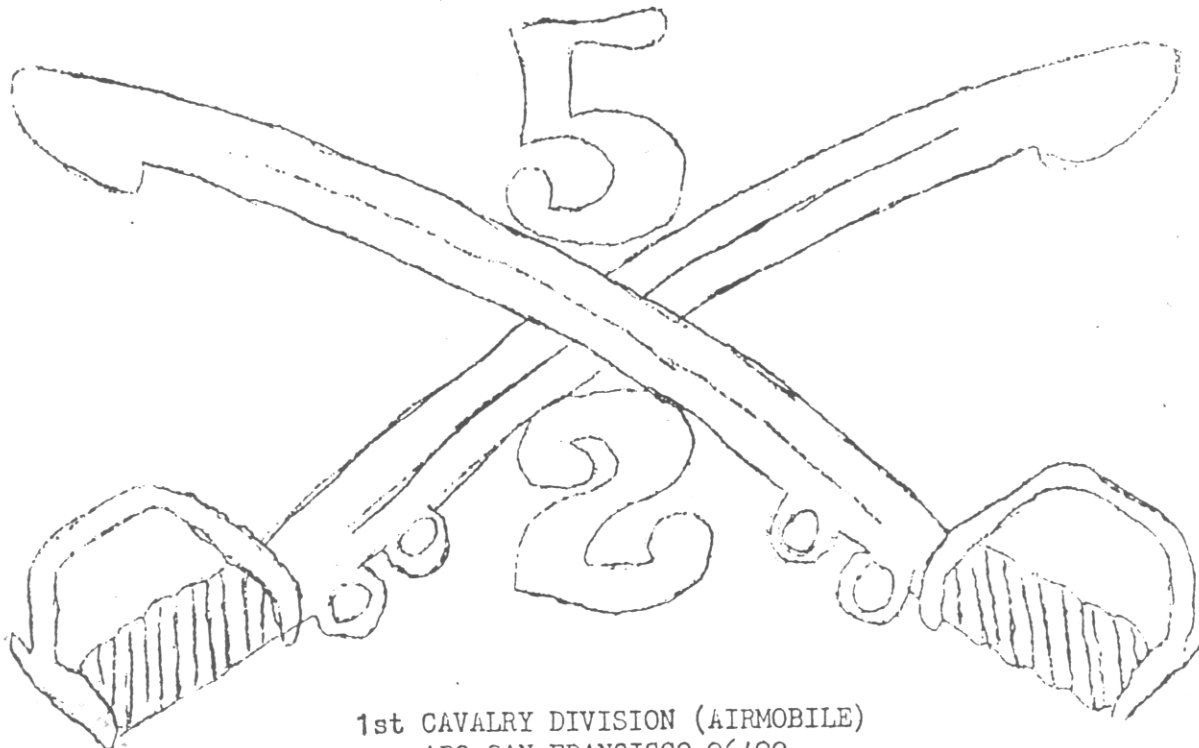


THE
HISTORY
OF

THE SECOND BATTALION FIFTH CAVALRY

E Company



1st CAVALRY DIVISION (AIRMOBILE)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96490
CALENDAR YEAR 1968

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2/5 UNIT HISTORY: 1968

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As 1968 began, the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry 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 companies conducted routine search and clear operations, mine sweep security and base defense missions in various locations. During the month of January and the first half of February, they experienced very light and brief contact. 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 gave themselves up to the skytroopers.

But the days of operating in the Bong Son area were coming to a close, plans were being made for the 2/5 to move north. On the 16th and 17th of February the battalion moved within 21 kilometers of the demilitarized zone as they joined division minus at Camp Evans, a barren and vulnerable outpost located on highway 1. The 2/5 assumed base defense.

Ordinarily, a security mission such as this is considered to be good duty by the infantrymen, a time forrest in a relatively safe fortified perimeter. The enemy in the Camp Evans area, however, had mortar and rocket capabilities and enough men to attempt ground attacks, day or night. Compounding an already unfavorable situation was the weather, so poor that resupply by air was nearly impossible, and the enemy interdiction of the only overland supply route, QL-1, with trenches and antivehicular mines. As a consequence, the infantrymen on the Camp Evans perimeter had to carry out their mission with rationed ammunition, little or no trip flares and claymore mines, and very little illumination from artillery and organic mortars.

