COMMENDERS

MTC Robert B. Tully........................................... July 1965—December 1965
LTC Edward C. Meyer ........................................ December 1965—July 1966
LTC Reginald T. Lombard ...................................... July 1966—November 1966
LTC Robert D. Stevenson ........................................ November 1966—May 1967
LTC Joseph McDonnough ........................................ May 1967—September 1967
LTC Joseph B. Love .............................................. September 1967—March 1968
LTC Arthur Leary, Jr. ............................................ March 1968—July 1968
LTC Raymond Maladowitz ....................................... July 1968—January 1969
LTC Jerry J. Burcham ........................................... January 1969—June 1969
LTC Robert L. Drudik ............................................ June 1969—June 1969
LTC John R. Witherell ........................................... November 1969—

The main body of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, disembarked the USNS General Simon B. Buckner at Qui Nhon, Republic of Vietnam, on September 13, 1965. It proceeded by air to join the advance party which was constructing the division base at An Khe.

In October the battalion conducted Operation COBRA to clear and secure the Song Con “Happy Valley” region. November found the battalion taking part in the Plei Me Campaign in the Ia Drang Valley. The highlight of the battalion’s operations there was the November 15 blitz, both by air and march, into LZ X-Ray to relieve the embattled 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry. The “Black Knights” were rotated back to An Khe to close out 1965 securing Camp Radcliff.

The battalion took part in several operations in the beginning of 1966, but did not make significant contact until Bravo Company engaged an NVA battalion on the morning of February 17.

In that action Sergeant Gary B. Gorton, a weapons platoon squad leader, moved his mortar sections forward under heavy fire. Scrambling everywhere to see that the tubes were correctly adjusted and aimed, Gorton was a one-man dynamo as he tried to supervise the 10 men under his command. Disdaining the enemy’s concentrated fire toward his positions, he directed a heavy concentration of mortar fire that fell upon the well dug-in enemy force, causing a deadly toll. The mortar ammunition ran out, so Gorton deployed his men as riflemen and maneuvered close enough to use hand grenades against the enemy, knocking out a .51 caliber machinegun.

The sergeant was killed by a sniper before he could return to the company perimeter. Bravo was reinforced by A and C Companies, which air assaulted
Sweat-soaked clothes and steamy jungle do not keep Specialists Four John Codron and Robert E. Wilken of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, from taking this enemy B-40 rocket out of the weapons cache they found during Operation JEB STUART III.

Private First Class Stephen Hanh, an RTO with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry, informs his company commander by radio of his platoon's situation during operations northeast of Tay Ninh in III Corps.

February 11 marked the beginning of Operation PERSHING, an operation designed to search and clear populated areas from the Nui Mieu Mountains to the South China Sea, to control the use of Highways 1 and 505, and to interdict and harass the operations of the 2nd and 3rd NVA Divisions.

On the morning of March 11, Company C moved into a blocking position near the village of Phu Ninh while elements of the 40th ARVN Regiment conducted a sweep of the interior. The sweep had progressed smoothly, and at 10 a.m., Captain Don Markham, the company commander, instructed the third platoon, led by First Lieutenant Dana Gerald, to conduct a local patrol to the south to insure security to the rear. After moving about 1,300 meters from the rest of the company, Staff Sergeant John Kriedler, the platoon sergeant, spotted a man running from them down a trail. He took aim and killed him. The man turned out to be a local hamlet guerrilla armed with several hand grenades.

SGT Kriedler and Specialist Four Jose Garza continued to root around some small huts near the trail when one enemy with an automatic weapon opened up and killed the Americans on the spot. LT Gerald, located about 200 meters away, reacted quickly and brought the remainder of the platoon to the sound of the latest shots.

When he arrived, all seemed clear, but another well-concealed soldier fired and killed Gerald and four other men. The platoon took cover and contacted CPT Markham. He estimated the platoon was pinned down by one squad of VC. He could not have known that the
lieutenant had stumbled into the front door of the 18th NVA Regiment.

The regimental headquarters had occupied the high ground (Hill 82) directly south of Phu Ninh, where the initial contact had been made. About half way down the hilltop was a 600-foot long trench that was the main defense for the hilltop... filled with enemy soldiers. There were numerous boulders that served as intermediate cover positions for the enemy troops occupying the hill below the trench.

