This volume can be many things to many people—a book of memories, a souvenir, a pictorial essay on armmobility, or simply a story of gallant men at war. It can be many things, but one thing it is not, nor does it pretend to be—a complete history of the 1st Air Cavalry Division in Vietnam.

The task and burden of history must lie with the objectivity of future generations, far removed from contemporary pressures and restraints. It is true, of course, that much research for this book has been done from available official records, the ultimate source of written history. But even more has been drawn from the vivid recollections of the Cavalrymen who fought, tasted the brassy bile of fear, shared the fierce exultation of victory or were drenched in the dark despair of death.

This is the story of the small, close world of fighting men in action, men who even at this writing still are fighting. This volume contains the memoirs of a fighting team—THE FIRST TEAM. It is a memory of combat; no doubt it is imperfect as all memory, but nonetheless real for those who were there, for those who can fill in the inevitable gaps.

It does not presume to be more than that.
To the 1st Cavalry Division Skytrooper

Phùc Vinh
12 February 1970

Men of the Cav:

This is your story—the story of the FIRST TEAM from its reactivation at Fort Benning through the years of fighting in Vietnam. Those who worked and trained in the days of the test division at Fort Benning before coming to Vietnam will find a memory included here, too. This book is more than a history; more than an illustrated after-action report. It is the story of men, told in words and in pictures, men who have fought valiantly and who have carried the banners of the FIRST TEAM proudly to new and greater honors. It is, in effect, a book of memories.

Since the vivid recollections of a man who served in an infantry battalion differ from one who served in an artillery battalion, and because the outlook at brigade level is substantially more detailed than the view at the top, this book has been organized to give several perspectives. There is a section devoted to each battalion and separate company in the division, a section for each brigade and one for the division as a whole. I will not attempt to summarize the history contained in this book, but I would be remiss not to pay reverent respect to those fallen Skytroopers who have given their lives in the service of their country. It is to their memory that this book is dedicated. All profits from the sale of this book will go to the Education Foundation of the 1st Cavalry Division Association to provide educational scholarships for the children of our comrades who made the supreme sacrifice in Vietnam and once again paid the price of freedom.

To every Skytrooper who has faithfully served this division, it is my sincere hope that in years to come this book will stimulate reminiscences and will always serve to remind all that in Vietnam, as it was in World War II and Korea, the FIRST TEAM remained—ALWAYS FIRST!

E. B. Roberts
MAJOR GENERAL, USA
Commanding
GENERAL
CREIGHTON W. ABRAMS
COMUSMACV

GENERAL
WILLIAM B. ROSSON
DEPUTY COMUSMACV
LIEUTENANT GENERAL
THOMAS MILDREN
COMMANDING GENERAL USARV

LIEUTENANT GENERAL
JULIAN EWELL
COMMANDING GENERAL
II FIELD FORCE
1ST AIR CAVALRY DIVISION COMMANDERS

MAJOR GENERAL
HARRY W. O. KINNARD

MAJOR GENERAL
JOHN J. TOLSON

MAJOR GENERAL
JOHN NORTON

MAJOR GENERAL
GEORGE I. FORSYTHE
BRIGADIER GENERAL
GEORGE W. CASEY
ASSISTANT DIVISION COMMANDER A

BRIGADIER GENERAL
ROBERT M. SHOEMAKER
ASSISTANT DIVISION COMMANDER B
DIVISION CHIEFS OF STAFF
Colonel George S. Beatty
Colonel Herbert E. Wolf
Colonel George W. Casey
Colonel George W. Putnam, Jr.
Colonel Conrad L. Stansberry
Colonel Robert N. MacKinnon
Colonel Robert M. Shoemaker
Colonel Joseph P. Kingston

DIVISION COMMAND SERGEANTS MAJOR
Command Sergeant Major Chester R. Westervelt
Command Sergeant Major Kenneth W. Cooper
Command Sergeant Major W. O. Marshall
Command Sergeant Major Jack Moore
Command Sergeant Major Vern O. Peters
Command Sergeant Major Lawrence E. Kennedy
THE FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION

1921 - 1965
The First Cavalry Division
1921–1965

The 1st Cavalry Division was activated as a Regular Army division on September 12, 1921, under the new National Defense Act. Three days later the 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments were assigned to the division. The 5th Cavalry Regiment was assigned on December 18, 1922. Until 1932 the 1st Cavalry Regiment was assigned to the division, making the Cavalry a “square” division. In 1932 the 12th Cavalry Regiment replaced the 1st, and remained with the division until the March 1949, reorganization, when it was disbanded as the division assumed the “triangular” (three-regiment) configuration of a regular infantry division.

In addition to three of the four regiments of cavalry the original organization included the 82nd Field Artillery Battalion (Horse), the 8th Engineer Battalion (Mounted), the 13th Signal Troop, the 27th Ordnance Company, Division Headquarters and the 1st Cavalry Division Quartermaster Train, which later became the 15th Replacement Company.

Major General Robert L. Howze was assigned as the first division commander.

