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THE BATTLE IN THE 506 VALLEY

17 December 1966

Our foreign policy is based on goals of freedom and justice. It is in the interest of these goals that we ask you to serve your country overseas. Your Nation depends on you and your colleagues, not just for the execution of American foreign policy, but for the embodiment of the spirit and ideals of our country.

John F. Kennedy

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Author's Preface

A major battle can be described in a paragraph. This one is considerably longer, incorporating as much detail as is possible to do under combat conditions. Key personnel were wounded or killed, leaving narrative gaps; memories impressed with the struggle of the battle are only reliable to a subjective point leaving the overall picture as valid as the pieces comprising it. The purpose of this history is not to exalt or impeach, but rather to guide others who will follow.

Impress upon the mind of every man, from the first to the lowest, the importance of the cause and what it is they are contending for.

George Washington

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On September 13 1966, the First Cavalry Division (Airmobile) initiated Operation Thayer I which was continued in Operations Irving and Thayer II and Pershing. The mission of these operations was essentially the same: the complete pacification of Binh Dinh Province by moving into the area in force and staying there until the job was done. (Map 1) Thayer I concentrated in the Crow's Foot, where the 18th NVA Regiment (Army of North Vietnam) was engaged and forced to withdraw. Irving was conducted principally in the mountains east of the Crow's Foot and west of National Route One. Irving kept the enemy off balance, seeking him out to destroy him in battle. Irving succeeded in driving the enemy further east into Binh Dinh Province, then Thayer II was kicked off to continue the mission of pacification in the Province. By December several large battles had been fought all over the Province and the enemy was forced to break up into small groups to exfiltrate back into the mountains to reorganize, rest and recuperate. Sporadic contact in the Crow's Foot (Map 2) indicated the enemy was hidden in the mountains around it and was getting some of their supplies from the Crow's Foot low lands.

Maximum use of the available Sky Troopers was made by spreading them out in all of the small valleys of the Crow's Foot, where platoons were operating separately and were self-sustaining for two or three days at a time. Not only could larger areas of ground be covered in this way, but a relatively isolated platoon usually enticed the enemy into making contact or holding to fight if engaged. The mission was simply to "find 'em, fix 'em, and fight 'em." A culmination of the complexities inherent in this deadly game of hide and seek manifested itself in the battle fought in the 506 Valley.

Two large Landing Zones (LZ) were in the Crow's Foot, LZ Pony and LZ Bird, both of which had tube artillery batteries which could fire supporting artillery into any part of the Crow's Foot. Spread around the Crow's Foot on December 16, 1966 were elements of the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry (1/9), 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (1/8), and 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry (1/12). (Map 2) In various stages of progress were Search and Destroy missions, ambushes and reconnaissance. Lieutenant Colonel George D. Eggers, commanding the 1/12 had one company, Charlie 1/8, under his operational control (OPCON).

Generally in command of the tactical phase of Thayer II was Colonel James Smith, the First Brigade Commander. In turn, responsibility for a specific area of operation (AO) was given to Lieutenant Colonel Eggers. To assist in the overall mission, specifically in reconnaissance work, was the 1/9 Cavalry Squadron, who were responsible to the First Brigade. It wasn't until later in the afternoon in the 506 Battle that Lieutenant Colonel Eggers assumed complete responsibility for the conduct of the fight. Until that time elements of the 1/9 remained responsible to 1/9 and to the First Brigade. Coordination for various plans, therefore, passed through either the commanders or the operations officers (S-3) of the First Brigade, the First of the Twelfth, and the First of the Ninth.

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Late in the afternoon of the 16th Charlie Company 1/8 came into Landing Zone Pony in CH-47 Chinook helicopters. Major Leon G. Bieri, Operations Officer (S-3) of the 1/12 contacted Captain Paul C. Ogg, Commanding Officer of Charlie 1/8, and gave him a briefing on the situation. The 1/12 had elements covering the Crow's Foot except for the 506 Valley. C 1/8 would be OPCON to 1/12 because the missions were similar and designed to accomplish the same goal. Two of Captain Ogg's platoons were to conduct a reconnaissance in force of the 506 Valley, one on the west side and one on the east side of the road. Initially Captain Ogg asked to take his entire company into the valley because the area was new to them and the enemy situation was unknown. However, he had to provide one platoon as security for LZ Pony and Major Bieri felt the "reconnaissance in force" would be sufficient. Also the entire Crow's Foot was being searched in a similar manner, platoons spread out covering large areas.

The first and third platoons, C 1/8, would search the 506 Valley, (Map 3), the principle feature of which is the communal fair-weather road, "Hiway" 506, which runs generally northwest to southeast. The valley floor is about 9,000 meters by 3,000 meters, watered by several streams which originate in the densely covered mountains surrounding the valley. Rice paddies with their attendant mud, water and dikes are readily evident. Coconut trees, bamboo and a few banana trees grow there along with numerous hedgerows. In one area the brush is quite thick, hindering movement. "A hundred meters in that terrain was just like a thousand meters in the average place," remembered a trooper from 1/8. Aside from a few small villages and hamlets, not much else appeared to be there.

The two platoons had moved off LZ Pony and set up together for the night, about 1,500 meters from the LZ. At first light on the 17th, Sergeant First Class Richard T. Carmichael's third platoon took the east side, crossing the 506 and moving up to search out a draw.

Lieutenant Potter's first platoon went south down the west side following a ridge line. His point man was carrying a "people sniffer", a chemical device the size of a large back pack, weighing about 25 pounds. It measures the ammonia content in the air, which means it smells sweat. Like a hunting dog, it is only effective working up wind. That morning they were working up wind and the "people sniffer" was registering high readings. Potter's platoon, well trained, moved cautiously along the ridge. They were almost to the tip of the finger, (Map 4), when they spotted the enemy setting up hammocks and working around in the area. Potter set about deploying his squads to overrun the enemy. It's not certain who fired first but a fight broke out. Two or three enemy were killed initially and Potter got a little further into their position. The platoon policed up several items of equipment, including five 30 caliber banana clips, one carbine, one AK-47 Russian assault rifle, twelve NVA packs and a switch board. Captain Ogg, informed of this right away, had

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an H-13 helicopter standing by and was airborne to assist within minutes. He knew they had engaged NVA, the packs, weapons and uniforms proved that. The telephone switchboard meant something else. It is normally associated with a battalion CP (command post) or regimental CP. Captain Ogg didn't know at the time it was a Regimental CP but he knew his first platoon had hit something big. He called Lieutenant Colonel Eggers, who was in the vicinity of LZ Bird at the time, and told him of these developments, asking to air assault his entire company immediately. Major Bieri, S-3, gave the go ahead, providing one platoon from Charlie 1/12 to make up for the security platoon Ogg had to leave at LZ Pony.

The fight on the ridge started at three minutes after ten. Captain Ogg arrived several minutes later and picked out an LZ to the southeast of the ridge. From the H-13 Captain Ogg directed the gun ships's fire into the ~~prop~~ proposed landing zone, to clear the area before the troops landed. Second platoon C 1/12 came in first and secured the LZ. Third platoon C 1/8 followed shortly. In the meantime Ogg flew back to Pony, got his CP group and fourth platoon and air assaulted. The time was now about eleven o'clock and Ogg had a full company on the ground, oriented and organized. His first platoon was still fighting on the hill, so Captain Ogg took his company up to disengage them and finish the fight.

The general mission of finding the enemy had been accomplished by Lieutenant Potter's platoon. The next step was to fix them or to pinpoint the extent of the enemy limits. The First Squadron, Ninth Cavalry, 1/9, is specially organized for this type mission. It is composed of three basic teams, White, Blue, and Red. The White Team or Scout team is composed of two H-13 observation helicopters, highly maneuverable and capable of close-in flying. The Blue Team is an infantry platoon with their own organic UH-1D lift ships. The Red Team is aerial rocket artillery (ARA), Huey's fitted with 2.75 inch rockets and M-60 machine guns. (Strictly speaking, ARA ships have 48 rocket pods and two miniguns, while gun ships have 14 rocket pods each with two M-60 machine guns operated by two door gunners.) This combination of men and equipment was called upon to help exploit the situation.

Even though the fight was still in progress on the ridge, indications were that some of the NVA had fled east. The First Brigade S-3 wanted a ~~platoon~~ platoon put in to the southeast to establish a blocking position to prevent escape in that direction. The call went from Brigade S-3 to the S-3 1/9, who in turn contacted Major Thomas D. Mendenhall, the Commanding Officer of Alpha Troop 1/9. At that moment Major Mendenhall was heliborne north of LZ Pony, conducting a damage assessment of an artillery concentration that had been fired the night before in a suspected location of a VC battalion. Major Mendenhall described his activity, "We arrived in the area (of suspected activity, north of LZ Pony) and on our first pass over the area at ten o'clock my wing aircraft took a small arms round--came up through the bottom of the

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aircraft and hit beneath the copilot's seat... We were in the process of adjusting artillery fire into weapons position where we had received fire when I got a call that my operations officer had received a mission to go down into the 506 Valley and support the 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry."