LTC Love, the battalion commander, was personally responsible for the security of Camp Evans; security not only from ground penetration, but also from

mortar and rocket attack. He gave two of the battalion's four rifle companies the mission of perimeter defense. During the day these men ran local patrols, at night they manned greenline bunkers. The remaining rifle companies conducted exhaustive search and clear operations through the villages which were close enough to Camp Evans to put the base within enemy ordnance. In addition to the destruction of any weapons found on the sweeps, these two companies had the responsibility of providing road security for two bridges, several daily mine sweeps, and the Camp Evans water point. Additionally they conducted extensive night ambushes.

The enemy forces in the proximity of Camp Evans consisted of fortified companies and battalion of NVA, main force VC units, and VC guerillas masquerading as bona fide local villages. Despite the defeats they had suffered during the first two weeks of Tet, the enemy soldiers' morale appeared to be high, and the battalion's first kill on the 17th confirmed that they were well equipped and supplied. It was monsoon season in the I Corps, and the rain worked to the disadvantage of the U.S. troops with the grounding of aircraft, flooding of roads, and general discomfort. The enemy reveled in the freedom of movement and concealment. They were able to move about for either tactical or logistical reasons, undetected.

The first blow struck in the 2/5's effort to choke off this enemy traffic was made by Company B while they were conducting a cordon and search operation around and in the village of Pho Trach, Phong Dien District. The village itself is less than one mile from Camp Evans. The enemy had placed command detonated mines along the trail that led to the village, and when Company B's point element was into the kill zone, the enemy kicked off an ambush by detonating the mines and engaging the infantrymen with small arms and machine gun fire. Company B reacted immediately, returning fire with their own small arms and machine guns and 90mm recoilless rifles, while the commander, CPT Robert Carroll called for gunship support.

17 FEB 68 MAP 6442-2 YD 5235

Having suffered only one casualty, Company B moved on line against their ambushers but the enemy broke contact, taking their dead and wounded with them. Although CPT Carroll led his men across the rice paddy in quick pursuit, the enemy soldiers escaped across the nearby My Chonh river. The supporting gunships reconned the far side of the My Chonh by fire, but by then the ambushers had disappeared into the bush. It was later discovered that these particular soldiers had maintained a command post in Pho Trach and had been given the assignment to harass Camp Evans at night. A search of the area revealed several small storage points for rice, supplies, and small arms ammunition. Two days later Charlie Company found a cache of mortar ammunition in the same area.

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The security mission at Camp Evans was peaceful and only lasted eleven days, which only three mortar rounds fell inside the installation. On 28 February the battalion was relieved of their duties at Camp Evans and were placed under the operational control of the 2nd Brigade 101st Airborne Division and given a new mission. Seven miles northeast of Camp Evans was an area that was to be visited and revisited by the men of the 2/5, a series of little hamlets along the banks of the My Chonh river, completely surrounded by graveyards and vast, open, rice paddies. The My Chonh was unfordable as it snaked through the little communities, but had several narrow passable foot bridges crossing it while the banks on both sides of the river were built up and choked with hedgerows and footpaths. Rising well above the trees was the steeple of a stately old cathedral, giving the area the aura of pious tranquility. Intelligence reports indicated, however, that the inhabitants of the neighboring villages were members of a regimental sized NVA unit who were using the sleepy little hamlets as their sanctuary. The Cavalrymen of the 2/5 soon found out that the intelligence reports were correct. The congregation of the towering cathedral consisted of a regimental commander, his staff, and a large security force. There was an ammo dump in the basement, machine gunners in the vestibule, and forward observers in the bellry.

CHURCHVILLE

CPT Pratt of Company A and CPT Carroll of Company B were given the mission to clear the area of the interlopers. Thus began the long saga of Churchville.

Armed with recoilless rifles and mortars the two companies arrived in the Churchville area on the 28th and established their forward observation bases (FOB) IN AN OLD VIETNAMESE graveyard, covered with traditional burial mounds and grave-stones. This island, in a sea of rice paddies, was about 800 meters from the woodline boundary of Churchville. Immediately following the evening meal, two B-40 rockets were fired into the perimeter from the tree line but were duds and landed without exploding. The harmless outcome did nothing to ameliorate the Cavalrymen's feelings about the intent of the rounds, and their answer was a section of aerial rocket artillery expended on the suspected launch site. The enemy in Churchville had begun to get a taste of what battling with the 2/5 would be like.