Markham moved the remainder of the company to the vicinity of the hamlet, but repeated attempts to relieve his platoon failed because of the enemy’s superior fortifications and firepower. Aerial rocket artillery (ARA) was called in to determine the enemy’s strength and location in relation to the beleaguered platoon and to neutralize their more vulnerable positions. The view from above gave CPT Markham a more conclusive picture of the enemy situation. Gunship cover allowed a seven man rescue force to crawl up to assist the pinned Skytroopers.

Descending to a small clearing below where they will begin operations, 2nd of the 5th Cav Skytroopers (upper left) watch the thick jungle below, knowing the enemy may be waiting in ambush.

Another of the battalion’s troopers jumps from the lift ship that has dropped him into a small section of Vietnam jungle real estate. The doorgunner leans forward to check tail rotor clearance.

Grinding his belly into the ground to get low, this soldier watches to his front. His platoon is moving into a suspected enemy bunker location.
While the rescue effort was in progress, Company D, commanded by Captain Richard N. McInerney, was airlifted to assist Charlie Company by establishing a blocking position to the east of their location. The plan was to effect the rescue of the platoon and then force the enemy off the hill by employing air strikes and artillery fire.

The rescue force succeeded in drawing close enough to the men in the platoon to place effective fire on the enemy positions, while each man individually crawled to safety beneath the thick underbrush.

Both of the companies pulled back slightly and fanned out to complete their blocking positions. Then Air Force fighters came on station to drop their ordnance on the hill. The action literally cast a stone in a hornet's nest—the enemy soldiers swarmed off the mountain into the hands of the two companies.

Sporadic clashes with the furious and frightened enemy erupted throughout the night.

By the following morning, the enemy units had left the battlefield, carrying their dead and wounded with them. Later, 36 bodies were found and 145 NVA were captured. A subsequent analysis of documents taken from an NVA political officer identified the unit as the 7th and what remained of the 9th Battalions of the 18th NVA Regiment. The detainees revealed that the unit was nearly wiped out.

After a period of pulling security operations, Operation LEJEUNE commenced on April 7. The battalion spearheaded a brigade task force that, at the end of only 12 days, killed 177 enemy soldiers and established two fully-operational hardtop airstrips, two major roads, plus one of the 10 busiest seaports in all of Vietnam. This operation was the first conducted with the Marines in I Corps.

Cache finds and minor incidents continued through the summer. On June 21 Alpha and Bravo Companies wiped out an enemy company which had been acting as an advance party for the 18th NVA Regiment. They had been moving into the Nui Mien Mountains.

In August Company A began working in the rockpile area in what became known as “Pratt’s Corner.” The area was named for Captain Clayton A. Pratt, who commanded Alpha Company in a two-week offensive, which destroyed the effectiveness of the 8th Battalion, 18th NVA Regiment. The campaign netted a total of 35 killed, 45 detained and 16 wounded, with 70 weapons captured.

For the remainder of 1967 the Black Knights interspersed security operations with a variety of patrols, making frequent light contacts. Intelligence gained during this period helped provide early warning of the enemy’s greatest drive of the war, the 1968 Tet Offensive.

As 1968 began, the 2nd Bn, 5th Cav, continued combat operations in the vicinity of the Bong Son coastal plain. The area was large and presented the battalion with quickly changing tactical situations, but through continuous operations and full utilization of the air-mobility concept, the enemy threat in the AO was greatly reduced. The enemy had dwindled in force from fortified regiments to small, ill-equipped, poorly motivated bands wandering about in search of survival. A few enemy soldiers were killed and several rallied to the Skytroopers.

It was a different story when in mid-February the battalion moved north to Camp Evans, just 21 kilometers from

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Within a gold horseshoe showing seven nail holes, the heels are upward and the opening between the heels is closed with a blue ribbon bearing the words “Garry Owen” in yellow letters. The crest of the regiment is azure in color. In the center a buckskin-clad hand grasps an old style United States Army sabre.

The horseshoe is symbolic of the cavalry. Its color, gold, is the color of the old United States cavalry uniform facings. It is still retained as the color of the cavalry arm.

The words “Garry Owen” are the title of an old Irish song, known and sung as the regimental song since the days of General Custer and the Indian Wars.

The arm, taken from the crest of the Regimental Coat of Arms, symbolizes the spirit of the cavalry charge. At the time of the organization of the 7th Cavalry Regiment this position of the arm and sabre was known as “Raised Sabre” and was taken at the command, “Charge”. The sabre itself is of old cavalry type used in the Indian Campaigns.