Major Mendenhall's infantry platoon, callsign Apache Blue, was at LZ Hammond, the Division forward logistical supply base, (Map 1), southeast of the Crow's Foot. Meanwhile the Scout Teams had flown up to the 506. Part of their job is to fly over the battle periphery and conduct a recon of the appropriate area. They were out over the valley, east of the ridge, reconning a village when they received automatic weapons fire. This was about eleven o'clock, the same time Captain Ogg landed his company 1500 meters to the west. Quite naturally it was difficult to ascertain who or what was doing the shooting but essential to find out. The Scouts reported killing two men and they could see others moving in trenches and bunkers. Major Bieri called Major Mendenhall and told him to put Apache Blue in to make an assessment of ("check out") the activity the Scouts had turned up.

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Very shortly two fights would be raging. One involving C 1/8, who was OPCON to 1/12; the other, Apache Blue who were working for 1/9 and First Brigade. Thirty minutes earlier when the fighting crackled on the ridge another company (Bravo 1/8) had been alerted. The day before, Bravo 1/8 had come into LZ Gavin (another artillery fire base, south of LZ Hammond) and were given the mission of Brigade reaction force. So, when the possibility arose of committing them, due to contact with an unknown size of NVA soldiers, they were alerted. Captain Raul G. Villaronga, commanding Bravo 1/8, "got the word that one of our companies (Ogg's company) with 1/12 had made heavy contact and that we were being committed." He was alerted "somewhere around ten thirty."

The sequence of events was fast moving and complicated by unexpected happenings. At eleven thirty Captain Ogg still had his company on the ridge, finishing up the original contact there. Intelligence (the captured switchboard) suggested they had hit a battalion or regimental command post. Ogg had already made his decisions; he requested ~~tactical~~ ^{artillery} air strikes. The infantry platoon from 1/9 would soon search the area where the Scout teams reported enemy activity. First Brigade had alerted a reserve force, Company B 1/8, and seemingly everyone was poised for the next phase of the battle.

The men of Apache Blue watched the valley falling away as their Huey's flew northwest at 85 knots. This was their normal routine. They spent every day air assaulting into some area to "check it out" or to "develop the situation". On occasion they had repeated the performance as many as four times a day. As they came in for the final approach the men standing out on the skids could see the distant firing at the Scout ships. As the helicopters brushed the ground the men jumped and scrambled out, running for cover, each man to a predesignated position. so that by the time all men were down, a circle defense had been formed.

Once on the ground First Lieutenant Steven Featherston put his men into the platoon assault formation to move northeast. Essentially the formation was a two squad front with two squads behind for maneuver. Lieutenant Featherston took the third and first squads with him on the right, the third squad leading with a two man point team ten to twenty feet in front of the squad. On the left his platoon sergeant, PSG James R. Petergal, had the second and fourth squads, fourth trailing the second. The second squad leader, Sergeant ~~Ca~~ Ceaser Bryant, had a two man point out. PSG Petergal was supposed to keep in eye contact with Lieutenant Featherston and this he did in spite of limited visibility caused by the thick vegetation. The surrounding terrain was covered with coconut trees, palm trees, and thick, impassable hedgerows that were built up six or seven feet high. In between the hedgerows were small clearings that looked like old potato patches, but now relatively barren of vegetation. (Map 5)

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As the first wave of the lift ships cleared the LZ they broke left or northeast, and received automatic fire 150 meters out. The second wave broke to the right and drew fire about 175 meters out from the LZ. So far the infantry had not been shot at. After walking 50 - 75 meters north and east the Blues came upon four small Vietnamese houses (hootches). Everything looked normal and nothing seemed unusual. Coming out of the tiny hamlet the second squad paralleled a hedgerow to the north. PSG Petergal recalled they "came up to real thick pine trees, bushes and shrubs. The lead element walked right up on to the enemy positions when they noticed three of them were out of the position and ~~they jumped~~ back into the positions, got their weapons, and came out shooting." They were about 150 - 200 meters from the LZ now. The men were aware that there were enemy soldiers in bunkered positions with automatic weapons because Major Mendenhall told them exactly that. But "they (the enemy) were so well camouflaged that the only reason we saw them was because men moved and were out of their holes and jumped into their holes when the point element came up on them," observed PSG Petergal. X

The second squad took the brunt of it. The two men on point were followed by Sergeant Bryant. The point team had actually gone past a few positions before movement was detected and the awful realization flew from man to man that they had walked directly into Hell. The firing broke out immediately then and in a few seconds everyone dove for cover as bullets crackled in the air all around. The point scrambled back fifteen feet to Sergeant Bryant. X

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The squad leader set about deploying his men left and right. The fourth squad was to his left rear, near an open area on the left flank. Three or four automatic weapons fired from the far left thus keeping Petergal from attempting a flanking movement to the left to relieve the pinned second squad. A hedgerow in between second and third added to the already impossible task of communication and movement from the one to the other. Over on the right Lieutenant Featherston and the third squad were in a box of hedges of their own. All along their front a fusillade of bullets dropped them and kept them down, making maneuver a nightmare. Forward movement was stopped cold; the hedgerow blocked the left and then more automatic weapons churned the air from the right, denying movement in that direction. By hugging the earth the fourth squad had inched up even with the second. One of the men in front of Bryant was hit three times in the head, no more than fifteen feet from the enemy position. Then Sergeant Bryant was mortally wounded. Private First Class John E. Horn, to his left, was also killed. Third and first had begun extricating themselves slowly. Grenades were flying along the front, "it was so thick we just threw our grenades in the area hoping they would go into the holes because you couldn't see any flashes from the weapons or movement at all." By using white phosphorus grenades someone managed to recover the man in front of Bryant. But other than that the situation was so unfavorable the only maneuver the Blues could possibly make would be to withdraw. And with difficulty, they did. (Map 6)

The Scout teams were still circling over the area. They were able to place the most effective fire on the entrenched enemy soldiers. They wheeled up and around, diving, pitching grenades out the doors, firing the door mounted M-60 machine guns, shooting directly into the holes and bunkers. The vulnerable 13's courageously hovered over the enemy, throwing everything they had. But even this brave display was somewhat futile. Most of the bunkers or trench holes had overhead cover. Off to one side of a main hole was another running 90 degrees, so the enemy could fire, pop down in his hole and actually fall back in a hole within a hole.

The Apache Blues had indeed run into a well-fortified, well-armed enemy prepared to wage a withering defense. His positions were intelligently built, mutually supporting and in some cases additionally covered by snipers in trees. The most people ever seen in a group numbered only nine. Only rarely were they seen, sometimes two or three together. The first estimate of the enemy, "during the heat of battle", was put at two companies.

Lieutenant Featherston was ordered to and withdrew 100 meters and secured an LZ. An attempt was made to adjust artillery fire. The first round came in hitting 100 meters to the east of the platoon. The second round was erratic and landed in the midst of the platoon. "Luckily no one was hurt at this time and we cancelled the fire mission," said Major Mendenhall. ARA was called in and made several passes over the area, followed by the FAC (Forward Air Controller) who directed air strikes into the village.

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When the air strikes ended the Delta Troop platoon, 1/9, came into the LZ that Lieutenant Featherston's platoon secured. One of Featherston's squad leaders, Sergeant Bryant, who had been killed in the first action, was still in the area of the fight. Featherston and First Lieutenant Thomas K. Holland, platoon leader of the D Troop platoon, got the word to move back up and secure Bryant's body. Apache Blue would take the right flank, moving generally north, back to the area of their fight. Holland would move his platoon out to secure the left flank.

Apache Blue moved forward and was suddenly pinned down by automatic fire. A few men with the platoon sergeant, PSG Petergal, were over on the far right. They discovered they could still crawl forward without receiving effective fire. They crawled up to a hedgerow and could see Bryant's body laying 15 to 20 meters on the other side. Then they started receiving carbine fire. Petergal had one man drop back ten meters so he could pitch grenades over the hedge. One man up front would look through the hedge and adjust this hand-made artillery.

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The carbine fell silent. As they started out to get Bryant the carbine opened up again. Petergal organized his few men into a base of fire and sent two of his strongest men out for Bryant. Under cover of this heavy friendly fire they pulled the body back into the hedgerow. The carbine opened up again. Petergal passed the word to withdraw; they'd accomplished their mission. They carried Sergeant Bryant's body back to the LZ.