On the 29th, both companies went into the area which the rockets had been fired from and immediately began uncovering large caches of weapons and equipment. That afternoon both had contact with snipers and what was lately described by CPT Carroll as a "reinforced NVA company". Several enemy soldiers were killed that day and several were detained for classification. Most, however, escaped into tunnels or ran into the church. Companies A and B were close behind.

On March 1, Captains Pratt and Carroll combined their forces and made an on line assault against the village in which the church was located. Tactical air strikes had been called in the previous day to soften up the area, and consequently initial entry into the area was effected without problem. Once inside the treeline, however, it became immediately obvious that the enemy were still there. Both companies made repeated contact with enemy snipers, including one 70 year old woman who continued to fire her AK 47 assault rifle until she was seized by members of Company B's 1/3 element who had surrounded her bunker. Contact continued for the next three days.

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On the morning of March 4, both companies combat assaulted into the vicinity of the church with the plan of establishing a cordon around the remaining enemy force. The previous night some one thousand rounds of artillery had been fired into the area, but none the less the Cavalrymen began to receive fire almost as soon as they touched down. Snipers were everywhere and it took almost two hours to maneuver the various Infantry units into place, effecting the cordon. A company was to sweep the village from the south while B company was to move in from the east. Directly behind the church was a large open rice paddy occupied by the companies two heavy weapons platoons, and to the north was the My Chook river, its bridges had been knocked out by the gunships earlier in the morning which completed the cordon. As the two companies pressed toward the church, they met continuous but receding sniper fire. Miraculously enough, neither company took any casualties, and the snipers were silenced by superior volumes of fire and skillful maneuvering.

By 1400, Company B's 1/6 element was 100 meters away and still moving. The platoon occupied a small open field, surrounded by trees and as they moved across it toward the church its occupants command detonated mines as the cathedral came alive with small arms and automatic weapons fire which forced the Cavalrymen to take the nearest possible cover, a small rice paddy duct to their rear. CPT Carroll knew that if he moved his platoon either in an assault or a tactical retrograde, he would sustain heavy casualties or would lose the chance of direct fire at the church, or perhaps both. He ordered his men to hold their positions as he called for ARA support. For twenty minutes the firefight raged on between the enemy behind the brick mortar walls of the church and its surrounding bunkers, and the 2/5 troopers behind their meager protection, a 6 foot high dike. Even though the cavalrymen were pinned down, they were matching the enemy's fire with their own, constantly exposing themselves to aid their wounded or to obtain a better firing position. In the meantime CPT Pratt was maneuvering A Company into a flanking position, but they had the thick undergrowth and booby traps, and snipers to contend with. Their movement was of necessity but

In the ensuing half hour, B company's 1/6 platoon suffered twelve casualties and their line several large gaps in it. Additionally they were subjected to the nightmare of crossfire. Two enemy soldiers were in the trees to the left of the beleaguered platoons flank, placing effective AK-47 fire on them. The pair was so well concealed in the leaves that effective fire could not be placed on them until one sharp trooper spotted them and killed them both with his M-79 grenade launcher. With the crossfire eliminated the situation had well improved, but the real turning of the tide came shortly after, announced by the unmistakable drone of the Huey Cobra, an ARA ship accompanied by a UH-1 slick converted into ARA capabilities.

The employment of gunships was straight forward. They expended directly into the church and surrounding bunkers setting off several secondary explosions into the church and surrounding bunkers. After the first run, the enemy fire had subsided sufficiently for the converted UH-1 and cobra to land and take out most of the wounded. After three more runs of the cobra, only a lifeless gutted shell of the church was left and the emancipated Calvary troopers were able to withdraw, leaving a body count of over thirty enemy dead.

During the next few days both companies moved back into the contact area to probe the church and destroy any caches. Several bodies were found but the remaining were carried off and buried. In their hasty retreat the enemy left behind several caches of ammunition, and weapons, and other equipment. The 2/5 Cavalrymen would work in Churchville many times again, as their part of effort to keep the area clear of enemy soldiers. But they had done their job well, contact in Churchville would never again approach the intensity experienced these first days of March.