The 7th Cavalry Regiment was formed in 1866 at Fort Riley, Kansas—its ranks filled with a hard-bitten crew of trappers, war veterans and frontiersmen, many of them Irish immigrants. The influence of the Irish on the regiment is noted in its famous drinking song “Garry Owen” which the unit adopted as its own.

Until 1872 the regiment rode against the Sioux, Apaches and scattered remnants of the Cheyennes who had so decisively been defeated at the Battle of Washita in 1868. In 1874 the unit moved to the Black Hills of South Dakota to afford protection for railroad construction parties. Hoards of gold seekers and farmers followed the newly-laid tracks and the influx brought on new troubles with the Sioux. In 1876 the 7th Cavalry and its dashing leader, Brevet Major General George Armstrong Custer, joined in a concerted drive to break the power of the tribes once and for all.

In 1877 the regiment returned to action against the wildest of all Indian generals, Chief Joseph of the Nez Perces. During a bloody four-day battle the might of the great chief was broken.

By 1906 the regiment had served two tours of duty in the Philippines and in 1916 joined the Mexican Punitive Expedition. It returned to Fort Bliss, Texas, and remained there until it was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division on September 13, 1921.

The unit had been decorated with the Presidential Unit Citation, streamer embroidered YONCHON, KOREA (1st Battalion cited); the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, streamer embroidered October 17, 1944, to July 4, 1945; the Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation, streamer embroidered WAEGWAN—TAEGU; the ROK PUC, streamer embroidered KOREA; and the Chryssoun Aristion Andrias (Bravery Gold Medal of Greece), streamer embroidered KOREA.

In Vietnam the 1st Battalion has been awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm for heroism in the Ia Drang Valley November 14, 1965. Both the 1st and 2nd Battalions share with the division the Presidential Unit Citation for gallantry in the Pleiku Campaign, October 23 to November 25, 1965.

Watching Air Force bombers in the hands of today’s Rickenbackers, Scotts and Mitchells is an exciting experience, one which draws the attention of even the veterans of several months in the field. Troopers of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, while they had the chance at LZ X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley, take such an opportunity.
In August, 1965, the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, sailed for South Vietnam, arriving at Qui Nhon on September 18. The battalion warmed up to its first decisive engagement when the Cavalrymen entered the Plei Me area in Operation SILVER BAYONET on November 9. On the morning of November 14, 1965, the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, met its rendezvous with destiny.

The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harold G. Moore, received the mission to air assault into a location near the Chu Pong Massif to conduct search and destroy operations. Bravo Company was on the ground at LZ X-Ray one mile north of the Massif by mid-morning.

But by the time the slicks returned with their fifth load of troops, LZ X-Ray was ablaze with enemy fire. Bullets ripped into Major Bruce P. Crandall’s chopper, killing three infantrymen and wounding three. However, by the time the LZ got too hot for further flights, the bulk of the battalion was on the ground. The tactical situation was that some of the NVA field assault elements had been using the Chu Pong Massif as a base and were staging for an offensive when COL Moore’s battalion landed in their midst.

Alpha Company, commanded by Captain Ramon A. Nadal II, landed on the LZ and its first platoon, led by Second Lieutenant Walter J. Marm, fanned out. COL Moore ordered Captain John D. Herren’s Bravo Company to move up to the fingers of a slope to avoid any ambush in the draws. At the H-Plus-1 hour Bravo Company ran into stiff enemy resistance and one of its platoons found itself cut off and tangling with an entire NVA company. In a hellish confrontation that lasted 20 hours, the 40 man platoon was reduced to a few wounded survivors. The enemy lost 72 dead. Bravo Company was forced to pull back.

Meanwhile, LT Marm was on his own and ordered his men to withdraw. At the base of the hill, Marm received orders to go up the slope to relieve the surrounded Bravo platoon. Sniper fire rang out, but LT Marm’s platoon moved forward under an umbrella of artillery and aerial rocket artillery fire.

The rigors of the three-day-long battle at LZ X-Ray show on the face of this 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, trooper as he and other Garry Owen soldiers inspect Communist weapons captured during the fierce fighting.
Marm moved slowly up the hill, firing short bursts from his M-16. He dashed across to the right flank where his men were receiving extremely heavy fire. Suddenly three North Vietnamese soldiers emerged from the brush. Marm whirled and emptied his weapon at them.