Lieutenant Holland and his platoon ran into a little more difficulty. They had moved along side Apache Blue for about 75 meters. When the fire pinned the Blues down, fire pinned down "Lancer White", Delta Troops's call-sign. They were in thick underbrush that grew over their heads. Visibility was limited to ten or fifteen feet. The lead squad had point and flank men out about ten meters. They were the first to make contact. Lieutenant Holland thought at the time it was a heavy caliber machine gun engaging them. Other small arms and snipers opened up pinning the lead squad.

Lieutenant Holland took his remaining two squads and moved off to the left, or west, to flank the fire on his lead squad. They moved about thirty meters, crossing a north-south trail and getting on the west side of it.

One squad led off moving north. The point man and right flank security ran smack into a machine gun bunker on the trail facing south. The left flank hit another bunker at the same time about fifteen meters west of the trail. There was also another bunker on the trail farther up covering the northern approach. Machine guns were in the two bunkers facing south and they "received a hell of a lot of fire from there." Later they realized there was a whole line of bunkers along the hedgerow facing south. The next morning they counted twenty positions in the hedge ten meters apart, well camouflaged and dug in deep with overhead cover.

At least 10 or 15 weapons opened up on them. The point and flank men were hit ten feet from a bunker. Firing as they fell wounded, they killed one NVA. Holland pulled the lead squad back thirty meters from the hedgerow. He sent his platoon sergeant over to see if the first squad could rejoin them. They had a WIA out in the open and couldn't get to him. The platoon sergeant got close enough to determine the man had died so he brought the squad out to rejoin the platoon. On the way back they drew heavy fire again. It took about thirty minutes to fight their way to the other two squads.

Even before the Delta Troop platoon was committed and became embroiled in their fight, it was becoming increasingly obvious a force larger than two enemy companies had been located. Lieutenant Colonel Eggers was at LZ Hammond. He had been keeping up with the situation, then "while back there (Hammond), Brigade (First) got the word that this fight in the village was really getting hot. Based on this we came back up to the area and started to deploy the battalion." He first called Captain Ogg and told him to get to a pickup zone (PZ) so he could be committed but Ogg was in contact and couldn't break it at

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the time. Bravo 1/8 was ready so 1/9 dispatched four ships to LZ Gavin to pick them up and get them started in. Unexpected problems arose, for one thing only a platoon at a time could go in. Captain Villaronga, his CP group and second platoon could fit on the first load and they took off before lunch time. However, it was during this time that F4-C fighter-bombers were hitting the area north of Apache Blue with bombs, napalm, and 20mm cannon. The air activity was too intense for Villaronga to land so they circled for nearly one hour. It was during this time that the basic plan was made. Also by the time Villagonga sat down C 1/8 had disengaged themselves and had come down off the ridge. Medical evacuation helicopters (MEDEVAC) carried out their wounded, a prisoner and some captured equipment. Apache Blue and Lancer White were holding their own for the present.

The 1/9 infantry platoons were up against more than two NVA companies, supported by a few 12.7 (50 caliber) machine guns. Lieutenant Colonel Eggers wanted to hold them there until he could muster forces to smash them. C 1/8 was ordered to seal off and block in the west and southwest. Considering the terrain and amount of area to cover it was a formidable task which took about two hours to accomplish. Captain Ogg wanted to move east all the way and get into the fight. In retrospect that might have been a valid move because he had a full company to fight with and was still orientated on the ground. Lieutenant Colonel Eggers was right in his plan because he couldn't foresee what would happen in the north.

Captain Villaronga and the second platoon B 1/8 came into an LZ south of the Cavalry Squadron's infantry platoon, Apache Blue. He was to collect his company and extend east to Hiway 506 because it was felt the south "would be the most likely area through which the enemy would try to withdraw," said Colonel Eggers. It took an hour for the rest of the company to arrive and set up the block. The anvil was set.

Lieutenant Colonel Eggers still had his entire battalion to commit. His concept called for A, C, and D companies to come into the north and push the enemy down into the block. B 1/12 would come into the east, thereby completing the encirclement. The plan was consistent with the situation but ran into trouble. (Map 7)

At 1:38 in the afternoon Major Bieri, S-3 1/12, notified A, C, and D Companies to move to a pickup zone (PZ) as soon as possible. The problem of consolidating platoons and companies on PZ's was great, due to their dispersion. The task of committing them as companies wasn't possible. This was to have its effect.

On the afternoon of the 17th, Delta Company 1/12 was composed of only two platoons. They had recently been reorganized from a heavy weapons to a light rifle company, current strength 62 officers and men. The third platoon was at LZ Pony acting as battalion recon platoon. The second platoon was on a

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sweeping operation about 3,000 meters south of LZ Bird. At 1:38 PM First Lieutenant Chester G. Cox, the Executive Officer and acting company commander, received a call to locate a PZ and prepare for extraction because "somebody made contact." They sat on the PZ for nearly two hours and received no word of where they were going or what kind of contact had been made. Second Lieutenant Timothy W. Feiner, third platoon leader, had seven Huey's with which to move his platoon. At about 2:44 PM they air assaulted to the LZ that all of 1/12 eventually used. Lieutenant Feiner moved his platoon to secure the LZ while C/1/12 came in. Then First Lieutenant Paul R. Prindle's platoon, second of Delta, closed.

At the same time, 1:38 PM, Captain Philip L. Blake, Commanding Officer of Alpha Company 1/12, was notified to "saddle up", meaning pack up and get ready to air assault. He was with his first and third platoons, the fourth north of them and the second northeast. Blake considered his disposition and decided to get out first with the third and first platoons because they were already together, close to a PZ. Then he wanted second and fourth to lift out in that order. It was thirty to forty-five minutes from the time he was alerted until the ships came in. They started into the 506 Valley and circled because of the air strikes. Rather than expend fuel they went back up to LZ Pony and sat down there. Sergeant First Class John M. Ketchen, the operations sergeant, came out and briefed Captain Blake on the situation as it was known at the time: an unknown sized NVA force was somewhere in the village south of the LZ where they would land. Major Bieri had said over the radio, "It looks like another Hoa Hoi."

On the way back to the 506 Valley Captain Blake called Captain Darrel G. Houston, the company commander of Charlie 1/12, on the radio. Houston had just come into the LZ and was unable to provide much information. Blake landed and began moving northeast towards the hiway. Just off the LZ he encountered Delta Company, which was forming into an assault line facing a hedgerow. The hedges were in a series, about two or three deep running parallel to the hiway for several hundred meters south. The hedgerows were thick and impenetrable except for where there were natural breaks or paths in them. Several houses, apparently vacant, lined both sides of the road. Delta had moved up to the first hedgerow and crouched there as Blake headed for the hiway.

About 150 meters from the LZ the third platoon and Blake came to the hiway, crossed, and wheeled into a line formation. Several automatic weapons cut the tense atmosphere, wounding a machine gunner, Specialist Four

Chisholm. His squad leader, Staff Sergeant Ellis Espinoza, was shot dead. Three NVA were killed and their weapons, a Chicom light machine gun, a Russian AK-47 assault rifle and an M-16 rifle were captured in this first brief encounter. (Map 8)

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The first platoon, A Company, had just come into the LZ when the third platoon exchanged the opening volleys. First Sergeant Charles R. Hillis shouted over to someone in Delta Company, "Where's Captain Blake and third platoon?" Sergeant First Class Rogue Perpetua, Jr., told him, "go northeast where the shots are coming from." Hillis had spoken to his friend "Pet", as he was affectionately known, for the last time. Staff Sergeant David A. Garcia, the acting platoon leader, and Hillis gathered up the first platoon and went looking for Blake. When they linked up, Blake put first platoon on his left as they pushed on south, still on the east side of the road.

From the road east it is about 75 meters to a creek bed but further south the creek and road come closer together in a bottle neck. NVA soldiers were dug into spider holes along the creek bed with good fields of fire onto the hiway and the adjacent ground. The point squad of the first platoon was nearest the creek when automatic weapons cut them down, hitting all but one man. Immediately several men rushed forward to aid their fallen comrades. Specialist Four Antonio Sanchez fired his M-16 as Private First Class Gerald E. Swanson and Specialist Four Frederico N. Lee ran out to pull back wounded men. Then Swanson rapidly fired his M-79 grenade launcher point blank into enemy positions while Sanchez braved the fire to drag back more wounded. When the casualties had been pulled back they got the word to come back themselves because an ARA strike was coming in on the stream bed. Not wanting the enemy to retrieve the weapons dropped out in the open, the three soldiers teamed up, covering each other as they ran out and gathered up the weapons.

