First Lieutenant Bobby Brown calls for aerial rocket artillery (ARA) support while his unit, Company A, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, conducts a search and destroy mission during Operation PERSHING in the Song Re Valley.

The 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, joined the 1st Air Cavalry Division on August 21, 1966, and shipped to the Republic of Vietnam from Fort Carson, Colorado, aboard the USNS Gaffey. The battalion landed in Qui Nhon and airlifted to An Khe on August 20. The battalion conducted final training exercises in the vicinity of An Khe, then began a mission nicknamed Road Runner, securing Highway 19.

By the time the month-long operation terminated at the end of September the new “Garry Owens” were ready for full scale operations. In October they made their jungle fighting debut in Operation IRVING. Air assaulting into eastern Binh Dinh Province, they swept east toward the sea while other division elements and Allied units made coordinated sweeps to the north and south. The following week the battalion moved back across Highway 1 to LZ Duz. Operation IRVING was a resounding success with 710 enemy detained and 681 killed. By the end of the operation the enemy units had dissolved and were scattered and hiding.

With November began Operation THAYER II. By mid-morning on November 1, Bravo Company had established contact with the 93rd Battalion of the 2nd VC Regiment in the area between Route 1 and Dam Tra O Lake, south of the Gay Giep Mountains. The company, led by Captain John L. Hitti, killed 43 enemy in the fight that raged on for more than nine hours.

A month later Company B had been hacking its way through densely foliated terrain since daybreak when it got a call that “some other outfit had made contact farther up the valley.” First Lieutenant William E. Kail was ordered to take the second platoon to the scene of the action, a small village about 1,000 meters from Phu Huu 2. When they had moved through thick jungle in a little more than an hour, it was 2 p.m. on December 1. The village did not appear to be defended by more than a few snipers so Kail formed his platoon for a quick sweep through. Coming to the edge of the village LT Kail paused to instruct his machinegunners. Specialist Four Dennis Beneditti was placing his machinegun behind a grave mound when an AK-47 opened fire. “Return fire!” LT Kail shouted. The men riddled the hootch to their front, but the fire had been coming from a well-concealed rock bunker next to the house. Staff Sergeant Jeffery B. Neher spotted the bunker when he had crawled within 10 meters of it—he knocked it out with a LAW (Light Antitank Weapon).

Staff Sergeant George Porod took a squad to check out the hootch. As they approached the dwelling a Viet Cong tried to slip out the back door. Porod fired, but the enemy, only wounded, managed to pull himself into the brush. The squad continued, moving forward parallel to a drainage ditch about 10 meters to it left. Crawling they came upon a trail across their front. Just then another VC rifleman jumped from a foxhole just four feet in front of Porod. The sergeant killed him. They began to take
fire from the ditch on their left.

LT Kail called Porod on the radio: "There are two hootches to your left. Get inside them." Porod went and the others followed, except for one man whom they did not miss at first.

Private First Class Lewis Albanese, 19, was off on his own, seemingly bent on trying to cover the others with his weapon as they deployed toward the houses.

Porod discovered his absence from the squad and began to call, "Albanese! Albanese!"

There was no answer.

Albanese had discovered that the ditch was really the connecting trench of a series of fortified enemy bunkers. He assaulted the ditch, killing several snipers. He then fixed his bayonet and jumped into the ditch. He began inching his way along the ditch, probing each position along its length and killing six enemy. The men of the platoon heard a prolonged burst of firing from numerous weapons on their left. None of it came toward them. Mingled with the noise of enemy AK-47s was the unmistakable sound of an American M-16.

"It's one hell of a firefight," said SSG Neher, "and I'll bet that's Albanese."

Albanese continued down the trench, firing his weapon ahead of him. He was mortally wounded and out of ammunition when he came upon two more Communists. He killed them both in fierce hand to hand combat before he succumbed himself. For his actions, PFC Albanese was awarded the Medal of Honor.