In 1923 the division assembled in the Camp Marfa area in Texas for its first maneuver and for the next four years was engaged in training and patrolling the Fort Bliss, Camp Clark and Camp Marfa area, again engaging in combined maneuvers in 1927.

The division engaged in maneuvers in 1936 at Camp Marfa, Texas, and in 1938 and 1939 at Balmorhea, Texas. Following the Third Army maneuvers in Louisiana in 1940, the division (less the 1st Brigade) constructed cantonments for 20,000 anti-aircraft troops at Fort Bliss and took part in the development of the El Paso Air Base.

In 1941 the entire division was assembled at Fort Bliss for extensive field training. The strength of the division was increased by the activation of the 61st Field Artillery Battalion as the first
medium support artillery of the division and the authorized personnel strength was increased from 3,575 to 10,110 men.

WORLD WAR II

In 1942, troopers of the 1st Cavalry Division were still horse soldiers. The changeover from horses to jeeps came in February 1943 when the division received orders assigning it overseas. Under the command of Major General Innis P. Swift, it arrived in Australia on July 26 and went through six months of jungle and amphibious training at Camp Strathpine, near Brisbane. Early in 1944, the division moved to Oro Bay, New Guinea, where final preparations were made for an assault into the Admiralty Islands north of New Guinea and west of the Solomons.

On the morning of February 29 a shattering naval bombardment preceded the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, as it led the rest of the regiment into Hayane Harbor on Los Negros Island. Waves of landing craft filed through a dangerously narrow channel under fire. But the location of the landings had been a surprise to the Japanese; their defenses were oriented toward the larger Seeadler Harbor on the other side of the island.

Before they could shift their concentrations eastward to meet the onrushing Cavalrymen, the Momote Airstrip and much surrounding territory was in American hands.

The Japanese infiltrated the perimeter at night and launched a series of bloody, although futile, counterattacks. But as one prong of the American advance swept northward up the Mokerang Peninsula, the other squeezed the Japanese back against their useless defenses around Seeadler Harbor, nearly annihilating one battalion. By this time, 1,400 enemy dead had been counted.

Attention then shifted to Manus Island, a much larger land mass just west of Los Negros. At its northeast corner, near the village of Lorengau, was the only airstrip in the Admiralties still held by the Japanese. At dawn on March 15 the 2nd Brigade combat team stormed ashore well west of Lorengau, supported by two battalions of artillery emplaced on tiny Cauwe Island.

Again the 1st Cavalry Division had outflanked the main Japanese line of resistance, which in this case ran along the beach directly in front of Lorengau. There were moments of fierce jungle fighting when the enemy opened fire from camouflaged pillboxes. However, by nightfall on the 17th, the 8th Cavalry had taken the airstrip. The brigade crossed the Lorengau River under fire and entered the village on the following day.

In its first fight the 1st Cavalry Division had done outstandingly well. When the Admiralties Campaign ended officially on May 18, 1944, the troopers had killed 3,317 of the enemy, while suffering casualties of less than one-tenth that size.

When the tide of war swept westward across the Pacific, the division, as part of X Corps, Sixth Army, was instrumental in liberating the Philippines. On October 20 the division’s LCV’s landed on the east coast of Leyte near Tacloban. On the 21st the troopers entered the city and began sheltering and feeding thousands of refugees.

After breaking out of Tacloban the division, now commanded by Major General Verne D. Mudge, moved northwest up the rich Leyte Valley in two prongs, aiming at the fishing town of Carigara on the island’s northern coast. Carigara fell; the valley had been cleared. However, Japanese reinforcements had landed in the Ormoc Valley on the other side of the mountain range, and were now menacing the X Corps flank from the southwest. Accordingly, the 1st Brigade advanced into the mountains.

The battle through the mountains was the outstanding achievement of the campaign. Record rains flooded the island. Supply lines were stretched to the breaking point. The Japanese were dug in on the reverse slopes of the knife-edged ridges, almost immune to artillery fire. Patrols slipped behind enemy lines, were isolated for days, fought without support, and withdrew battling for each clump of jungle foliage. But in spite of all hazards the troopers of the 5th and
12th Cavalry broke through in nearly a month of sustained heavy fighting, climaxed by the capture of Hill 2348 on December 2-3.

Meanwhile, the 7th Cavalry had been knocking out Japanese strongpoints on the fringes of the Leyte Valley and the 8th Cavalry, which had landed on the neighboring island of Samar on October 24, had been waging a brilliant campaign of its own.

At first the 8th Cavalry advanced slowly north toward Hinabangan, near a junction with the east-west road connecting Wright and Taft. Hinabangan was occupied on December 7. The troopers pushed on and captured Wright on the 13th. Then they took the left-hand fork and raced westward to Catbalogan, where they were halted temporarily by defenses on the Magbag River. Pressure against this line convinced the Japanese that they could not hold Catbalogan, and on the 19th the Cavalrymen entered the objective unopposed. Taft soon fell; by the 21st the Samar portion of the campaign was over.

When the Leyte-Samar Campaign ended the 1st Cavalry Division had eliminated 5,937 Japanese while losing 241 of its own men.