First Lieutenant Robert L. Robbins, the second platoon leader of A Company had landed and moved over towards the hiway and the sound of heavy firing. They stayed on the west side of the road and pushed down about even with Blake and Hillis. Blake wanted to close the gap between himself (third platoon) and Robbins (second platoon) who was across the road. Robbins couldn't maneuver to the flank because Delta was severely engaged there so Blake told Hillis to push the first platoon forward and cut right to the flank. As the first drove in they hit determined resistance and became virtually stopped dead. Hillis grabbed a radio hand set and called in ARA runs across his front. Rockets and machine gun fire swept through the enemy positions relieving the pressure so the first could move again and Blake to the advantage to move the third over towards Robbins. Once again enemy fire prohibited movement but Blake had firmed up his line so the first, third, and second platoons were linked together in an "L" shaped battle line facing the enemy inner security belt. Shortly before Blake's fourth platoon, the weapons platoon, had landed on the LZ. As they made their way south following the sound of the increasing battle noises, they came up on Delta Company's left flank, who had just become engaged in a fierce fight. The fourth platoon managed to keep moving left and wound up in with Lieutenant Robbin's second platoon. Blake had just found out his mortar platoon sergeant, PSG ~~Donald~~ Donald Leemhis and the fourth platoon medic, Private First Class ~~Alton R. Kennedy~~ Alton R. Kennedy were dead and Sergeant Sherman Fuller was seriously wounded. Later when a perimeter had been established First Lieutenant Donald Grigg, mortar platoon leader, was wounded. Blake had lost KIA or WIA two platoon leaders and five sergeants.

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In between the time when Hillis and the first platoon had landed and when Robbins and the second platoon had landed, Delta Company had become engaged. They had been on an assault line facing a hedgerow, Lieutenant Feiner's third platoon on the right or south end, Lieutenant Prindle's second platoon on the left or north end. Feiner was with his first squad on the extreme right. Back with his second squad was the company headquarters, Lieutenant Cox and First Sergeant Gene O. Helgerson. To their left was Prindle's platoon, each squad on line facing the hedges. The NVA lay just beyond the second hedgerow but no one was aware of that. The enemy positions were of the cleverest camouflage, impossible to detect. However, one of the men in Sergeant William D. Cook's first squad did see an NVA through the hedge. Feiner and the first squad started through and moved across the open up to the next hedgerow and went through that. Once out in the open again, not ten feet from the hedge, the enemy at last revealed their presence with a fusillade of bullets. The surprise was more than effective for now the Americans were in the open with no place to turn to except back over more open ground. (Map 9)

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The first burst knocked down Private First Class Timothy Ewing. Corporal Jack J. Deaton, who was right behind Ewing, was shot and fell wounded. The NVA, realizing he was still alive, put another burst in him and there he died. The squad leader, Sergeant Cook, was hit and fell fatally wounded. Specialist Four Michael J. Anderson, the medic, moved forward immediately and got up to Ewing. A lung had been punctured and Ewing was having trouble breathing so Anderson tried mouth to mouth resuscitation. Just then an enemy bullet hit across his hand. Anderson patched Ewing as best as he could and crawled back to work on other wounded. Later in the afternoon Feiner and Anderson were able to pull Ewing back for medevac but he died before reaching the hospital. Anderson continued his job all afternoon and into the night. It was nearly one o'clock the next morning when he stopped to patch his own wounded hand. The knuckle was broken, not a serious wound, but as Lieutenant Feiner described it, "a very painful one."

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Close to the first squad, machine gunner Private First Class ~~Regardox~~ Roger K. Hattersley, was pinned down in the open, apparently in a blind spot because enemy bullets kept churning the dirt on both sides of him. He fired all his ammo from there. Then he ran out to where Deaton was laying, picked up 200 more rounds, and ran back. Hattersley shot up at least one. A bullet hit him in the right shoulder. Somehow he made it back and was later medevac'd. The next day his machine gun was found right up by the bunker.

X For almost five minutes the killing continued unabated. The enemy was well hidden in a bunker about two and a half feet high, concealed in the thick, bushy hedgerow. The NVA had waited until the Americans were very close, too close, in fact, for them to hope to move after being pinned down not twenty feet from the bunker. Hattersley had finally seen the bunker, then Feiner saw rifle smoke but couldn't pinpoint the firing aperture.

X The mortar Recon Sergeant, Staff Sergeant Harry R. Forsyth, and Lieutenant Feiner wanted to call in artillery, but neither was certain of their location. They both had a good idea but couldn't say definitely. Nor were they the only ones disoriented that day. For one thing, the map was inaccurate just enough to make pinpointing futile. Visibility was limited by the vegetation and terrain features were no help on the valley floor. Furthermore, they were fiercely engaged in a fire fight. Under the circumstances, Sergeant Forsythe made the best decision. He plotted a concentration using common sense and a little guess work and called for two smoke rounds. Nobody ever saw the smoke but by then it made little difference. Lift ships, gun ships, command and control helicopters, and H-13's were constantly in the area. Also Charlie 1/12 was moving again; exact location unknown. Sergeant had to give it up for the time being.

X To say the least, their position was highly unfavorable. They were in close to the enemy position--too close for friendly artillery or ARA. They were in the open, by and large, and boxed in by hedgerows. The AK-47 kept them down while snipers in the trees began picking them off. Feiner, ~~realizing~~ realizing this had his men spray the trees, hoping to kill the ones up there but the camouflage was nearly perfect so it was impossible to know the results of this shooting. All the bunkers were interlocking and mutually supporting, further protected by well concealed snipers. There was a bunker or spider hole every 15 to 30 meters, camouflaged and hidden in a hedgerow. Friendly fires were essentially blind, having no specific targets that were recognizable.

By now the second platoon was heavily engaged in a similar situation. Feiner radioed his platoon sergeant, PSG Willie Earnest, who was with Sergeant Rochelle Simms' third squad, and told him to maneuver over to try and relieve the second platoon. Lieutenant Cox went along and they picked up a 90mm recoilless rifle from A Company's weapons platoon.

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X
Over on the eastern sector of second platoon-Delta, they attempted to knock out an enemy bunker. The gun crew, Specialist Four Percy B. Goodeagle, Specialist Four Arcadio Sanchez and Private First Class Charles R. Bookleman were emplacing the 90mm when an enemy grenade bounced off Sanchez' back and exploded, wounding Sanchez and Goodeagle. The breech block on the 90mm was damaged by the blast and was now worthless. However, Bookleman did manage to lug the gun back to Alpha Company as he fought his way out of that hot spot. Time had lost meaning in that one small area, sequence was blurred. Lieutenant Cox had been shot. PSG Leemhis crawled over to help Cox. As Leemhis lifted up, a sniper bullet found its mark in his neck and he fell dead next to Cox. Private First Class Alton R. Kennedy was close by treating other wounded and dragging them back out of the fire swept field. Kennedy made two trips braving the spray of bullets, in spite of pleas for him to stay back. He couldn't bring himself to ignore the pitiful, plaintive cries of "Medic, help, Oh God, help!" Moving out again Kennedy was wounded on his third trip. His fourth was the last. Kennedy gave his life to save other. Sergeant Simms had one man still alive from his squad. Together they endured the afternoon and evening until darkness afforded a chance to get out of their private Hell.

The second platoon became engaged right after the third. On their left flank Alpha company was hard pressed, on the right Feiner was taking many casualties. Private First Class Eleazer F. Trevino started through a small hole in the hedgerow. A sniper bullet cut him down. Specialist Four James W. Jeffers, close behind, could see him and started out to him but Trevino motioned him back. He could hear someone yell, "stay back, there's snipers all over." At this time the platoon sergeant, PSG Perpetua, and Private First Class Angel Luna went through another hole. Perpetua spotted a machine gun bunker and charged for it. He was right up on it when he was hit. His helmet had eleven holes in it and he was shot in the chest and head. He had recently extended for duty in Saigon. He volunteered to go out that day—above and beyond the call of duty. Luna was shot and killed by a sniper as Perpetua fell.

X
The fighting was reaching a peak in their area. Incoming rounds were everywhere, the fire accurate. Men were pinned down with nowhere to go. ARA was called in and eased some of the pressure but because of the exceedingly close proximity between friend and foe, exploding rockets spewed fragments everywhere, some of which hit the Americans.