While taking part in Operation PERSHING on February 18, Bravo Company came in contact with an enemy battalion. Delta Company was air assaulted into the area to reinforce Company B and it also made heavy contact. Other Cavalry units set up blocking positions to the south and east of the contact area. At dawn the Skytroopers swept through the area to find that the enemy force had withdrawn, leaving 68 bodies.

Throughout the spring of 1967 the battalion continued to operate in the northern An Lao Valley experiencing light contact almost daily. By the end of June the Garry Owen battalion had chalked up 379 enemy killed.

The battalion moved north in 1968 and took part in the battle of Hue. In mid-February it routed the enemy stronghold in the village of Then Bon Tri near the old imperial capital. The enemy was well dug in in a regimental-sized complex and the infantry was at first unable to get to them. Artillery, air strikes and Naval gunfire were used against the enemy trenches, and the 5th of the 7th slowly pushed into the northwest corner of the hamlet. Three NVA snipers in a concrete bunker, supported by mortar fire, pinned down two platoons in a shallow trench. Private First Class Albert Rocha worked laboriously along the trenchline, stopping once when a sniper's bullet ripped through the handguard of his rifle. He and First Lieutenant Frederick Krupa finally crawled atop the sniper's bunker. While PFC Rocha poured bullets into the hole, LT Krupa and other men from Delta Company worked a satchel charge into the bunker and blew it.

"The snipers were trying to push out the charge," Rocha said, "but the lieutenant held it right there. It went off in their faces. I was almost ready to get up and move out when one of the snipers suddenly appeared in front of me. I killed him."

On February 23 the Garry Owens were airlifted to the north Hue docks to sweep the enemy out of the northern part of the city.

March found them operating from a perimeter seven kilometers northwest of Hue. One evening in early March an ambush squad from Delta Company settled into its position on the south side of Highway 1. Spotting a large number of enemy with weapons the ambushers called in artillery.
In a little world of black on black,
Out of grenades, the lieutenant crawled
After placing his men behind cover,
Sprayberry and his volunteers were
Behind him, one by one, the holes
positions in the shadows nearby. He
blackness to the enemy, blast a hole
bunker gun port. There was a flurry of
movement inside the bunker and then
to the nearest enemy bunker. He pulled
the explosion and flash of the blast spit
from the gun port. The bunker was silent.
Sprayberry identified a string of one-man
men.

"I heard the ducks quacking, at least
it sounded like ducks, but the flapping
of the wings, I think, was the enemy's
sandals flapping against the road," he
said. "I looked through the starlight
scope and I couldn't see anything until
they got about 100 meters away. I mo-
tioned for the men in back of me to get
down and they passed it back."

"If we had tried to get across the
railroad tracks, they would have spotted
us against the sky, so we just kept down
with our weapons on bushwhack, ready
for someone to spot us."
The squads stayed down for 10
minutes, then continued back to their
battalion perimeter.

"It was funny in a way," concluded
Di Polite afterwards. "They were singing
and talking just like GIs do. And there
was one straggler, far behind the others,
who kept calling to the others like 'Wait
for me. Wait for me.' But it wasn't
funny when it happened. We were all too
afraid one of the stragglers would spot
us."

Spring is rice harvest time in I Corps.
Peasants had become accustomed to
having a large portion of their annual
rice supply confiscated by the Com-
munists. The Cavalry set out to change
all that.

To protect the farmers' crops the Sky-
troopers patrolled the area and secured
the roads to the government grain storage
facilities at Phong Dien by day. They set
ambushes at night for the benefit of
enemy infiltrators.

Once the harvest was in the 5th of
the 7th assaulted into LZ Tiger to begin
Operation DELAWARE in the A Shau
Valley on April 19. LZ Tiger was ideally
situated to command the enemy's
supply routes into the valley. Recon-
naissance elements captured enemy
trucks, supplies and weapons, also
destroying bunkers and interdicting
roads. As enemy vehicle losses mounted,
an estimated platoon struck back,
hitting Delta Company on April 25. A
ring of flame sprang up around the for-
ward operations base.