Companies A and B stayed in Churchville for several more days, sweeping the villas along the My Chonh, but they had negative contact and negative findings. On the 7th of March, Company B was moved to LZ Jane, the newly established battalion landing zone, to assume base defense responsibilities while Companies C and D were moved in to join A company in a continued search mission. The

C and D were lifted in to join Co. A in a continued search mission. The emphasis was placed on the enemy's food supply; having taken away his fortress, the Cavalrymen were now attempting to starve him out of the area entirely. During this time all three companies of the 2/5 had light contact and the infuriated enemy retaliated for their losses by mortaring FOB's, sniping at patrols and employing a remarkable diversity of booby traps. Although the kill ratio was five to one in favor of the Cavalrymen, the 2/5 lost several fine men, notably, CPT James Estep, C company's commander ^{9 MAR '68} who was seriously wounded, and A company lost their first sergeant Robert Lawson, who was killed. Despite their casualties, the troopers of the 2/5 so successfully interdicted the enemy's supply lines that he virtually disappeared from area.

The month of March had given the enemy a vivid and stinging picture of the 2/5: March, too, was a good month for the battalion commander, LTC Love. Having been promoted to Colonel and having received orders for a new unit, Col Love on the 21st of March, handed the 2/5 colors to the new battalion commander, a senior aviator from Teaneck N.J., LTC Arthur Leary Jr. With a new commander and a new mission the 2/5 closed the book on Jeb Stuart I.

On 3rd April, the 2/5 left LZ Jane and moved farther north to join the division in the liberation of the Marines at Khe Sanh, operation Pegasus. The battalion rear was moved to LZ Stud, set deep in the Annimite mountains, and the forward command post overlooked the battle sight itself, the fortified Marine outpost, Khe Sanh. The lightning airmobile tactics of the 2/5, and the other remaining battalions of the Cav, and the remaining units which made up the multi service task force under the operational control of the Cav, were once again to launch the division into public eyes as they routed the once comfortable and heavily fortified enemy which surrounded the Marines.

For seventy seven days the Marines had suffered constant harassment from enemy artillery, rockets, and mortars. The NVA troops were estimated at 7000 strong, and their incredible network of truck routes kept them well supplied. The enemy situation

The enemy situation was so luxurious that they were able to sneer at the leathernecks over a commercial-type radiostation later found by the 2/5's A company. They were, perhaps, the best equipped soldiers the NVA had in South Vietnam, and their commander, General Giap, made a public statement that Khe Sanh would be Dien Bien Phu of the sixty's, and nothing could stop them. Unmindful of General Giap's empty bravado, on 7 April all four of the 2/5 line companies combat assaulted into the area.

The landing zone was prepared for the mass assault with thousands of bombs, and huge volumes of artillery fire, and high explosive rockets from Cav choppers. The LZ's were all green and the 2/5 troopers were swarming into the jungle beneath the canopy which had for so long hidden the enemy, his supply routes, and his ammo dumps. The enemy, except for those of his comrades who had died under the massive barrage which preceded the assault, had elected to break and run rather than staying and making contact with the 2/5. In their haste they abandoned huge caches of weapons, ammunitions, clothing, rations, and communication equipment. As the Cavalrymen pressed on toward Khe Sanh the caches became richer and richer. It was soon obvious that the enemy's ability to harrass the Marines at Khe Sanh was greatly reduced.

Without taking a single hostile casualty, the 2/5 carried out their phase of the rescue mission with such speed and professionalism that the battalion was singled out for open praise by the Division Commander, Major General Tolson. On the 15th April, Company B walked across the Marine perimeter at the Khe Sanh camp and the next day was joined by the battalion command post. The siege was over, the enemy was gone, the Dien Bien Phu of the 1960's never materialized. Instead of a crushing victory over the American forces, the enemy received 1042 NVA killed, 557 individual weapons captured, and 206 crew served weapons captured.

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The drama of Khe Sanh was over, but a huge and tedious cleanup operation remained. While other units moved to the A Shau Valley, the 2/5 was given the mission of policing the Khe Sang battlefield. The C.P. moved to L.Z. Snap, fifteen miles south east of Khe Sanh, and the companies began methodical search and clear missions in the local area. A few of the enemy remained and there was light contact almost daily until the first week in May. The troopers of the 2/5 continued to find enemy caches as, virtually alone in the desolation of the Annamite mountains, they ferreted out the last of the NVA and their supplies. Even though they were virtually the only infantrymen in the area, the 2/5 maintained the Cav's image of swift, thorough, and efficient professional soldiering.