Lieutenant Prindle was over farther to the left on the other side of the hedgerow. He was blocked by a barbed wire fence. He cut through two strands and was working on the third when a bullet went through his helmet, knocking it to the ground. Prindle ran over to a wounded machine gunner, grabbed the M-60 and got up firing but it jammed. He was then pinned down with his platoon. All forward progress was dead. They moved no further forward from where the fight erupted.

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Meanwhile, Lieutenant Feiner was still trying to extricate his first squad. He sent the second around to the left to flank the bunker facing him. They maneuvered over to a break in the hedgerow and went through. As they came up on line an NVA bunker engaged them. The first burst hit two men. Specialist Four Joseph Lemon ran over and jumped in the bushes to conceal himself, unwittingly only two meters from a spider hole. His body was found the next day in the same place. The whole squad was pinned down when snipers in trees opened up. Sergeant Antonio Garcia was killed, along with the rest of his squad. Most of them were shot through the neck or head with deadly accuracy.

X

Lieutenant Feiner called the second squad on the radio. He wanted to tell them to hold up because Charlie 1/12 was moving somewhere on his right and he didn't want second shooting that way. The RTO (Radio Telephone Operator) Private First Class Michel E. Noone, lone survivor of the squad, told Feiner that Garcia was dead, and everyone else had been hit. At the time he thought a couple were still alive. Feiner asked him where the fire was coming from. "I don't know, sir, we're getting picked off!" said Noone. A medic tried to get over to them but it just wasn't possible. A large open area that lay in between was covered every step of the way by enemy fire. For the rest of the afternoon and evening Noone lay there alone, wounded and unable to move. Just after dark he saw 15 or 20 NVA come out to where his squad lay. When a man moaned they sprayed him with automatic fire. Noone was wounded again by one of these bursts. A bullet hit his back and came ripping out his stomach. Amazingly he was still conscious. He opened his eyes and saw the enemy had taken two or three ponchos which they used to carry off their own dead. They also searched the dead Americans. When they got to Noone, one enemy soldier grabbed his belt and picked him up. Seeing his stomach hanging out they figured him dead and threw him down. He landed on a red ants nest. Three hours later a medical evacuation team found him covered with ants, but alive. Noone was one of three survivors from Delta Company that had actually seen a VC or NVA that day.

X

Delta Company's First Sergeant Gene O. Helgerson led the medical evacuation team that located and saved Noone. For several hours they crept around looking for American wounded, treating them and pulling them back for evacuation. There can be no doubt that Helgerson and crew put life back into men who otherwise would have surely died from their wounds. The urgency of their work retrieving wounded men forced them to leave the dead where they lay forlornly. With the morning sun the next day these men would begin their last trip home.

Charlie 1/12 had come into the LZ while Delta secured it, and before Alpha landed. Captain Houston had only two platoons to command, one was security platoon on LZ Bird, the other had been committed earlier in the day to assist Charlie Company 1/8. First Lieutenant John J. Rudd's third platoon stayed with Houston while First Lieutenant William R. Edmison's first platoon was sent to the southwest to link up with Captain Ogg's Company. Edmison moved his platoon about 200 meters southwest, making no contact with either

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Q. Pinning the 1st squad down? You moved them left.

A. ~~That's~~ That's right. They maneuvered...year, and they came towards the break in the hedgerow--the only way they could do it--they came through the hedgerow and were fired upon from this other bunker I explained before that was interlocking. They didn't know where the bunker was; they were there all afternoon and still didn't know where the bunker was. I lost 5 people in that squad that were killed. The only man I had left there was the RTO...

Q. What was his name?

A. Noone. And he kept on warning me all afternoon, when Charlie Company came up on our flank, I told them to hold fire because....

Q. Which flank did they come up?

A. They were coming up on my right flank; they were coming up on my west. When they started coming up, I wasn't exactly sure where they were coming in, I didn't want my people firing into them so I called and had the 2d squad hold and he said he was the only one left that wasn't hit.

Q. OK. What transmissions did you have with this 2d squad and what did know that was going on?

A. I called them, I maneuvered them...

Q. Who did you talk to, do you remember?

A. The RTO.

Q. Noone?

A. Noone. They maneuvered, they got through the break in the hedgerow and they received fire. They called me and said the squad leader was dead...

Q. What was his name?

A. SGT Garcia and two other people...or 3 other people were hit. I tried to get a medic into them but I couldn't get him in.

Q. Why?

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A. Well, they were about 20 meters to my rear and about 30 meters to my front from where I was on line, in other words, they were behind me and to the front of me or, say, 20 meters to my left. We tried to get him in and heavy sniper fire pinned ^{them} down because there was a big open area. ^{they} tried to go through. They got pinned down and they were picked off one by one from snipers.

Q. In the trees? This is how these men were killed in the 2d squad?

A. Right, most of them were. Like out of the 13 people I lost I had 9 of them that were head and neck wounds. 6 of them were shot through the head.

Q. You say they were killed by the snipers in the trees or by the initial...by the bunker.

A. They were hit with the initial burst; a couple of them were hit, most of them when they got through, they went on line and laid down and returned fire. Of course they didn't know what they were firing at. When I called I said where's the fire coming from, he said, "I don't know, sir, we're getting picked off." When we went in there the next morning, I found ^a man that was laying almost on top of the bunker and where it was was in a heavy bush area. I imagined what happened, when they opened fire, he went for the bush for cover and he was on top of the bunker.

Q. How far was he from the bunker?

A. Within 2 meters.

Q. 2 meters? What was his name, do you remember?

A. Spec 4 Lemmons.

Q. And they still didn't know where the fire was coming from?

A. Well, Noone was there all day, he was in a position where he had been hit, he said about dark 14 to 20 "charlies" came in the area. They came in the area and they sprayed the area. Everytime somebody moaned they'd spray. Well, this time Noone got hit through the back, split the front of him open and he got hit through the leg. He was still conscious; said he opened his eyes and looked and said the VC

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had taken two or three of our ponchos and were carrying the bodies off.

Q. Who's bodies?

A. The VC bodies.

Q. Enemy bodies.

A. Right. And they also were searching everybody. They came up to him, he said one came up to him and grabbed him by the belt and picked him up; he was still conscious. And said he was just lucky because ^{they} ~~he~~ must have looked at him and saw his stomach hanging out and figured he was dead. ^{They} ~~he~~ threw him back down in this nest of red ants and the shock team, medical . shock team found him about 3 hours later. They saved his life; he was covered with ants. But I saw him Christmas; he was the only one that ^I ~~could've~~ gotten any body count at all from the platoon by the 2 or the 3 that he said he saw ^{that} them carrying off. Nobody else/was alive in my platoon saw a charlie all day. And this was the same with the 2d platoon. The only kind of body count I got, I saw him and I knew we got two, this machine gunner said he got one that he knows he got. So we were pinned down there, Charlie Company came up on our flank and they walked into the same open area where I pulled my platoons back about 15 meters.

Q. Who's troops were these?

A. My 1st platoon, my 1st squad.

Q. You could pull them back?

A. Right. I got them pulled back and about...oh, maybe 10 meters at the most, ^{it was} heavy underbrush.

Q. Was this just after they were hit or...?

A. This was within 2, 3 or 4 minutes after they were hit. So they were getting fire all over the area; they pulled back, they were lucky. Like the machine gunner must have been in a blind spot with the bunker because he was returning fire and I was

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up from him a ways laying there and I saw rounds striking, going down one side of his body within about a foot or 6 inches and back up the other side, but he must have been in a blind spot, he pulled back and ran out of ammo, jumped up and went back out in the area, got 200 rounds out of a corporal that was carrying when he was hit.

Q. What was his name, do you remember?

A. Hattersly.

Q. Hattersly?

A. Hattersly, right. And he went back, fired about 3/4 of his rounds and then he jumped up and went after the bunker and he got hit, got medevac'd. We didn't know about it, Charlie Company found his machine gun, and he just came back from the hospital.

Q. Where did they find his machine gun?

A. Up by the bunker.

Q. Right up by the bunker?

A. He went right up to the bunker, got hit, and ^{dropped} back.

Q. Do you know where he was hit?

A. He was hit through the...right up just below the shoulder.

Q. Right shoulder?

A. Right, and it ran down across the ribs and up the back.

Q. Was there any machine gun fire, or was it just AK?

A. I couldn't be sure. I'd say most of them were AK's in my area. So we pulled back a ways, the FO moved up to me as soon as I hit the initial contact. He tried to call....

Q. What was his name?

A. SGT Forsythe. He tried to call artillery in and they fired two ^{smoke} small...as I said before, we didn't know where we were going into or what was on the ground

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and he couldn't get any artillery in.