The company commander and most of
the men with him were wounded. Be-
tween them and the rest of the company
sat the enemy, entrenched, bunkered
and well gunned. In that trenchline were
at least two machineguns.

A daylight attempt to breach the enemy
line and reach the isolated men was
thrown back by a hail of devastating
enemy fire. Darkness fell, covering all—
Americans and NVA alike—with the
blackness that only the jungle can pro-
duce. Too impatient to wait for the light
of dawn, First Lieutenant James M.
Sprayberry, the Delta Company exec,
organized a volunteer night patrol.
The plan was to crawl unseen through the
blackness to the enemy, blast a hole
through the line and reach the isolated
men.

Sprayberry and his volunteers were
almost within reach of the enemy line
when two machineguns opened up on
them, lacing the night with lines of red
tracers that danced off the ground around
them, lacing the night with lines of red

A Skytrooper of Company A, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, stops to inspect an enemy footprint
as members of his platoon enter a deserted village. They were on a search and destroy mission in
the Song Re Valley in II Corps.
back to his men for another load of "frags." As he hooked them to his gear, his volunteers came under more enemy fire. The vendetta was renewed.

Sprayberry charged the source of fire, another bunker, bulleted a frag into it at the end of his run. Another flash and another silent, smoky bunker.

With two men placed to cover him, the lieutenant went forward again to destroy three more bunkers and their occupants with grenades. As the last bunker exploded, and enemy soldier jumped up from his concealed position and raced through the darkness toward Sprayberry, hoping to surprise the Garry Owen officer. Sprayberry heard him, drew his .45 caliber sidearm and shot point blank, blowing the enemy trooper backwards into the night. He then killed the enemy soldiers in another bunker before returning to his men.

The immediate threat to his patrol was eliminated. All was finally quiet. Sprayberry made radio contact with the isolated men on the other side of the now silent bunker line and guided them toward his position. In a few minutes they were through the line and joined to the volunteers.

Sprayberry organized litter parties and began evacuating the wounded to the rear. For the next several hours Sprayberry and his men moved wounded men through the night.

They were almost finished, there remained but a few wounded with the security men forward, when another enemy machinegun broke the silence

(Continued on P. 261)
The 8th Cavalry Regiment was constituted July 28, 1866, and organized September 21 of that year. Its ranks were filled with hard-fisted miners from the gold fields, restless settlers and adventure-seeking frontiersmen. After outfitting in Fort Concho, Texas, the regiment made a 2,000 mile move by horseback to South Dakota and located its regimental headquarters at Fort Meade. They fought along side the 7th Cavalry against the Sioux and Chief Sitting Bull. The unit became known for its quick striking activities in the trouble spots of the Indian Wars.

The battle honors for that period indicate the unit’s mobility. In 1867 they campaigned in Arizona against the Apaches, raced to Oregon in 1867 to fight the Nez Perces, and then back to the plains in 1889 to ride against the Comanches.

In 1898 the regiment moved to Alabama and was staged for overseas movement to Cuba. By 1902 the unit had returned to the border and resumed its patrol missions. It was sent to the Philippines in 1905 and returned to the border in 1907. Many skirmishes developed with Mexican bandits who conducted smuggling operations into the United States. In 1912 the regiment returned to the Philippines and remained for three years. It returned to the States and joined the 5th and 7th Regiments in the Mexican Punitive Expedition. In 1919 it returned to garrison duty at Fort Bliss, Texas, and joined the 1st Cavalry Division on September 13, 1921.

The unit flies campaign streamers for the Indian Wars, World War II (New Guinea, Bismarck Archipelago, with arrowhead, Leyte and Luzon), the Korean War and, of course, Vietnam.

Prior to the Vietnam conflict the unit was decorated with the Presidential Unit Citation streamer embroidered Luzon; the PUC, streamer embroidered TAEGU; 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 ROKPUC, embroidered KOREA; and the Chryssoun Aristion Andrias (Bravery Gold Medal of Greece), embroidered KOREA.