The attacks came in waves, and LT Marm moved from one position to another held by his platoon. It was late afternoon when Platoon Sergeant George B. McCulley, Jr. and the machinegun teams appeared on the scene. With a platoon from Bravo Company that also had worked itself up an adjoining slope, the Skytroopers battled the well-entrenched enemy. Marm ordered walking casualties back down the hill.

"We're surrounded, lieutenant," reported Sergeant Charles P. Tolliver, a squad leader, when he returned back up the slope with several wounded men. Enemy troops had slipped behind the platoon.

Marm concentrated on the platoon's immediate problem, a seven foot bunker which had pinned down his men. One trooper crawled over to Marm with a light-weight anti-tank weapon. Marm triggered the LAW which obliterated the left side of the bunker, but the machinegun continued to blast away at the platoon.

"Hold your fire!" Marm shouted. Jumping to his feet, the pintsized officer dashed toward the bunker, yanking the pin from a grenade. Dodging the enemy fire, he pitched the grenade through the gun port and hit the ground. The grenade exploded and Marm rushed around the left side of the bunker, jabbed his M-16 into the entrance and triggered off a long burst. Then he scrambled back to the side of the bunker and gestured for his men to move up.

"On the double!" he yelled, just as an enemy bullet slammed into the left side of his jaw and drilled through his mouth. A medic ran up and administered first aid.

Alpha Company plunged ahead, thanks to LT Marm's act of bravery for which he was later awarded the Medal of Honor—the 1st Air Cavalry Division's first in Vietnam.

In the two days that followed, the battalion again engaged the NVA, during which time it drove back four human wave attacks.

During the fierce three day battle to gain ground from the enemy, the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, and supporting units were credited with killing 834 NVA, with approximately 1,215 more North Vietnamese regular forces either killed or wounded by supporting arms.

For their courageous fighting and decisive victory over the enemy forces, the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, was awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm on August 22, 1966, by General Cao Van Vien, the chief of the Joint General Staff, Republic of South Vietnam Armed Forces.

In January 1966, the battalion worked as barrier defense at Camp Radcliff in An Khe. The period from the end of January through February was spent on operations MASHER and WHITEWING in the northeastern sector of Binh Dinh Province.

The battalion operated around the Chu Pong Mountains in April, participating in Operation LINCOLN/MOSBY, and returned to find a more peaceful LZ X-Ray. During June the battalion secured Highway 19 from its junction east of the An Khe Pass to Mang Yang Pass in the west.

In July the battalion participated in Operation HENRY CLAY around Dong Tre and Chung Son.

Then came PAUL REVERE, and once again the "Garry Owens" were back in the Ia Drang.

Soon after noon on August 8, 1966, A Company made contact with a large enemy force in the Ia Drang Valley. The third platoon was on point and made the initial contact with several NVA. They aggressively pursued and were immediately hit by several heavy and light machineguns, cutting them off from the rest of the company. Reinforcements were requested, and B and C Companies were air assaulted east of the contact area. In the meantime, the third platoon made its way back to link up with the main body company, aided by several individual acts of heroism.

Sergeant Major Richard Schaaf was
Platoon Sergeant Francisco Roig led the platoon to safety while personally beating off several attacks on his beleaguered men.

Once in the company perimeter, artillery was effectively placed on the enemy. Several human wave attacks by the Communists were beaten off, largely through the efforts of two valiant machinegunners, Private First Class David Frederick and Private First Class George Hamilton, who fired with deadly effectiveness until their guns were put out of action.

Captain Robert A Wands, the company commander, was wounded and First Lieutenant Jeffery White, the executive officer, took command. Although wounded himself, he rallied the unit to beat off the attacks. The wounded were taken care of by Private First Class Elvin L. Polk, who moved from man to man to give aid during the attacks, even going outside the perimeter to gather additional medical supplies.

Shortly after 3 a.m., with more reinforcements enroute, the enemy force broke contact and fled. The three companies then set up a perimeter for the night. Darkness prevented a search of the battlefield but the enemy casualty figures were estimated to be at least 65 killed.

In September the battalion once again became responsible for barrier defense at Camp Radcliff at An Khe.