Q. Why couldn't he get any artillery in?

A. He didn't know where he was.

Q. He didn't know where he was on the ground?

A. We had moved and he had judged as close as he could and he called for 2 smoke

but couldn't see them so we couldn't get artillery in. Finally Charlie Company came up on our flank...

Q. You must have an idea from the map, though, around where you were or you didn't at all?

A. Well, we had moved about 15 clicks from where we were and came in, we could judge it fairly close, but they just more oriented as we came in.

Q. And they never saw the two smoke bombs?

A. They never saw the two smoke bombs, and the reason I was told there was no prep before hand was because they had, the first night they made initial contact, they had choppers in the air and they didn't know where they were, so we didn't have any artillery prep at all. We finally tied in with Charlie Company. The 1st Sergeant was up in my platoon, Charlie Company came up on our flank and they walked into the open area here and got two of their people killed on the same machine gun bunker.

Q. Do you remember who they were?

A. No. I think one of the platoon leaders got hit in the leg, LT Rudd, and they thought it was our fire, I held my people to fire, nobody fired and then they realized it was from that same bunker.

Q. The same bunker that hit your 1st squad right off?

A. Right. So the 1st Sergeant was up with me and he moved around, back about 25 meters and tied in with Charlie Company.

Q. Do you know who the 1st Sergeant was?

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A. Charlie Hogerson.

Helgerson

Q. Hogerson?

A. Hogerson.

Q. And he....

A. He moved around and got with Charlie Company Commander and told him where we were and how we were deployed and he tied us in. They came up on us, as I say, there was a hedgerow down in the end of that open area; they were on the other side of the hedgerow in the brush and they ^{CAME} in through the brush and walked out in the open area. Like I say, it was like this....

CPT SYKS - Do it on the map.

A. The area we were hit in was not much wider than this tent - open area - and there was a hedgerow here where the VC were set up and there was heavy brush to my right flank on my east...excuse me, my west...where Charlie Company was, it was about 5 meters of brush. They were on the other side which was open rice paddy and field. They walked into the open area where I had initial contact and got two of their people hit. My 1st SGT moved around behind where I had pulled back into on the other side of the open area from where I initially got hit, tied in with Charlie Company and let them know where we were and we set up on a line that way.

Q. Did you throw smoke or anything?

A. After we got in, CPT *HEVSTON* called me and had me throw smoke to mark my flanks, he was going to bring ARA in. He brought it in on the area, it cut down on some of the fire we were receiving.

Q. Where did the ARA hit?

A. Right in along the hedgerow across the open area; about 15 - 20 meters from where we were laying. The fire from the bunker after this was intermittent. Everytime somebody moved or shifted trying to get to one of the wounded, he'd open up. This was about getting near 4:30 - 5:00.

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Q. And the man who was in the bunker would open up, not one of the snipers in the bunker.

A. No, it was mostly from the bunker.

Q. Were you still getting fire from the trees?

A. The 1st SGT and I had sprayed the trees heavily and this cut down on most of the sniper fire. Of course we didn't see any bodies fall out or anything but this cut down on the fire. We pulled back, like I said, about 4:30, 5:00, I believe it was ~~Alpha~~^{Bravo} Company that landed behind us.

Q. OK, Let's go back to the ARA. How long were they on station?

A. They came in twice. They ^{CAME} in with us twice.

Q. Two full loads?

A. I believe it was 2 full loads.

Q. Two ships each time?

A. I don't know. It was coming in close and it seemed like a long time they were firing. After the ARA came in, we were getting artillery in, Bravo Company was calling artillery in, they were to my east. They brought it in, I got a call from the RTO of the 3d squad, ~~him~~ and the squad leader were alive at that time, it was coming in fairly close to them.

Q. Into the village or...?

A. It was coming into the village on the other side of the hedgerows. At that time they were fairly close with ~~Bravo~~^{alpha} Company. As I said, when they went up, they got the 90 from ~~Bravo~~^{Alpha} Company and they were in the area of Bravo Company, of course our 2d platoon was right in that area together too. After some of the artillery came in, Alpha Co landed behind my area.

Q. Do you remember how much artillery came in?

A. It was coming in off and on I'd say for about a half an hour. I called it off twice because it was coming close to my people. One of them got hit with it in the 3d squad and then the RTO from the 2d squad still had contact with...called me and

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said it was coming in on top of him, so I called back and got the artillery lift

- Q. Was there a problem with the number of choppers in the air as far as bringing in artillery? Were there a lot of choppers in the air?
- A. Like I say, we were on the ground at least an hour before any artillery came in at all and ~~Bravo~~ ^{Alpha} Co had adjusted that in and finally got the choppers out of the air. ^{Bravo} Alpha Co came into reinforce us. They swept around through Charlie Co in to the other side of the village, 150 meters. When ^{Bravo} Alpha Co came in, I'd say it was close to 5:30, maybe 6 o'clock; it wasn't much before dark. They swept around to the west and south to the other side of this village.
- Q. They swept through the village?
- A. I don't know. They swept around to my flank, to my west. And secured a field and part of the village where this other platoon of Charlie Co was. I don't know how they got in there or what they were doing in there.
- Q. You mentioned before that there was this ring around the village, were they inside that ring..?
- A. Right. That night when I finally did get over there we found right on the perimeter.....we killed 3 VC in a bunker-in a hole.
- Q. Where are you now?
- A. This is where Alpha Co swept into. We eventually moved Charlie and Delta over there at night.
- Q. How did you do that?
- A. At night after dark we were spread out on line, the 2d platoon moved down to us and tied in with us. Then CPT Houston gave...he had been wounded. He gave me both companies--what was left of both companies and told me to sweep down to this village which was to the south.
- Q. Do you know how far south this was? Part of the same complex?
- A. It's part of the same complex, maybe 100 meters, and we swept down on line. We got

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Q. Did you know where this fire was coming from at aH or just...?

A. I'd say over to the east, but I didn't know for sure. And went back out, guided one ship in, we got him in; guided another one in, just got on the ground, got one body on it, or one of the wounded on it and somebody fired, I think it was one of our people, M79, and he took off and then a little while later we guided ^{re} 3 supply ships, ammo resupply.

Q. Were these the first medevac that you men had come in there in the afternoon?

A. Right. Early in the afternoon just after Alpha Company came in CPT Houston called me and he brought some medevac ships in the same place Alpha Co. landed and wanted me to get what people I could out. I had one man that I knew was still alive laying out in the open area, so I ~~called~~ crawled out and got him.

Q. You personally did?

A. Right/ Brought him out....

Q. Do you remember his name?

A. Ewing. Brought him out, I couldn't get to the other squad up here that was pinned down, and then 3d platoon....er, 2d platoon got theirs medevac'd someplace up in B Company, I don't know exactly where they came in or what. That's where I medevac'd my other man from the 3d squad that was hit, up in that area.

Q. OK, these other men from the first squad, they were left there overnight?

A. Right. They went out, I got a medical shock team in and they went out and found Ewing...I mean Noone....that had been hit.

Q. What time did they reach him, do you remember?

A. About 11 o'clock at night. And CPT Wagner worked on him all night long.

Q. CPT who?

A. Wagner, he's the battalion surgeon. And they got him out and medevac'd. I think the first body they medevac'd was Ewing, but after ^{WE} pulled him out he died before they got him medevac'd so they ~~got him~~ there and he got out the first thing

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in the morning. None of the bodies went out until the next morning.

Q. Did have any contact after dark at all when these medical teams were coming in to get...check the bodies over?

A. No. What happened was ^{about} ~~at~~ dark they pulled out of the area. The only fire we received was that few : bursts of AK when I started guiding medevacs in over here. We just swept through that area and we were on line shoulder to shoulder but there was nothing else you could do.

Q. This was at dark when you all were coming....

A. This was about 9 o'clock at night, 8:30 - 9 o'clock at night, so we finally moved, but initially I was spread out with the 10 people I had over a 150 meter area. The 2d platoon had pulled back this way trying to get to us, and he was on radio contact with me and he ^{didn't} know exactly where I was so he called me and asked me to fire a round; everytime I'd fire somebody else would fire, so then he says give me a yell, and we were sitting in the same place so I yelled once and he said, OK, give me another yell. So after about 5 or 6 yells he found me.

Q. And who was this you were yelling to?

A. ^{PRINGLE} LT ~~Rendleton~~. He tied in with us.

Q. He was wounded but not killed?

A. No, he wasn't wounded. He got one through the helmet but he wasn't wounded. And in the company we lost 16 KIA's and twenty something wounded.

Q. And these are just the 2 platoons?

A. That's 2 platoons, headquarters company....no, it was...we went on the ground with 62 people, the next morning we had 35.