In Vietnam the 1st Battalion (less Company A) has been awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for action on June 21 and 22, 1966. Both battalions received the Presidential Unit Citation for the Pleiku Campaign in 1965. Bravo Company of the 2nd Battalion was awarded the division’s first Valorous Unit Award for an action on May 16, 1966.

Skytroopers from the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry, move through grass during a reconnaissance patrol in War Zone C.
On August 20, 1965, the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 8th Cavalry, boarded the USNS Geiger at Savannah, Georgia, and sailed for Qui Nhon, Republic of Vietnam, arriving on September 21, 1965. The main body was moved inland by helicopter to the division basecamp north of An Khe in Binh Dinh Province.

There, in the beginning of its years in Vietnam, the battalion occupied a portion of the base perimeter and through October busied itself conducting search and clear operations in the Binh Khe area.

Shortly before midnight on November 3, Alpha Company, co-located at the Duc Co CIDG Camp with the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry, was alerted for commitment into an ambush site on the south bank of the Ia Drang River. The men began immediate preparations to move and readied their gear. The south bank had come under repeated enemy assault, and it was there that Alpha Company would meet a battalion of the 66th NVA Regiment.

The landing zone near the river bank would only accommodate five ships at a time, so the beleaguered perimeter was reinforced by platoon echelon. At 12:40 a.m. the first platoon was jumping from the Huey landing skids at its target. They were followed by three other platoons under command of Captain Ted Danielson, and by 2:45 a.m. on November 4 they were all on location. It marked the first time that a perimeter under heavy fire had been relieved at night by heliborne forces—another first for the FIRST TEAM.

From the time they landed until dawn the Cavalrymen fought and threw back NVA attacks, and while they waited in the pitch dark between the running attacks they were subjected to flurries of sniper fire and barrages of grenade attacks. Extraordinary heroism was commonplace that night along the Ia Drang.

Specialist Four Raymond Ortiz distinguished himself with magnificent gallantry there while acting as a medical aidman. He took his first wound early in the fight while exiting the landing helicopter and entered the fray with his left arm shattered and rendered useless by an enemy bullet. But disregarding his wound he moved up to within 30 meters of the enemy firing line to treat and evacuate wounded men from that exposed area. Ortiz moved along the line as if ignoring the deadly enemy grazing fire. Over a distance of some 50 meters of open ground and amid the hail of enemy small arms and automatic weapons fire, Ortiz carried six wounded troopers to waiting evacuation helicopters.

He returned a seventh time to seek out a wounded platoon leader who was calling out in the dark. He ignored his comrades' shouts to take cover and moved toward the wounded man's voice, only to be struck in the chest by another bullet and knocked to the ground. Bleeding from the chest wound, he pushed himself to his feet and started off
Skytroopers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, move through a small farmyard during a search and destroy mission against the Viet Cong in Phu My Province, northeast of An Khe in I Corps. The mission was part of Operation IRVING, which took place in October 1966.

toward the wounded officer again. Again he was struck by enemy small arms fire and fell to his knees. Then, apparently contemptuous of the enemy fire, he struggled forward with a final effort until he collapsed from loss of blood. He later was presented the Distinguished Service Cross.

In the new year of 1966 the battalion’s first move was to “beat the bushes” around LZs Bronc and Stallion in Pleiku Province to ferret out a reluctant enemy force. Hard on the heels of retreating Viet Cong, the battalion stopped just short of inviolate Cambodian territory and established the first prepared landing zone that close to the border in the division’s history. Opened on January 8, it was named LZ Cheyenne.

Operation WHITE WING, centered around the city of Bong Son, followed through to the end of February, resulting in 25 Viet Cong dead, six detained and tons of supplies captured. In mid-March the 1st Bn, 8th Cav, participated in Operation JIM BOWIE, moving in primarily company-sized search and destroy missions with wide sweeps through the Phang Rang and Song Con River valleys. Operations LINCOLN and MOSBY I followed in late March, and on the morning of March 25 the battalion air assaulted directly from An Khe to an LZ near Duc Co—a 78-mile heliborne move of an entire battalion, one of the largest undertaken by the FIRST TEAM. The battalion was again back in the Pleiku area north of the Ia Drang Valley. But this time they came for a reconnaissance in force mission.