Operation THAYER II lasted from October through the end of 1966. During this operation the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, operated in the Phu My District, working off many landing zones in the area.

January and February of 1967 were spent in Operation DAZZLEM securing Highway 19. From the end of February to the beginning of October the battalion took part in Operation PERSHING, working across the Bong Son Plains and in the An Lao Valley.

Throughout October 1st Bn, 7th Cav, chased the NVA up the South China seacoast, twice killing more than 100 men in a single day.

On October 27, 1967, the battalion began offensive operations against an enemy command post and hospital complex west of LZ Baldy, near the South China seacoast and Highway 14. Charlie Company air assaulted into the complex followed by A and B Companies. An aerial scout observed enemy positions to the north of the LZ. Company C advanced toward the location and made heavy contact shortly after leaving its landing zone. Bravo Company maneuvered northwest to support Company C and also made heavy contact.

With both companies heavily engaged, Alpha Company moved in to flank the enemy and the North Vietnamese force soon found themselves surrounded. Companies C and B rolled over the enemy positions from the west, and then joined in mopping up operations which continued until dark.

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Covered by the stone walls common around Hue, these 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, Skytroopers throw lead at the enemy nearby. The imperial city of Hue was then held by the Communists.
Eyes ever-peeled for signs of the enemy, this Garry Owen machinegunner prepares to move into heavy jungle in III Corps.

line with Bravo and Charlie and then set up a perimeter for the night. Just at dusk the unit received heavy automatic weapons and mortar fire from an enemy company dug into the front and one flank of their position. The enemy positions were immediately engaged by artillery and aerial rocket artillery and then the Skytroopers assaulted and overran the enemy positions.

Subsequent intelligence reports indicated that the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, had, in one day of battle on the 27th, rendered one North Vietnamese battalion totally ineffective—killing or wounding all personnel.

The beginning of 1968 found the Garry Owens participating in Operation WHEELER/WALLOWA in the Que Son Valley, located in Southern I Corps, on the border of southeastern Quang Nam and northeastern Quang Tin Provinces.

From the end of February to the end of March the battalion was active in Operation JEB STUART. This operation was carried out around the city of Hue and later in the coastal area known as the "Street without Joy".

On April 19, 1968, the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, spearheaded the U.S. drive into the A Shau Valley, landing at LZ Vicki.

On April 21st, the battalion made light contact and killed three NVA. Working east to establish a new LZ, the battalion found two enemy bulldozers, one with USSR stamped on it. It became apparent that engineer units of battalion size had been working in the area, building and repairing the...
vital road network. The Skytroopers took the bulldozers with them to their new LZ.

A few days later Alpha Company found three flatbed trucks with 37 mm anti-aircraft weapons mounted on them. Three days later Charlie Company found four more trucks in the same area.

From May 1968 through October of that year the Skytroopers from the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, participated in Operation JEB STUART III. This operation was conducted around the Camp Evans area and along the “Street without Joy.”

Participating in Operation TOAN THANG I, which began November 3, 1968, the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, continued to compile an outstanding record of achievements. After deploying to the III Corps Tactical Zone and before the battalion had settled into its new rear area at Tay Ninh, the Garry Owen troopers were deployed to LZ St. Barbara and initiated combat operations in War Zone C. Intelligence soon indicated that NVA forces were massing in the northwest corner of Tay Ninh Province near the Cambodian border. In response to this threat, the Garry Owen battalion was airlifted to LZ Ann.

While most of their time was spent searching for the enemy in the jungle, part of each company’s time was spent in defense of the battalion firebases.

Several times, while the 1st Bn, 7th Cav, was operating near Quan Loi, the enemy—frustrated in their attempts to travel through the Garry Owen area of operations—tried to break the Sky-
Arriving at Qui Nhon, South Vietnam, on September 16, 1965, the men of the 2nd Battalion 7th Cavalry, the “Garry Owen” battalion, boarded aircraft for a flight to a small village located in the jungles of the central highlands named An Khe, the 1st Air Cavalry Division’s first home in Vietnam.

Late in the afternoon of November 14, 1965, Company B, commanded by Captain Myron Diduryk, was air assaulted into LZ X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley to support the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, which had tangled with the 66th NVA Regiment.

