desert Storm were underpowered A2 level vehicles. M113A3 that were in the conflict kept pace with the Abrams equipped maneuver forces. Since 1987 the PM office has been modernizing the M113 fleet to the A3. Today's M113 fleet includes about four thousand M113A3 vehicles equipped with the most recent A3 RISE (Reliability Improvements for Selected Equipment) package. The standard RISE package includes an upgraded propulsion system (turbocharged engine and new transmission), greatly improved driver controls (new power brakes and conventional steering controls), external fuel tanks, and 200 AMP alternator with 4 batteries. Additional A3 improvements include incorporation of spall liners and provisions for mounting external armor. The M113A3 is a full-tracked armored personnel carrier that provides protected transportation and cross country mobility for personnel and cargo. A light armored vehicle weighing 27,200 pounds, it carries 11 infantry personnel in addition to the vehicle driver and track commander. It is capable of sustained speeds of 41 mph on level roads and accelerates from 0 to 35 mph in 27 seconds (this compares to 69 seconds for the M113A2).

Modifications for Iraq - Modified versions of the Vietnam War ACAV sets have been deployed to Iraq for installation on the current M113 series vehicles in use. An improved circular shield turret deployed to Iraq, and such vehicles have been utilized without the 2 rear stations. However, they reportedly are modified with armor to protect the Track Commander (TC) position and are NOT employing the two rear left and right machine gun stations.

The M113 has relatively light armor, but is being augmented with reactive armor, add-on plates, and RPG standoff cages ("slat armor"). Windowed gun shields developed by an armorer in Iraq are reminiscent of ACAV vehicle modifications so effective in Southeast Asia (Vietnam War). Band tracks to replace the high maintenance, road damaging steel tracks are in use by Canadian and other forces.

(continued on page 4)

CHAPLAIN'S

Parker Pierce

O Hello to all: I pray that everything is well with all of you 1/50th vets and your families. It's hard to believe we are already in the third month of the new year. As I mentioned in the December newsletter, 2007 brought forth a lot of emotional highs and lows for all of us. My year had been very positive until the last month of the year, because on December 23 in the early a.m. I got word from Atlanta that my father had passed away! That was a Sunday morning and I had talked with him on the prior Wednesday night and he was in an excellent state of mind - witty as always. My Dad made his appointment with eternity on that Sunday morning - please read Hebrews 9:27. Each of us has that appointment to keep! My Dad I know was spiritually ready for that eternal encounter, because he at one time in his life had asked the Lord Jesus Christ into his life - please read Romans 10:9-10. I'm forever grateful for that because I know I'll be with him again one day. He was a special guy in my life in many ways other than being my father. He was a friend and man that taught me many great lessons and truths about life. He was a man of integrity and character and I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for having such a Dad. He taught me how to treat all people fairly and with honesty, and to always do my part. He was the hardest working man I ever worked with or knew. He worked a full day on the Thursday before the Lord took him on Sunday! So, even though we will miss him a lot my Mother, my sister, his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren, and I were blessed to have him healthy and with a good mind for ninety-one years, eleven months and thirteen days - what a blessing from God!! In closing I want to thank each of you who will read this tribute to my Dad to consider what was said and most definitely be ready for that appointment! May the Lord continue to bless each of you and your family members, and I know we all will be in prayer about the upcoming presidential election - another critical time for our country. Also, continue to pray for our President, our military, and our entire nation - we need REVIVAL!! God bless.

HISTORIAN'S REPORT
JIM SHEPPARD

Since our Christmas Newsletter, I have made 3 trips to the National Archives Records Administration in College Park, Md. I have copied approximately 1500 pages of new documents from January through May of 1970. I estimate this to be about 1/3 of what remains to be copied for 1970 & these new items will be the main content for a third Document CD, set for sale beginning at the next (2009) reunion.

I continue to monitor various outlets on the Internet for items of interest for our Archives. Within the past two months, I have obtained a 1965 Field Manual on Booby Traps, a 1969 Field Manual on Jungle Operations, and an original 50th Infantry Regiment Thanksgiving Dinner Menu from Germany in 1921!

EVOLUTION OF THE M113 (Continued from page 3) - Most of the M113s which are still in service have been upgraded. However, they are still lightly protected compared to modern APCs or IFVs such as the M2 Bradley or IDF Achzarit. Those larger vehicles cannot be transported in a C-130 plane so it may be argued that their capability to be air-deployed provides an advantage over more heavily armored vehicles. A fervent pro-M113 community has developed due to the versatility of the platform.