On the 7th of May, the battalion moved once again, and its command post and rear detachment were located at the US Marine installation at Dong Ha. As part of a 2nd Brigade task force ^{OPERATION CONCORDIA SQUARE} opcon to the 3rd Marine Division, the 2/5 began operations in this area with the mission of interdicting and eventually and entirely halting the NVA infiltration south from the DMZ only 8 miles away. After a brief stand down in the rear area, LTC Leary was to have the companies assume a defensive postures during the day and conduct extensive ambushes at night. The terrain was flat and sandy, and the company FOB's were situated in several sparse tree lines which bordered large forbidding stretches of uninterrupted wasteland. The considerations behind the tactics were not only the blistering daytime heat which the enemy avoided by moving at night, but also the fact that the enemy had potent artillery and heavy weapons capability, and could fire their 130mm guns and 155mm mortars from concealed locations on the northern side of the DMZ. This capability for placing effective ordinance on the Cavalrymen was greatly reduced during the hours of visibility. 8

The night ambushing proved to be a most effective tactic. Several portions of an NVA unit, a transportation battalion, carrying rice and munitions were completely obliterated by Company D, commanded by CPT Joe Carpenter. Company A also had much success, contact 4 or 5 times in one night was common.

On May 12th, however, the enemy dealt a stinging blow to the 2/5. First platoon, Company B had set out on a local security patrol that morning, around their FOB. They were sticking to the tree lines and at 1030 made contact with an estimated platoon of enemy snipers in the trees. Immediately Cpt Carroll added up another platoon and set out to reinforce his element in contact. To save time, he led his platoon across the treacherous open area. Before they day as ever, the enemy had triggered their subtle trap and engaged the would be rescuers with already plotted artillery and mortar fire. Cpt. Carroll and three others were killed, and 44 Cavalrymen were wounded. At the end of the day however 30 enemy soldiers were killed in retaliation of the remainder of Companies and C, and the rocket and tube artillery which soon answered the enemy fire and silenced their guns.

Company B's losses inspired a new fighting spirit in the men of the other companies, and during the five remaining days of Concordia Square, over 190 enemy soldiers were killed in ambushes and other night contact. Additionally, individual weapons were captured.

On the 17th of May, the battalion returned to their original home in I Corps Zone, and launched Jeb Stuart III, again under Cav control. The enemy, since their defeat at Churchville had been trying to reestablish a major force in the Stuart area. Their key to success was the ability to feed their troops with rice gathered locally. It had been reported that the previous year the enemy had experience no difficulties in acquiring foodstuff sufficient for their needs from the local farmers through either coercion or complicity. The mission of the 2/5 was to deny the enemy this rice.

From May until the end of July the companies criss-crossed Quang Tri Province in exhaustive and methodical searches for the rice, and when rice was found was air-lifted to a central storage point in the city of Hai Lang. From this point it was redistributed to the local population in small, frequent elements sufficient for their needs.

In this manner were large quantities of rice, sufficient to feed a large body of insurrectionists, that denied the enemy. In addition to achieving control of the rice, the 2/5 moved to interdict the transportation routes used by the enemy. Each night as many as twelve ambush positions were established to catch them in the act. The enemy was also using the hundreds of waterways in the area to move the contraband rice at night, but this operation was severely hampered by night helicopter hunter-killer teams composed of the hunter, a Huey slick, low flying, carrying troops with starlight scopes mounted on their M-16's who marked the targets with tracer for the killer, the Huey cobra gunship. A third bird, a flashship, would light up the area on call leaving the enemy in a posture not unlike that of the mechanical animals bobbing across the target in carnival shooting galleries.

The enemy was still in the area, but because of the rice denial and supply interdiction operations, the enemy's numbers were small and their effectiveness minimum. Contact was almost exclusively restricted to exchanges of small arms fire as the companies searched and cleared the local villages and hamlets. The enemy made extensive use, however of booby traps, and incidents occurred almost daily during the last part of May. Nevertheless the companies were merely delayed by this action, and the enemy, through his use of the booby traps, had marked his position and that of his caches.

Rice harvest season came to a climax around the second week in July, and the results of the rice denial mission were shown clearly in records of the Popular Forces in Hae Lang who controlled the rice. The year previous the enemy had controlled the entire harvest. This year, 4500 of the 5000 tons of rice harvested were accounted for.