On May 20 the battalion again air assaulted into what was euphemistically

The Dong Nai River flows through the center of War Zone D, III Corps, center of the Cav’s area of operations in the summer of 1969. The thick triple canopy jungle was the scene of much fierce fighting. The 1st of the 8th was right smack in the middle of that activity.
known as “Happy Valley” in a sector north of LZ Hereford on Operation CRAZY HORSE. Deployed from that location, the battalion’s five companies swept back and forth over the “Denver Trail.”

It was there that Charlie Company had moved up a steep hill when the Viet Cong, sitting solid in foxholes and bunkers, opened up.

On the left flank of Company C, Captain Roy D. Martin’s Bravo Company had meanwhile come up against an impossible situation. The enemy had fortified a steep ridgeline with communications trenches connecting a series of rugged machinegun bunkers, two of which held heavy .50 caliber machine-guns. The complex was large enough to hold a battalion of men. At least five .30 caliber and one .50 caliber machine-guns opened up on the first platoon’s point squad from the heights above, killing six Cavalrymen outright and mortally wounding the platoon leader, Lieutenant Robert H. Crum, Jr. Specialist Four David C. Dolby, a machine-gunner, ran to the lieutenant’s side and pulled him to cover.

“Take over,” the seriously wounded officer ordered. “Get the men out of here.”

Dolby immediately took command of what was left of the platoon, directing his comrades to safe positions and covering their movements with fire from his M-60 machinegun as he scrambled from behind rocks to trees. The deep-throated bursts of the enemy .50 caliber followed his movements, chewing branches and chunks of tree trunk into splinters and ripping foot-long furrows in the earth, just missing Dolby’s fleet-footed figure. Again and again he set up his machinegun and stitched rounds into one bunker after another with accurate fire.

There was no stopping him. He was everywhere that rainy afternoon, pulling the wounded to safety, placing fire against the enemy bunkers and directing the platoon.

He crawled to within 50 meters of the enemy positions and hurled smoke grenades as far forward toward the bunkers as he could to mark them for aerial rocket artillery (ARA). Minutes

Troops of the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry, move cautiously through what appears to be an abandoned village. In fact, however, it is an NVA camp, only recently vacated.
later a Huey beat its way down on the
ridge and loosed a salvo of rockets into
the enemy line.

According to Private First Class Ken­
neth Fernandez, Dolby had no regard for
his own safety as he moved again and
again through the enemy’s kill zone to
assist the wounded, evacuate them on
his back, pop smoke and coordinate
fire. “I couldn’t believe that a man
could move through that fire like Dave
Dolby,” Fernandez said.

For four hours Dolby carried his
one-man war against the entrenched
enemy. The men around him said he
had silenced each of the enemy machine­
guns at least four times with his M-60,
but there were replacement gunners to
man the guns anew each time. Dolby
was ordered to withdraw what was left
of his men. He was the last man out of
the area, firing a parting burst into two
bunkers as he went.

For those several hours of his life as
a soldier and a man, Dolby was later
presented with the highest honor his
country could bestow—the Medal of
Honor.

With the approach of summer the bat­
talion moved out on their most impor­
tant operation of that year, NATHAN
HALE. On June 20 the Skytroopers moved to the vicinity of Tuy Hoa to reinforce the 101st Airborne Division. Linking up with the 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 327th Infantry, the battalion joined an intense battle near Trung Luong and a nameless hill called Hill 258.

On June 22, the enemy launched the most ferocious attack of the campaign. At 5:43 a.m. B Company came under a two-pronged assault on position Eagle. The battle raged on for four hours, often directly and individually on the perimeter. The enemy left 134 of its dead when they broke contact.