The M113 has also been adopted to replace the aging fleet of visually modified (vismod) M551s being used to simulate Russian-made combat vehicles at the US Army's National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California. These M113s, like the M551s they replace, have also been modified to resemble enemy tanks and APCs, such as the T-80 and BMP-2.

A huge number of M113 Armored Personnel Carrier variants have been created, ranging from infantry carriers to nuclear missile carriers. The M113 Armored Personnel Carrier has become one of the most prolific armored vehicles of the second half of the 20th century, and continues to serve with armies around the world into the 21st century. Not without its faults, the otherwise versatile chassis of the M113 has been used to create almost every type of vehicle imaginable. Few vehicles ever created can claim the application to such a wide range of roles.

The future M113A3 fleet will include a number of vehicles that will have high speed digital networks and data transfer systems. The M113A3 digitization program includes applying appliqué hardware, software, and installation kits and hosting them in the M113 FOV.

HARRY B. WILSON

A report on both memories and a return in September 2007 to Dinh Binh Province, and some battlefields there; including An Bao (5 May 68), Thuan Dao (2 Mar 68), and 18 Jan 68.

Many thanks to Harry for his submission to the newsletter. However, due to the length of his interesting narrative, it will be necessary to divide his report into several parts that will be included in future newsletters.

Almost forty years ago, I served as an Infantry soldier with the US Army in Vietnam in the Tet year of 1968. In September 2007, I went back as a tourist. I write of both trips here. I hope, like my fellow vet Dick Guthrie who did the same thing, that what I write helps brings closure, both for me and those who read this, who see the photographs, and who also fought there, often desperately. The experience of fighting desperately and closely is the defining characteristic of combat infantry (including Marines). Perhaps some measure of closure may come also to those who are survivors of those who did not come back from that time. There were many.

At the very beginning, I say that finding the places I did, and putting together some of these old memories, would not have been possible without the very fine work that our Association Historian Jim Sheppard has done. Just getting good, high definition topographical maps of Vietnam is a real issue, to say nothing of having daily and radio logs, after action reports, histories written in real time, rosters, etc. Jim's work was invaluable for this trip. I could not have done this return trip in the way I did without Jim's work. I also want to thank COL Dick Guthrie for his encouragement to go and to get deep into it, such as interviewing COL Binh Ba Loc, our Viet Cong counterpart from that past time. And I thank the many members of the 1st of the 50th Infantry Association, who provide much support and encouragement also.

In what follows, I weave the old and the new, both 1968 and 2007. In 2007, I was traveling with my wife Ann and old friends Steve and Carol Higgins. Steve is also an Army veteran. He was with the Phoenix program working with the ethnic or Mnong tribes around Buon Me Thuot (Ban Me Thuot in our days) in the Central Highlands in 1969 and 1970.

I also need to say at the outset that my recollections are those of one person except where I reference others or records that Jim has collected. My experience from reunions is that all of us have different perspectives, all of which are valid. In battle, perspective can change by a few feet in distance, by role, by access to radio and what channel, and by any other number of things.

My service in Vietnam started with initial orders to the 1st Cavalry Division in late December 1967, and then immediate assignment to the 1st of the 50th. (Mech) Infantry. In very early January 1968, I succeeded Bob Driscoll as the Platoon Leader of 3rd Platoon, C Company, a position I held until mid-June 68. The Company COs in this period were CPT Herb Randall, who rotated in 2/68, CPT Jay C. Copley, who was CO from 2/68 until he was badly injured on 5 May 68 (I incorrectly thought until May 2007 that he died from those wounds), and 1LT John Martin. After mid-June 68, a large group of new replacements took over, as all companies were by then vastly reduced in number by casualties from battles like An Bao and rotations. But one example is that, in mid-May 68, B and C Companies were operating together with a combined strength of under 100 troopers. Later, I was the Company XO and then S-1. My platoon sergeant for a few weeks in January until wounded was SFC Wood. My squad leaders initially in Jan 68 were SGTs Norm Poage (later the Platoon Leader of the 1st Platoon under orders to have a direct commission – wounded badly in April- succeeded in 1st squad by Gerald Jablonski), Toby Hamon, Jerry Colquette, and Leon A. Jacque. The members of my platoon as of sometime in early January 1968 are listed separately. I have added names as I remember them from photos. Unfortunately, I don't have a roster as of May 1968.