Q. OK, what happened that night? Did you set up yourself a perimeter?

A. Alpha Co set the perimeter up and let Charlie Co and Bravo....er, Charlie and Delta get some sleep.

Q. OK. This perimeter of Alpha Co, were they inside the big....?

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Delta Company, 1/12

action of 506 Valley

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SP/4 GARY JOEL RTO D, 1/12

- Q. Tell us around what time you got the order and what happened as best as you possibly can.
- A. We started off, we were walking down one valley and they come down and picked us up. Then we took about 15 minutes flight time to get to 506 Valley. As soon as we landed in there we got our squads put back together and while we were standing around waiting for the rest of them to come in, why, we heard some shots and we started lining up, AT squad was connecting up with Silver Falcon and after we got on out, we started making a sweep through. As soon as we hit the open area.....
- Q. Just continue. What platoon were you in and which was the first platoon to hit the ground and what order did they come in, do you know?
- A. AT squad leader and RTO's was in the very first ship and the 1st squad, 2d squad, and then the 3d squad came in.
- Q. What platoon?
- A. AT squad.
- Q. AT platoon?
- A. I believe so sir.
- Q. Do you know the order of the other platoons that came in behind you, you were the first men on the ground from your company.
- A. Negative. There was one other group there before we got there. I don't know exactly what bunch they was with, but mortars, they was right with us. When we landed we were trying to get together to get on line, we were going to make a sweep through the village.
- Q. What type of terrain was around the LZ?
- A. There was large trees and heavy bushes and a lot of it was open rice paddies around the area.
- Q. Did you have any sniper fire when ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ into the LZ?

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- Q. The sniper fire hadn't started until we already landed, but after we were on the ground for approximately 10 minutes, why, then we heard some sniper fire start opening up.
- A. The fire was directly at you or you just heard it?
- Q. We just heard it starting off with until we got on line and started moving through.
- Q. How far was it before the enemy really opened up, when they let you have it all of a sudden?
- A. My estimation, I'd estimate the closest enemy to us was about 5 to 8 meters at the most.
- Q. How far was it from the LZ before he opened up on you?
- A. Just about 30 meters.
- Q. Is that pretty much how it was for the rest of your men?
- A. Roughly about 30 meters.
- Q. About 30 meters before you actually opened up. What formation was the company in when you were deployed on the LZ and the company ^{MOVING} through toward the village, does anybody know? Give your name.
- A. SF/4 Carlisle 2d plt-----we left the chopper, we got on line, went about 30 meters just started sweeping, moved about 30 meters and hit us.
- Q. What type of security did you have out, did your point man come across the enemy before he opened up and how far was your point man out ahead of you?
- A. Well, the enemy was about half way between the two platoons, right in front of us, they were just spread out everywhere.
- Q. Give your name and just take it all.
- A. This is SGT Jeffries, 2d plt of Delta Company, 1/12. From the beginning when we first hit the LZ, we were the first platoon to move in to where the fight took place. When we first moved out from the LZ there was no fire at all, so we moved on in a column, the whole platoon with SF/4 Carlisle's squad, lead squad, my squad

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next, and SGT Travino which was wounded in the battle. We had flank security now up which everybody when the platoon stops, they would come to a security take up security. As far as the point man is concerned, was in his squad which he wasn't too far away because it was thick brush down first. It wasn't too thick but it was hodgeprows and stuff. So, after we got up, the platoon sergeant and the platoon leader said move your men in line which to the right, so the 3d platoon was coming up to our right. So the first squad was SGT Travino's squad, PFC Rock here was in at the time, I believe you was the BTC, wasn't you, at the time for SGT Travino? The next squad, I had the middle squad, my squad was the middle one and his squad was on the left flank.

- Q. This was after you moved up on line?
- A. This is affirmative. We was on line.
- Q. How far had you moved in you column befor you deployed on line?
- A. Well, we had moved anywhere from approximately 30 to 50 meters before we got on line.
- Q. Did you have any fire?
- A. We heard some fire way back in the background, but it wasn't from where we first hit the enemy at.
- Q. When you deployed on line, was the other platoon up on your right flank yet?
- A. No, they hadn't quite got up there, so we waited before we moved out of there first. Then the other platoon got up, we had to shift down again to the right in line with the 3d platoon which had come up between us and Charlie Company. After we moved up, we started moving forward on line and at first the 1st squad and 2d squad of the 2d platoon was ordered to go around to the left flank. We were coming up on some hutches, we didn't know what was in these hutches so SF/L Carlisle and myself, we was taking the two squads. His squad and mine around to the flank. So the platoon leader said we were going on an azimuth of about 200, so he said to cut to the azimuth about 230 which would drop us back more southwest. So as we turned southwest, and started

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moving forward, the 1st squad of the 2d platoon was still moving in an azimuth of about 200 when the first man was hit. The first man that was hit I believe it was SGT Travino, he got wounded as he walked between an opening in the hedges. He laid there because...to keep the sniper from shooting at him anymore. If he had of moved, the sniper would shoot at him some more, therefore, the platoon called me over, as I came over I came to the left flank of the sniper and I came over and as I got over, my PFC stepped through the hedges to meet me when the sniper wounded him, therefore, we called a medic which was PFC Beancat which he did a very good job out there. He patched up my PFC, and I went down to where SGT Travino was, him and I were pretty good friends. I started to walk out where he was and they say everybody in the platoon, so SGT Jeffries don't go there, there's a sniper going to get you. SGT Travino looked up at me and told me to stay back. So I stepped back and PFC Beancat, the medic in the platoon, came down to where SGT Travino was laying at the time, which we had really started shooting, trying to place the snipers, couldn't really see them at all. Some of them were dug in the ground and some of them were up in the trees. As PFC Beancat started working on SGT Travino, a sniper shot him twice around the stomach somewhere. I couldn't really tell, we started fighting back hard then, with PFC Rock here, he did an outstanding job which he went in for a couple of medals because he exposed himself many a time trying to get the sniper. Also the platoon leader, LT Frone, he exposed himself sometime, he also got a hole through the helmet to prove how much he exposed himself. They called for the 1st squad which I had left half of my squad over in the 1st squad area.

- Q. Over on the left?
- A. They were over on the left flank and they were laying low because they were getting crossfire from the Silver Falcon and so they had to lay low. So they

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crawled....I think you crawled over to where they were, didn't you Carlisle, you brought your men over and they crawled over to where we were and we had all our platoon on that side at the time. So it was getting later and later.

Q. What time was this now?

A. This was about, let's see....about a quarter after 4.

Q. What time did you get on the ground, do you remember this, around what time you all got on the ground?

A. I think it was about a quarter till 4. We had been gone about a half hour when we got hit, I would say about a quarter till 4.

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Q. You've been talking about SCT Travino and the sniper fire. You were just getting sniper fire at this time.

A. The first person that got hit was from sniper fire, we know that. But farther around to our left where the 3d platoon was, to our right where the 3d platoon was, where Silver Falcon was coming in, it was machine gun bunkers there. This is where most of the KIA's.....they just waited until they got within 10 meters on them and the machine gun would open up, and also, with the guys this close to the machine gun, you couldn't evacuate them because anybody try and go near them they would get killed too. So, a few guys that got killed trying to evacuate the others. This is sort of to give you a general picture although we fought longer, we still...we laid down fire, also called in ABA's which is choppers coming in firing the rockets, and the battle was so close that sometimes when ABA come in, some of my men would receive some fragments from ABA's exploding.

Q. OK. You say there was a machine gun that opened up to your right on the 3d squad of the 3d platoon.....

U SGTK Tell, when SCT Travino got shot, about 2 meters in front of him where he was laying was a bunker and the bunker was about a foot off the ground, you couldn't even tell it. SCT Perpetus, our platoon leader, and PFC Lumar, they went through the hedges

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first night there, and SGT Travino was right behind them, and we were coming not exactly.....we were on line, but they were going a little bit ahead of us and a machine gun got SGT Perpetua and killed PFC Lunar too and that was just right after SGT Travino got wounded; he got shot about 3 times. The bunker was just a little off the ground, you couldn't see it...you couldn't see it through the brush or anything like that, and that's mostly where my squad was, right there

Q. I see. How many other....what do you estimate the size of the enemy was? You had that one machine gun which had opened up on you, and what was his....I mean how was he deployed? I'm trying to get an idea of how he was actually deployed.

A. You mean how the bunker was?

CPT SYKES: How the bunker or bunkers, the number of weapons, etc.