The meticulous search and clear operations along with the rice denial and supply interdiction caused the bulk of the remaining enemy to retreat to their storage points hidden in the Annamite mountains. The largest of these areas was Base Area 112, situated in the rugged and dense portion of the mountain SW of Camp Evans. On July 20, the Bn. moved to Base Area 114.

The forward command post was located well into the towering mountains, a location so remote that the entire move was executed by air. All supply, of course, had to come to the fire base, known as LZ Mooney, by helicopter, and the air was filled from dawn to dark with the drone of helicopters bringing in ammunition for the grunts and the artillery pieces, food, water, and whatever else was required for the survival of the troops in the barren region.

Mooney itself was located on the military crest of a long and steep ridgeline, so well fortified and so inaccessible from three sides that the chance of ground attack was virtually nonexistent. Not more than two hours after the last of A company landed at Mooney, Cpt Robert Fullerton moved them out as the spearhead of the 2/5's search and clear of the area. The remaining companies were close behind.

The going was incredibly tough. The hills were steep, the jungle knotty, and the weather almost unbearable with temperatures in the 100's and the humidity most high. In the flatlands LZ's for the resupply birds were simply

effected by setting up security around a dry open place in the rice paddies. The forward command post was located well into the towering mountains, In their mountainous new home, though, giant trees had to be either blown or cut down, and the heavy underbrush had to be cleared in order to receive supply. Despite this, the morale of the troops was high for almost as soon as the companies moved out from Mooney, they discovered several well used trails, apparently supply routes, and much evidence of heavy and recent traffic.

As the jungle operations got under way, a new commander, LTC Maladowitz, took command of the 2/5. Within a very short period of time, LTC Maladowitz put several tactical innovations into effect. In order to alleviate the problem of cutting new LZ's nightly, an activity which was not only tedious and time consuming, but also allowed the enemy to pinpoint the Cavalrymen's location of the 2/5's search and clear of the area. The remaining operations were by the sound of the log birds, LTC Maladowitz ordered that the companies be resupplied once every four days instead of the usual twice a day. To

The going was incredibly tough. The hills were steep, the jungle knotty, make room for the additional food now necessary, the new commander ordered each man to lighten his load of personal gear to the barest minimum. Dehydrated and light weight LRRP rations were substituted for the heavier canned C-rations.

Light weight LRRP rations were substituted for the heavier canned C-rations. Lighter, more flexible, and having been given the capability of surviving without compromising their locations, the troopers of the 2/5 got into full swing.

The searching operations continued into Sept, and the findings grew larger daily. Co. A made the largest single discovery of heavy weapons, mortars, machine guns, recoilless rifles, anti-aircraft guns, and rocket launchers, in the history of the 2/5. Co. B found enough ammunition to supply an NVA battalion for several weeks; Co. C found and destroyed the rear area of a regimental command post, and Co. D discovered two enemy supply camps and a small hospital. Also, the main line of wire communication from an NVA regiment to a division in the A Shau Valley was found and destroyed.

In the middle of Sept., LTC Maladowitz expanded the operations by gaining control of a larger area of responsibility and establishing a task control of a larger area-of-force command post under the control of the battalion XO, Maj Edward Valence, at LZ Carroll. Two fire support bases, one at LZ Maureen and the other at LZ Miguel, were also established. The weather however, began to tighten its grip, and with ceilings dropping to almost zero and heavy rains, the mission in the base area 114 had to be curtailed. Despite the change of plans, the successes proved to be very rough on the enemy. It would take them a long time to regroup their losses.

On the 27th of Sept. the battalion began the return to its original AO as the battalion rear began preparations for its own move to a new LZ about four miles away from LZ Jane. The new LZ, Nancy, was also north of Camp Evans and only 1/2 mile from QL 1. LZ Nancy had been thus situated to avoid having a long access road which would be subject to flooding, a major problem which had faced LZ Jane since the onset of the rains. The perimeter defense of Nancy was the responsibility of the 2/5. A base defense SOP was enacted, and during the 2/5's entire stay at Nancy not a single mortar round fell into its perimeter.

For the oldtimers, this move was like coming home. In addition to the defense commitment at Nancy, 2/5 troopers found themselves securing old haunts nicknamed North and South Bridges and the Alamo, the last being a compound adjacent to the Hai Lang District Headquarters. Additionally the Bn. was responsible for search and clear missions in the area surrounding Nancy, including what had almost become their second home, Churchville. The mission was deprivation of freedom of movement from the enemy in order to curtail recruiting and supply activities in the area. Felling again that the old tactics could be improved upon, LTC Malasowitz and Maj. Valence devised several innovations, the most audacious yet successful of these was a two company night blitzkrieg cordon followed by a first light sweep of the village by Skytroopers augmented by a platoon of National Police.