Trip to the LZ Uplift Area My wife Ann and I left our hotel south of Qui Nhon very early on 20 Sept. 07, with a guide, a translator and a driver. Traveling on QL1 was chaotic, as the Vietnamese population has increased by almost three times since 1975, and the economy is starting to boom with the abandonment of the communist economic system (it's rapidly becoming a capitalist system). We saw the Cham temples on the hill near Phu Cat, which I remembered. Pic 026 (I am using only the last three digits on photos).

I started noticing differences from 1968 very shortly into the drive up to Phu My, which started me on the path to realizing two revelations to a veteran about modern Vietnam. First, the Vietnamese government has eliminated any visual landmark that would reference either the American military presence or Republic of South Vietnam government presence, except for a few bases that the present government still uses, such as Camp Radcliffe at An Khe (a restricted area now), and airports, such as Phu Cat (itself sanitized) and Da Nang. Second, there are military cemeteries and monuments everywhere along QL1. This led me, along with some reading and interviewing, to an epiphany that I will discuss further below. The short version is the NVA and VC body counts that the American command gave back then were, in fact, wrong. They were low, and likely way low.

Jim Sheppard's bmp maps of the An Bao area and the Thuan Dao area are attached with my edits to show where I went at those two locations, with notes at An Bao indicating "VP_" for about where I shot photos. Other photos have descriptions edited onto them.

At Phu My village proper, I recognized almost nothing. The guide showed me what he said was the MACV HQ (Pic 076 or perhaps the building behind it), but I didn't recognize it, nor did I recall that MACV was there in 1968. The Australian compound I recalled was not there that I saw. Phu My village itself, at the intersection of Highways 1 and 505 (which now has a traffic light), is a much larger and bustling village -- one might say a small city. There is a major military monument/cemetery there. Pic 077.

North of the Phu My intersection about 4K is the Highway 506 turnoff to the West so familiar to many of us – the infamous 506 Valley. We could not go beyond about 75 meters because of muddy road conditions. Pics 084 and 085 show this area, which was the first that I really recognized from the perspective of almost 40 years. I remembered night laagers in this area near QL1, particularly in the April 68 and 11-13 May and 25 May 68 time frame. But a very muddy road prevented us from going further. Interestingly, it was the only muddy road issue I encountered, which was not the case 40 years ago.

FROM THE EDITOR

JOHN TOPPER

As many of you know there will be a change of command ceremony at Fort Benning on 4 June at 0800 as LTC Paul Humphreys relinquishes command of the battalion to LTC Tony Bennitez. What you may not know is that two of our Association members will be honored at the battalion headquarters on 3 June at 0900. Dick Guthrie and Jay Copley will be recognized during an investiture ceremony as Honorary Colonel of the Regiment (HCOR) and Honorary Sergeant Major of the Regiment (HSGMOR), respectively. This is a high honor and both are worthy recipients of the tribute.

The tradition of Honorary Colonel and Sergeant Major go way back and are a big deal in the armies of Great Britain and her "colonies." They are also a big deal in our army and to be selected is a mark of respect to those invested in the office.

The Combat Arms Regimental System (CARS), approved in 1981, governs the selection process for all honorary positions. The purpose of CARS is to enhance combat effectiveness through a framework that provides the opportunity for affiliation, develops loyalty and commitment, fosters an extended sense of belonging, improves unit esprit, and institutionalizes the war fighting ethos.

Every battalion or squadron carries before it the colors of a particular regiment. Emblazoned on those colors are the crest and motto of the regiment, framed in the campaign streamers of past battles, which adorn its staff — battles which made our forefathers and their comrades heroes. They fought, bled, and often made the ultimate sacrifice for their brothers-in arms, unit, and country. The regiment and its traditions provide a vital link to that past and form an important tool in building unit cohesion, pride, and esprit de corps.

The 1st Battalion is charged with the responsibility of securing and maintaining the colors of the 50th Infantry Regiment. In that capacity, LTC Humphreys made the formal nomination of Dick and Jay, which were subsequently approved by the Chief of Infantry Branch at HQ Department of the Army.

The purpose of the honorary program is to provide a link with the past through the HCOR and the HSGMOR. The primary mission of the soldiers holding these honorary positions is to perpetuate the history and traditions of the regiment, thereby enhancing unit morale and esprit. This, in turn, helps the commander develop loyalty and commitment in his troops, fosters a sense of belonging, and institutionalizes the war fighting ethos. The HCOR and HSGMOR are credible sources who have lived through the regiment's storied history and can relay their feelings and experiences.