Without pause, the now battle-tested division entered the fight for Luzon and the capital city of the Philippines, Manila. It played a key role in the Sixth Army's drive to fulfill the promise General MacArthur had made three years before—to return and liberate the islands.

The FIRST TEAM landed in the Lingayan Gulf on January 27, 1945, and moved 30 miles inland to Guimba. On January 31 MacArthur gave the following order to MG Mudge: “Go to Manila. Go around the Nips, but go to Manila. Free the internees at Santo Tomas. Take Malacanan Palace and the Legislative Building.”

This meant that a flying column would have to knife through 100 miles of enemy-held territory, churn through mud, ford rivers where the bridges had been blown, fight or by-pass an enemy whose dispositions were largely unknown and crash into the defenses of a major city. Under the command of Brigadier General William C. Chase, the troopers did it in 66 hours. There was fighting at Angat, the “hot corner” at Novaliches, and other places, but on February 3 the column entered Manila. The 3,700 people who had been imprisoned in the Santo Tomas camp for three years were freed.

"First in Manila” became one of the highlights of Cav history.

By March 3rd the resistance in the capital had ceased. During the latter stages of the battle the 2nd Brigade combat team challenged the formidable defenses of Antipolo, with an aim of preventing Japanese reinforcements from reaching Manila.

MG Mudge had been wounded at Antipolo, so when the division turned south on March 21 toward the Batangas peninsula it was commanded by Brigadier General Hugh F. T. Hoffman. The XIV Corps plan of attack called for an envelopment, with the 1st Cavalry Division and the 11th Airborne Division converging on the main north-south road at Lipa.

The towns of Santo Tomas, Tanauan, and Lipa were captured in sharp fighting by March 29. Then the Cavalrymen moved east and linked up with the 43rd Infantry Division, severing all north-
southern communications. The Japanese were holed up in strongpoints, fighting when attacked but otherwise remaining fairly immobile. The Bicol peninsula was cleared in April and a stronghold at Mt. Malepunyo was slowly reduced. Around the Katapalan Sawmill in eastern Luzon the last major battle of the war was won in early May. When the campaign officially ended on June 30, the 1st Cavalry Division had accounted for 14,114 enemy dead and 1,195 prisoners.

The shooting war was over for the Cavalrymen. However, their outstanding services made them eligible for a final honor: That of being the first unit to enter the surrendered Japanese capital.

On the morning of September 8 the division marched into Tokyo, GEN MacArthur was escorted by the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry. Amid ceremonies celebrating the newly-won peace, the FIRST TEAM, which was to remain in Japan as part of the 8th Army until 1950, staged a triumphant parade, as "First in Tokyo" was entered in the proud roll of 1st Cav achievements.

KOREA

On July 18, 1950, when the 1st Cavalry Division landed at Pohang-dong, South Korea, within the rapidly shrinking Pusan perimeter, it was one-third under-strength. Supplies were scarce. But there was no time for additional preparation. The division was being deployed as part of the Eighth Army in a desperate attempt to salvage a war that had been three-quarters lost. When the troopers waded ashore from their LSTs, the Communists lined were only 25 miles away and moving closer day by day.

Under the command of Major General Hobart Gay, the division occupied the key sector of the perimeter, straddling the main road from Pusan to Seoul, the capital of South Korea. The troopers first contacted the enemy on July 22 when a probing North Korean patrol clashed with the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry.

The following morning an artillery and mortar barrage heralded the first major ground attack against the Cavalry positions. With unrelenting ferocity, the North Koreans hammered at the U.N. forces for the following month, forcing them to yield ground grudgingly but steadily. Lacking manpower, the division was forced to leave gaps in its front. The Communists infiltrated through the gaps, sometimes hiding themselves in the crowds of refugees, flanking the Allied units and maintaining offensive momentum.

However, once the Cavalrymen took up positions behind the Naktong River fronting the city of Taegu, the cumulative effects of heavy casualties and overtaxed supply lines began to tell on the North Koreans.

They succeeded in punching across the Naktong, but only at suicidal cost. An attack on August 4 against the 7th Cavalry Regiment cost the enemy 1,500 counted dead out of a force estimated at 1,700. Reinforcements bolstered the strength of the Eighth Army. Republic of Korea (ROK) units were integrated with 1st Cavalry units, and by August 28 the division was back to full strength.

September 1950, a month in which the 1st Cav had shown virtuosity in both defense and attack, ended with a quick United Nations victory apparently in sight.

On October 9, the troopers received orders to continue the advance across the border. The town of Kumchon on the road leading to the North Korean capital of Pyongyang was captured in the face of the stiffest resistance the enemy was able to mount on the entire front. The 7th Cavalry and the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade trekked some 5,000 Reds further north in the vicinity of Sariwon, assuring a triumphal entry into Pyongyang.

On October 19 Pyongyang fell and the third historic "first" for the FIRST TEAM was consummated. Pyongyang followed Manila and Tokyo in the roll of enemy capitals occupied by the 1st