Bravo Company went under the operational control of the 1st of the 7th and extracted from LZ X-Ray with that battalion on the 17th, thus being spared the agony that was incurred at LZ Albany. The remainder of the 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, which had moved overland to LZ X-Ray from LZ Columbus on the 16th, moved again through the jungle toward a location along the Ia Drang Valley that was to be known as LZ Albany. The battalion compensated for the loss of its Bravo Company by picking up Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry. The column was almost to its destination when it ran across an NVA patrol. The lead elements of the battalion killed two, captured two, but at least two got away. That was the flank security for an NVA battalion that was on the move toward LZ Columbus.

The two battalions collided. For more than four hours it was rifleman against rifleman in hand to hand fighting of unparalleled intensity. When the battalion finally pulled itself into a perimeter, the worst was over. Bravo Company was air assaulted into LZ Albany to assume a reinforcing role. There were still Skytroopers outside the perimeter during a night which was filled with sounds of scattered fighting.

Although the battalion took heavier casualties than in any previous engagement of the war, General Westmoreland proclaimed the action “an unprecedented victory.” When the smoke from the battle cleared, the enemy had left over 350 of their crack troops dead on the battlefield. The battle of Ia Drang Valley was over.

On January 25, 1966, the battalion was called upon to participate in Operation MASHER. On January 28 Company C conducted an air assault into LZ 4, a sandy, open graveyard surrounded on three sides by tall palm trees. Immediately upon landing, Charlie Company came under intense automatic weapons and mortar fire from well fortified enemy positions in the treeline. Company C was scattered over the entire landing zone and suffered moderate casualties during the initial hours of the battle. At 3 a.m. on January 29, Charlie Company conducted a night withdrawal south across the landing zone, carrying its wounded, as artillery fired into the treeline. Later that morning...
Skytroopers scoot under barbed wire to advance toward an enemy bunker complex located in the trees beyond. Bong Son was the place, 1966 the date and MASHER the operation.

and into the afternoon, artillery fire and air strikes were delivered on the enemy positions. When the action was over the enemy dead numbered 81 with an estimated 112 more killed.

The Garry Owens began Operation WHITE WING in the An Lao Valley, on February 7. At 9 a.m. on the morning of February 15 Company B made contact with a well dug-in enemy force. By using air strikes and artillery, the company was able to overrun the enemy positions and by night fall had accounted for 57 dead Viet Cong. Bravo Company succeeded in capturing the Viet Cong battalion commander and thereby obtained valuable intelligence information.

On August 1 the battalion was com-
mitted to Operation PAUL REVERE II, aimed at stopping an enemy buildup in Pleiku and Kontum provinces. On the first day of the operation Alpha and Bravo Companies came under an early morning attack from an enemy battalion. The Skytroopers resisted three human wave attempts to overrun their positions.

The next day weather conditions were severe, some of the worst flying conditions the division had seen. During a break in the weather the third platoon of Alpha Company assaulted into LZ Pink at 2 p.m. Contact was immediate and heavy. A reinforced NVA company surrounded the 26-man platoon. As the fighting intensified radio contact was lost. The bad weather stymied efforts to relieve the embattled force. Not until 5:30 p.m. did the rest of Alpha Company reach the platoon. For more than three hours the Cavalrymen had held out alone against a much larger force, but in the process 18 had died and the rest had been wounded. The bodies of 16 enemy were found on the battlefield.

The operation continued through the rest of the month, with the battalion conducting search and clear sweeps and serving as the operation headquarters defense unit. A total of 861 enemy were killed during the operation.

On the 25th of August, 1966, the battalion received a new mission and moved that same day some 150 miles to Phan Thiet to commence Operation BYRD. Although most of the fighting during BYRD was between small units in “quick and dirty” encounters, on the 25th of October Company C assaulted two platoons into a Viet Cong position that had been spotted from the air. With close support from aerial rocket artillery (ARA) they accounted for 52 Viet Cong dead in three hours of close-in fighting. Friendly losses were only one killed. This was one of the largest single engagements of Operation BYRD. Throughout Operation BYRD the 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, task force was the only independent American battalion-size force in the country. Operating smoothly and reacting swiftly, the task force set precedents for air mobile operations.

This action, and many others like it, combined to make 1967 and Operation BYRD outstanding successes for the 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, and the 1st Air Cavalry Division.