All Honorary Colonels are retired commissioned officers in the rank of colonel or above with former service in the regiment. The Honorary Colonel's duties include: service as a liaison between the regiment and regimental associations, attending regimental functions and command ceremonies, participating in award ceremonies, speaking on the regiment's history and traditions at dining-ins and similar functions, assisting in historical professional development programs for officers and NCOs, and presiding over regimental committees. The Honorary Sergeant Major is a retired soldier in the rank of sergeant first class or above who has former service with the regiment. The HSGMOR's duties are to assist the HCOR in perpetuating the history and lineage of the regiment and assist in maintaining an honorary program and its many aspects as listed for the HCOR.

For those interested in attending the ceremonies, I have secured a block of rooms for the nights of 2 & 3 June at the Holiday Inn North, 706-324-0231. Rates are \$78; when calling for reservations, ask for Reservation Code: 150. The point of contact at the Holiday Inn is Sophia Parker; if you need assistance she can be reached at Extension 286. (Source: AR 600-82)

HARRY WILSON

(continued from page 5)

LZ Uplift is not recognizable except for terrain features. I hiked around where I could. Everything we knew as a base area is gone, replaced with a few shops and dwellings. Duster Hill is replanted with trees and I did not even attempt to climb it. It is obscured by vegetation. I don't remember where the company areas were, except that we were on the west side of the road. Those areas are covered by brush now. See pics 088, 089, 159 and 160 looking west across QL1 in the south center of what was Uplift. All that is visible now is the Vietnamese war monument on what was, I think, 8 inch hill. Pic 164. Jim has a great aerial photo of Uplift in 68 on one of his CDs. I saved it at Pic Upliftntl. All that I saw from the old base areas was some old pavement and one old bunker east of QL1 and north of Duster Hill, where a 173rd company had a base. These are partially visible in the photos above. Pics 165, 167 and 105 are from the top of 8 inch Hill looking east at the Nui Mieu mountains. Pic 170 is looking at the west side of 8 inch Hill. Pic 153 is Duster Hill looking southeast, I think.

An Bao Next was An Bao. This was emotional, as I was there, as were some of you, and it and Thuan Dao were most on my mind going back. In fact, An Bao and Thuan Dao have been on my mind regularly for almost 40 years. To see where I went, look at my edit of Jim's bmp topo map, named An Bao edited bmp. My route is outlined in yellow, with the view points where I shot photos ("VP __s"), and my approximation of where certain events occurred (yellow letters). Hill 274 is a reference point. Keep in mind that I circulated back and forth a bit on my route.

We went into the An Bao hamlets via the dirt road shown on the map. Because of new housing and vegetation, it was almost impossible to see south until we got to VP1, where the vegetation cleared. Looking about 200-1000 meters south and east, we could see where first A Company (-) came into the battle area on 5 May 68, just west of Ichiban. This was before they got hit, but perhaps around the place where they first saw signs of enemy activity. This same area is where CPT Copley led C Company (-) through heavy fire into the battle area just short of an hour after A Company (-) got hit at 1145. This is shown in Pics 201 and 173. As I recall, this area is now less vegetated than in 1968.

(continued on page 7)

Recalling a Firefight

Harley "Mick" Hawkins

(Editors Note: This is Mick's recollection of a battle that took place in early January 1968. A copy of the after action report can be found on the Association website)

My good friend Jim Edwards told of a time he broke a crock full of rice an old woman was carrying and how bad he felt about doing it. It is amazing to me more bad things didn't happen over there than did. I think we owe a lot to our officers who kept everything in check and made sure villagers were not harmed.

Thinking of this I was reminded of a running battle we had with the V.C and NVA in early January 1968.

As I try to remember things 40 years ago it really stresses my brain to remember exact things like the company's that were there. I know we were D company and I know B Company was involved. At least I think it was. A company might have been but I don't think so I think one of the Cavalry units like 1/5 or 1/7 was there.

This started off as a running battle in the Dam Trao Lake area and we had worked this area many times and knew the area very well. Around the first of January we were on a mission in our APC searching for the bad guys north of the Dam Trao Lake area.