Enemy losses during NATHAN HALE were huge. For its exceptional demon-

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SECOND BATTALION
EIGHTH CAVALRY

COMMANDERS

LTC James H. Nix .......................... July 1965—December 1965
LTC John A. Hemphill .................... December 1965—August 1966
LTC Thomas H. Tackaberry .............. August 1966—February 1967
LTC John C. Dashiell .................... February 1967—July 1967
LTC John E. Stannard .................... July 1967—February 1968
LTC Howard Petty .......................... February 1968—March 1968
LTC John V. Gibney ...................... March 1968—September 1968
LTC Frank L. Henry ...................... September 1968—February 1969
LTC Fred S. Lindsey ..................... July 1969—October 1969
LTC Michael J. Conrad ................... October 1969—

The 2nd Battalion (Airborne), 8th Cavalry, stepped off the USNS Geiger at Qui Nhon, Republic of Vietnam, on September 20, 1965, after 31 days at sea. The following day, CH-47 Chinook helicopters transported the battalion to its already opened base at An Khe.

By October 17, its mission of securing and developing the basecamp had changed, and during late October and early November the unit found itself fully committed to combat operations. The movement to Camp Holloway on October 23 marked the beginning of the Pleiku Campaign. The battalion air assaulted on the outskirts of the Plei Me Camp on the 27th to “pursue, seek out and destroy the enemy.” A series of battalion, company and platoon-size airmobile operations were employed, searching the jungles west of the camp. Significant engagements were made on November 4th and 6th.

The fiercest battle of the period was fought on November 6, when Companies B and C battled a numerically superior force to a standstill. Both companies were conducting platoon-size search operations from separated basecamps. Bravo Company, screening toward the Meur River from high ground about one and one-half kilometers to the east, made contact with a platoon-size enemy force, but by noon the company was engaged with an entrenched enemy who was committing more and more units to the battle.

As the firefight increased in intensity, some elements of B Company were pinned down and the enemy, now in battalion strength, began to encircle them.

Company C wheeled about and made a forced march back to the scene of the fight. Crossing the river, it came under heavy fire. Neither company was able to muster enough firepower from its own position to maneuver decisively. Both sides began to disengage as darkness approached.

The two companies sustained significant casualties, but they had inflicted grievous losses upon the enemy. The
The after-action report records 77 enemy killed by body count, with an additional 121 estimated killed.

The battalion led off 1966 with Operation MATADOR, moving close to the Cambodian border to block any enemy movement westward.

Operation WHITE WING commenced January 31 for the battalion as it moved to LZ Bird to begin operations in the Crow’s Foot and the Bong Son operational areas.

Operation JIM BOWIE was planned as a follow-up to the Bong Son Campaign, as intelligence reports indicated a base area around Kon Truc.

Returning to the scene of the Pleiku Campaign, the battalion began Operation LINCOLN on March 25, terminating April 17.

A suspected enemy build-up east of the Vinh Thanh Valley led the 1st Brigade to request a company-sized reconnaissance operation from the battalion.

The mission was to search and destroy in the rugged hill mass between the Suoi Ca and the Vinh Thanh Valleys, in north central Binh Dinh Province.

On May 16, Bravo Company was air assaulted into LZ Hereford on a mountain east of the Vinh Thanh CIDG Camp, moved onto a ridgeline and immediately made contact with a Viet Cong battalion.

When the company commander, Captain J. D. Coleman, heard the terrific brawl his lead platoon was engaged in, he hurriedly put his company in a tight circle, letting the squads of his embattled lead platoon fall into their arc.

The fight went on for four hours without a lull. When the weather broke about 6:30 p.m., aerial rocket artillery (ARA) on station poured round after round in close support of the perimeter. Salvo after salvo, some within just a few feet of the company trace, battered the enemy positions, pinning them down close to the perimeter and holding them there, giving Coleman’s troops the edge. The attacks diminished in strength, and by 8 all contact had been broken by the enemy.