It was a dramatic sight as twenty-four helicopters swept into LZ Nancy at 0100 in the morning and plucked the first lifts of A and C companies off the PZ's. Intelligence reports had indicated that the local VC moved out of the villages around 0300 every morning and as the two companies touched down on their six separate landing zones, they hoped that their prey were still sleeping peacefully. Within two minutes the entire village was surrounded, the cordon complete. The tactic was used twice with unquestionable success;

7 enemy killed as they tried to flee through the cordon, 12 captured in their concealed bunkers in which they attempted to hide, and four tons of rice liberated.

The 2/5 continued routine operations in the LZ Nancy area, the only heavy contact coming when Co. A routed an NVA battalion from their base camp in the foothills west of Nancy. The enemy had no will to fight, though, and as a Cheu Hoi led Co. A into their lair, they fled, leaving only delaying forces behind.

In the early part of November the 2/5 received a warning order to prepare for a move south. About a week earlier the division minus and the 3rd Brigade had departed slightly NW of Saigon.

On 10 NOV. the battalion departed LZ Nancy, part by air, the remainder by sea, for their new home at Phuoc Vinh, III Corps.

Phuoc Vinh is located 52 miles north of Saigon in the heart of the III Corps CTZ flat jungle and rubber country. The division headquarters, the 2nd Blackhorse Brigade, the 2/5 made this their new home. The last elements of the battalion arrived at Phuoc Vinh on the 12th of Nov., and immediately began their mission of providing security for the installation by conducting search and clear patrols in the contiguous countryside. While the companies swept the exterior of the base, exhaustive efforts were employed to fortify her perimeter defenses. The operational control of the 2/5 employed to fortify her and assumed by Division Artillery, and for the remainder of Nov. the companies continued their search missions with scattered contact.

On Dec. 1st, LTC Malasowitz received an order to move a 2 company task force into the 3rd Brigade AO for a combat mission that lasted for the first 3 weeks of Dec. On the afternoon of Dec. 1st, the battalion forward CP was operating near an isolated Special Forces Camp in Dong Xoai. Companies A and B combined into one force and air assaulted into the treacherous jungle where no US forces had entered for over 3 years. Operations began immediately, and the battalion CP was located at LZ Odessa and base defense was taken up by Co. E. This particular region was a suspected strong hold for several NVA units, and Cav units that were already operating nearby reported heavy resistance from well equipped and highly motivated communist soldiers. Cpt. Jim Mace of Co. A told his men that "Gooks are in season...get em". They did.

For 14 days the Cavalrymen fought raging battles with the enemy who were outnumbered and found themselves in very hazardous situations because the enemy had worked the territory without interference for years.

LTC Maladowitz planned counter attacks using several sorties of B52 heavy bombers, tactical air strikes from Air Force Phantom Jets, and Army helicopter gunships, and when the smoke cleared, he ordered the two companies to return to the scene. Brief contacts lingered on, but the enemy was severely hurt by the

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aerial pounding, and several bodies and parts of bodies were found in the rubble. On Dec. 10, Cpt. Wayne Porter of B company discovered the payoff; an incredible cache of rockets, heavy weapons ammunition and small arms ammo in addition to explosives, rations, clothing, medical supplies and several dozen bicycles that were used to carry goods from the nearby Cambodian border. For two days the men cleared the area without a sign of the enemy.

Company C experienced contact with a portion of the remaining enemy force, but it was very obvious that they had lost the grip they once had on that particular bit of real estate, and on the 19th of Dec., Co. C moved to Quan Loi to assist the 2nd Bn. 7th Cav. in their operations with the 3rd Brigade. On 23 Dec. Co. B replaced Co. B 1/5 Cav at Phouc Vinh.

The 2nd Bn. 5th Cav. closed the remainder of 1968 with negative enemy contact as they continued to secure Phouc Vinh. It had been a good year for them, and a very bad year for the enemy they had opposed in so many places during so many various missions and operations in the Republic of Vietnam. The war was not over though, and although there was relative calm, LTC Maladowitz prophesized that it could be the lull before the storm. Perhaps he was right, but only time will tell.

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