There were many small villages in the area that I do not know the name of. I never seen a city limit sign so never heard what they were as far as I know they didn't have a name. There was a large village to the south called An Loc and south of this there were mountains or a large hill and west was Dam Trao Lake. This is the area on one of the lakes where we saw some ducks and we thought it would be a great Idea to eat duck that night. I always wondered why there were so many ducks and why the villagers didn't seem to eat them. I killed two and we cooked them that night thinking it would be a good change from C-Rations. They were the worst thing I have ever eat in my life; mud tasted good compared to them ducks they were very foul tasting. I now understand why there were so many of them, with fish and sea food available, the villagers weren't going to eat these things.

We found a small V.C unit north of there and chased them south. We thought they went into a large village. I think B Company was to the west of us and they moved over to the north and we moved around to the east. One of the cavalry units was air assaulted in to the south. The area to the west (being the big lake) was covered by air.

As we moved in all hell broke loose and it became obvious we had hit a very large force that was in the village. We were ordered to move back and hold our positions and I thought what the hell we should be attacking. Leaflets were dropped in the village and the civilians were told to come out and they wouldn't be hurt. The National Police came in and checked ID's of the civilians coming out of the villages. I think a lot went north towards B Company and some came east towards us. They were mostly women and children. I remember the scared look on their faces and at this moment I was so damn proud to be an American. Someone in the heat of battle had thought to save the civilians. We stopped to let the villagers out after they were check by the national police and it really didn't take that long. We then attacked again we received very heavy rocket, small arms and machine gun fire. D Company was attacking and so was B Company. I think the cavalry unit was blocking. I was on the right M60 machine gun and I saw four NVA pushing a big machine gun on wheels out the villages and northeast. Dave Parker was on the 50 caliber machine gun and him and I knocked it out and killed the NVA. I think they were trying to flank B Company attacking from the north. Sgt. Bell told us to stop firing in that direction as B Company was somewhere over there and we did directing our fire back towards the village. Night hit us and we pulled back and set up night defenses with air and artillery pounding the area all night and putting candles up. At daylight we stayed as a blocking force and I think more cavalry units came in to attack with B Company. The NVA and VC were over run and it was now just a matter of clean up. I have no idea who thought of getting the civilian population out of harms way before we attacked, but I think God for them I know many, many innocent lives were spared. You never hear much about things like this in the reporting of Vietnam. This happened I know because I was there.

HARRY WILSON

(continued from page 6)

Going back to 1968, C Company was light a platoon when we pulled into Uplift mid-morning on 5 May 68, supposedly for a stand down after a long, hard time in the field. We got orders to mount up again after a very short period, with almost no knowledge of what we were doing other than that A Company was in trouble over Miss America. We went QL1 at top speed with CPT Copley continually radioing me (point platoon) for more speed. He was hammering for speed. Bill Roskilly (then 19 years old) remembers seeing a track with wounded coming back to Uplift. C Company then followed A Company's track trail west of Ichiban. About a kilometer in, we where hit with heavy small arms fire in heavy brush about 5-7 feet tall (I could not see this area in 2007 because of brush). My point 3rd Platoon pulled up to return fire. But CPT Copley with the command track (following the point platoon as he usually did) just kept going past us through the incoming fire – without holding up at all-- and burst out into the dry paddies, and we followed. At that point, we continued to take fire for a brief while. Jay, and then we, just drove right through a serious firefight. It was a new experience. But once in the open paddies, my memory is that incoming fire ceased while we crossed to A Company. At some point around here, I remember seeing the black smoke columns from A's burning tracks. Jeff Felder remembers this also.

With Jay's command track still in the lead for about 1.5-2 kilometers, we got to the survivors of A Company at about 1245. We arrived there almost exactly an hour after A was first hit according to the Daily Log. Bill Roskilly and Jeff Felder and others remember that the incoming was subdued or non existent when we first started to pull up to A. I do not dispute this. But almost immediately thereafter major hell broke loose in terms of incoming fire. Bill and Jeff remember that, and they remember it happening as the last of our tracks pulled in. What I remember is that all major hell broke loose, like I had never seen, and we were by then veterans of a number of significant engagements. I saw countless B-40 trails zipping through the air from both sides, and we had heavy small arms fire coming from the front and both sides. We started taking wounded almost immediately. Bill Roskilly remembers this also. Gary Quint, of A Company, recalls at or just before this moment that A Company was almost over run by NVA charging en mass with green vegetation rapped around them as cammo. Bill and Jeff remember having to jump back and forth behind paddy walls because the fire was coming from all sides.

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