The beginning of 1968 found the battalion still operating as an independent task force in Operation BYRD in the II Corps Tactical Zone. Pitted against an estimated two Viet Cong battalions, the 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, crushed the insurgents and opened Highway 1, the vital link to Saigon. When the battalion left the location to rejoin the division, convoys could travel from Saigon to Hue without incident for the first time in a decade, and the enemy forces were reduced to the extent that local forces could contain them.

A major force in relieving the Marine bastion at Khe Sanh, the Garry Owen battalion initiated Operation PEGASUS on April 1, air assaulting into the region and gaining control of Highway 9. Beginning a drive toward the beleaguered camp, the Cavalrymen ran into well-fortified NVA trenches and foxholes. Failing to dislodge the enemy with tube artillery and ARA, the unique air mobility of the 1st Cavalry was brought to play.

In May the battalion participated in Operation JEB STUART III, and returned to unfinished business in Houng Dien District and along the “Street without Joy,” in what was known to the Cavalrymen as the “Battle of the
Graveyards." In the Lunar New Year Offensive in February, Viet Cong forces overran the northwestern section of the district, a small peninsula in northern I Corps.

The battalion air assaulted into the southern portion of the peninsula and fought its way over the enemy positions, often camping near graveyards, from which the name of the battle was derived. As the enemy infested areas were being cleared out, the battalion was called into the Khe Sanh and A Shau Valley operations, postponing its final victory.

When they returned to the familiar terrain, the 2nd Bn, 7th Cav, evacuated Vietnamese civilians to safe areas, and in a massive effort, organized a sampan flotilla to relocate them. Two thousand tons of enemy and friendly rice were transported in the effort.

Throughout the summer the battalion concentrated its power on finding rice and denying sanctuary along the "Street." Braving numerous booby traps and enemy snipers, the battalion utilized Rome plows, which had proved so successful earlier in the year in Operation BYRD, to expose enemy bunkers and rice and weapons caches, destroying a former Viet Cong haven.

At the end of October the battalion once again assumed the spirit of Khe Sanh and spearheaded the 1st Cavalry drive south to III Corps.

Moving into the unfamiliar territory, the Cavalrymen went to work establishing a firebase and combating enemy forces at the same time.

For the Garry Owen battalion 1969 was a busy year. Engaged in operations to seal off NVA supply routes from Cambodia, the battalion worked out of LZ Jamie, 23 miles northeast of Tay Ninh.

Frustrated by the FIRST TEAM's efforts to shut down their infiltration routes, North Vietnamese regulars launched a desperate attempt to storm LZ Jamie on the 11th of May.

When a trip flare went off near the LZ at 12:45 a.m., no one was surprised. At 1:10 a.m. another trip flare flashed into the night; an observation post reported four individuals lying on the ground. Cavalrymen responded immediately by spraying the area with artillery and small arms fire.

At 2:40 the men at LZ Jamie knew the attack was a determined one. Between then and approximately 3 a.m. some 200 rounds of 107 mm rockets and 60 and 82 mm mortars slammed into the firebase.

In the midst of this deafening mortar and rocket barrage, the crackling of small arms fire was barely audible. From three sides the North Vietnamese poured toward the perimeter. "Just as the mortars were hitting, sappers blew the wire," said Sergeant Vaughn G. Hood, a squad leader with Company D. "We opened up with M-60s, M-16s and claymores, and the artillery fired at Charlie point-blank." The concentrated enemy fire and the holes in the wire, blown by bangalore torpedoes, allowed the NVA to breach the perimeter.

Some of the bunkers had been built with cyclone fence surrounding them. "The fence saved our lives," said Private First Class Larry M. Huff. "The NVA got up to the fence, tried to blow it, but couldn't. We were able to direct mortar fire on the gap in the perimeter wire, and kept on firing all night long."

The NVA did occupy three bunkers, but not for long. One bunker was decimated by direct 105 mm howitzer fire. "There were enemy swarming all over those bunkers," said Specialist Four John W. Brock, "and the 105 just blew them—and the bunker—away."

Another bunker was retaken by the men of the battalion. "There were still a few NVA soldiers left," according to Master Sergeant David A. Vallee. "They threw frags, and when those didn't do the job we went in and shot them."

With two bunkers in the possession of the enemy attackers and more crossing the perimeter, Captain William Lacey, Jr. organized a counterattack and personally led five volunteers. Maneuvering against the enemy-held bunkers, CPT Lacey and his men overpowered the enemy on the bunkerline and drove them from the firebase.

Overhead, aerial rocket artillery and

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