With more than 40 wounded personnel, along with 20 others killed, CPT Coleman had little choice but to remain in position and await reinforcements which had landed at nearby LZ Hereford during a brief break in the weather. Bravo Company dug in; the relief force was fed into the perimeter at 10 o’clock.
At 6:15 a.m. the next day, the two companies initiated a “mad minute.” Simultaneously, the enemy launched a violent battalion-size attack at all sectors of the perimeter. Enemy soldiers came within a few feet of foxhole positions and the companies’ ammunition began to run alarmingly low. Some Skytroopers on the line had already fixed bayonets and were preparing for a last ditch stand when the enemy abruptly broke off the attack, many of their number dead or wounded.

The battle had far-reaching significance. The enemy’s intent, according to captured documents, was to direct a regimental attack on the CIDG camp and then to disrupt pacified civilian centers in the valley. After this initial contact, and after the addition later of Skytrooper infantry battalions, the Viet Cong force exfiltrated the area.

For this action, Bravo Company, 2nd Bn, 8th Cav, was awarded the Valorous Unit Citation, the division’s first of the Vietnam conflict.

In the months of June and July, Operations NATHAN HALE and HENRY CLAY in Tuy Hoa and Trung Phan Provinces provided further airmobile exercises in finding, fixing and destroying the enemy. In August, search and clear missions in the Tuy Hoa AO were conducted as part of an operation nicknamed John Paul Jones.

THAYER I initiated the first phase of the Binh Dinh Province Pacification Campaign on September 13. Operation IRVING kicked off on October 2, with Companies A, B, C and D air assaulting into the Nui Mieu Mountains at LZs Ebony, Playboy, Adam and Esquire, overlooking a well-populated area near the South China Sea coast. All companies made contact in the next 29 days with a well hidden, well equipped enemy.

On October 8, Captain Charles Getz, commanding Bravo Company, was moving his troops along the coast. A scout helicopter reported the enemy fleeing to a nearby island separated from the mainland by a causeway waist deep under water. Searching toward the area, eight VC were detained. The enemy soldiers informed Bravo Company’s CO that others were hiding in caves with entrances beneath the waterline. CPT Getz was an excellent swimmer.

“Who wants to go with me?” he asked the first platoon as he peeled off his webbing and shirt.

Private First Class Louis G. Pom-
ponio, a fire team leader, Staff Sergeant Colin K. Hall and Specialist Five Anthony P. Caramda, the platoon medic, all volunteered.

They dived off the rock formation that housed the caves and followed underwater patches of light indicating the cave entrances 20 feet below. The sight of the determined Sky troopers breaking the surface inside the first cave induced the six VC to surrender.

Bravo's aquanauts searched two more caves and captured 11 more VC. Their total at the end of the day was 24 detainees.

Operation THAYER II continued through 1967 with search operations in the central and southern Kim Song Valley. The battalion was headquartered at LZ Santa, air assaulting into the area with Company B to LZ Ho, Charlie to LZ Chi, and D Company to LZ Minh. Alpha Company followed January 6, opening LZ Castro.

THAYER II closed out for the battalion on February 3, and the unit moved to Camp Raddiff to assume responsibility for the An Khe base defense. Its stay was short. Back under the control of the parent 1st Brigade, the battalion began Operation PERSHING I and was to remain in the area until June 18.

Company C discovered three and one-half tons of rice on March 2 in a large bunker complex. Bulldozers were now being used to destroy bunkers and tunnels in the area.

On March 19, Alpha Company approached a hamlet near An Do and LZ Geronimo in the plain area, initiating a three-day battle in which more than 120 NVA were killed.

B Company engaged one individual in a bunker on May 17. He became the FIRST TEAM's 10,000th enemy KIA since the division's arrival in Vietnam.

The 22nd NVA Regiment chose to make contact with elements of the battalion on May 31. Bravo Company was making a sweep west of Highway 1 and was engaged by an NVA company firing from prepared positions in hedge rows and from trees in a hamlet. Three additional companies and a platoon of tanks were directed to the battle area and leveled their firepower at the enemy position. Initially, the tanks provided cover for the engaged companies, enabling them to move into position and

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