A. Well, I don't know what the force was, but I know they had snipers...at least 2 in the trees, and behind the bunker there was one sniper because if you stood up, you know, trying to shoot at the bunker, the sniper from around the rear, he would be like sticking out or laying out and you would know what kind of cover he had, but he'd be shooting back at you. He was shooting kind of high to you, not from the trees but he was still high, he was like on top of the bunker, he hid behind something, you know what I mean? And they had at least one automatic weapon in the bunker and another sniper was in the bunker with a semi-automatic weapon. I don't know what other kind of force they had there, but the bunker just had a little tiny hole, maybe two feet wide, and that's where they were shooting from and their field of fire was so great, anyone moved to the right of this little hedgerow to the left, you know, in this little space here, they didn't have a chance. This is where our MIA's and KIA's came from.

Q. But you say that the men that were killed initially and wound initially, they waited until they came right up on the position, then opened up? The men didn't have a chance...they didn't see the...at all?

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U SPKR -- We were in the 3d...eh..2d squad(this is IFC Rearly) we were in the 2d squad the 3d platoon. We moved through....come up on line at the edge of the rice paddy, we moved through one clearing and went through a hedgerow, a slight hedgerow, then we moved across another clearing and got right up to the hedgerow, then it was whole hell slaughter. It wiped out....it got us right in a crossfire on both sides.

Q. When you hit the LZ, did you have any fire at all when you landed in the LZ in the 3d platoon?

A. Well, when we hit the LZ, we landed, we never heard no sniper fire and then we were on the LZ for about 5 minutes, then over to our right facing the village was the 2d platoon and we heard some sniper fire way up on the....it was on our right facing the village and heard a few sniper rounds over there so we kept moving, the 3d platoon kept moving forward and we got up on line and we had to move back to our left to tie in with Silver Falcon, that's Charlie Company. When we got some kind of contact down there, I don't know if they made altogether contact with Charlie Company or not, they said move forward. We moved forward and I'd say we moved about 25 meters from the bank of the rice paddy to where we were pinned down. We were pinned down. We fell right in front of a machine gun bunker and they had sniper fire coming to us from the trees and we couldn't move back, couldn't move forward. Every time you would move you'd get it. We had one KIA, when he fell, he fell within a foot of a spider hole. That's how close we were. I would say we were within 5 to 8 meters of the machine gun bunker when he opened up on us.

Q. IFC Rock mentioned that some of the men were killed attempting to pull out some of the other wounded men. I imagine that they were so close when you got to pull them out, the other men got killed in an attempt to save their buddies. Is that what happened?

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Q. That is generally what happened. It seemed like everybody was going out to a wounded man or KIA. Charlie was just picking them off, they didn't have a chance. And finally, LT ~~ARMOUR~~ ^{M-} our platoon leader, picked up a 40 caliber machine gun and went out three times right in front of these bunkers shooting the machine gun, so us guys were OK any everything. They could run out and grab the people that were wounded and get them out.

Q. At this time were you trying to maneuver as an element against the enemy force right there or were you just trying to go back and forth to pull out the wounded? Did you have a scheme of maneuver as far as the platoon went?

A. Well, we couldn't do too much. We were pinned down. It seemed like there were snipers everywhere, they were shooting at us and everytime we moved to our right, it would be our right, they would start shooting at us. We just couldn't get to them. We couldn't maneuver forward because the bunker was no more than 7 meters from where I was and SGT Fatua, he was only three meters from it at the most.

OFF SYLVE - It's rather complicated to get the whole picture here as to what the company was doing because we don't have anybody who was really with the company commander or with the company CP at the time to give us the overall picture, but I think we are going to be able to piece it together with these boys even though they have a very limited view as to what was happening. WFC Lilly said as the 3d platoon moved up the LZ moving generally in a southerly direction, his 2d squad of the 3d platoon line up or married up with the 2d platoon.

U SYLVE - They hit this machine gun nest here..... Silver Falcon was coming up through here and they run into a machine gun bunker or whatever it was, OK, we felt through this hedgerow ... There was an opening here right? Yes, its open between here, went through here, the 2d squad went through here, then they came up on line at the next hedgerow, a little opening right in here, we went through this, and on the next hedgerow we come up on line again. This is where we got in front of that damn machine gun. We felt through this little opening and got on this

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hedge line right along here just on the back side of it, there was a little open here, big palm tree here, and the machine gun was right behind that palm tree. The first ones up there, they come up right up alongside the sniper, they didn't see him. They were the first ones to get hit. There was a couple riflemen right along in here somewhere. I was directly in front of the tree, the sniper couldn't see me, there were two guys on my right, two guys on my left, the two guys on my right got hit right away with automatic weapon. Right in here where Holland got hit.

Q. OK. Now, who was on your left now? Was anybody on your left from the 2d platoon?

U BUNK #2 - 2d platoon, no. There was supposed to have been a squad from the 1st platoon.

U BUNK #2 - The 1st squad didn't come up from this last hedgerow. We couldn't figure it out. They didn't come up when we come up.

U SPILLER #1 - The 2d squad moved ahead.

U BUNK #2 - We went that way and that's the last we seen of them.

U BUNK #1 - We were on line on this here hedgerow when we went through to the next hedgerow

Q. The 1st squad of the 3d platoon was on your left and after you went through that hedgerow, you never saw them again. So, when that machine gun opened up on the 2d squad which you all were in, you had nobody to your left to assist you. Is that correct?

A. Not that we could see.

Q. Now, who was on your right now?

A. It was the 1st squad, SGT Cook going down this way. They got in front of another machine gun and were pinned down the same as we were.

Q. Did both guns open up about the same time?

A. Cook's opened up first, then ours opened up.

Q. What happened throughout the rest of the afternoon and the evening? Where was the 3d platoon you all were in?

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Well, when we were hit there, we were pinned down, I couldn't definitely say what happened, what the rest of the platoon did, what kind of movements and all they had. There was only two of us there that wasn't killed within the first 15 minutes. The medic, doc Anderson, here job he done, he moved up, come up in this fire, and was putting a bandage on one of the riflemen and he just got the bandage on and moved back, was moving back and got hit in the head.

U SHAN #2 - The machine gun opened up on us again and I waited until dark then went back to the company CP and got medics again and brought some help up. At that time the machine gunner was gone and five guys dead up there.

U SHAN #1 - I stayed here from that afternoon until about 5:00 the next morning.

U SHAN #3 - After it started getting dark, why, what was left of AT was still together. We teamed up with Silver Falcon what was left of theirs that was still back there and didn't make it on through. We got together and got up on line, we were making a sweep on into the secured LZ that night. After we got in there, they were getting the choppers and everything.

Q. Ok. Now during the nighttime right now, and the next morning you say there was nobody there but they left during the night. Do you have any idea how they left the area at all?

A. As far as I know, they left on our left flank because there was no squad on our left flank. Every once in a while I would hear some movement on our left flank. It seemed like they were moving out. After it got a little bit dark, I went back out to the medics and got the medics back up with some reinforcements and I thought the machine gun was still there, but he moved out already. So we got the PTC, he was wounded pretty badly. We got him out; he was still alive. There was no enemy in sight then. I think it was around 10 o'clock and I think they were all pretty well out of the area then. I think it must have been around 8:30 9 o'clock when they come through and run a police call over the bodies, got the stuff off them.

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- Q. Now, how many men did you say were on this police call?
- A. I saw eight. I know there was eight of them.
- Q. You were lying here playing dead, is that right? Do you know of any numbers that left the area over your positions?
- A. Well, those eight, when they left, when they left my position where I was at, they didn't go back towards the village. They more or less went off on a angle over next to the 2nd element over there to the 2nd platoon, went off in a direction that way to the left. (voice in background, "We weren't there either, sir.")
- Q. What happened the next morning now? What did you do the next morning, what did the 2nd and 3rd platoons of Delta Company do the next morning?
- A. Well, the next morning, during the night we moved out and we found the rest of the battalion where we had sort of a perimeter set up I guess you would call it, and they brought in ~~an~~ extra arms and stuff like that. We went on more or less patrols looking for KIA's, MIA's, equipment, anything we could police up, "charlie" anything, the next morning. Just moved from one end....we moved out, checked out these two hedgerows mainly where all the fighting had taken place, and we married up with alpha Company and we worked our way back. We swept the area four or five times, maybe six, I don't know, we just kept sweeping the area policing up equipment, anything else we could find.
- Q. So you just stayed in the general vicinity where you had the action the day before. You didn't move down the village at all?
- A. No sir. We just kept checking out the area that we were in.
- Q. I imagine this time you had a chance to look at the enemy positions, the bunkers and everything. Now, I'm trying to get a feel of what they were. Did they all have overhead cover mutually supporting.....

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- A. All they had over their head was just little plum leaves just laying over top the bunkers and that was it. You couldn't see a damn thing.
- Q. What was the artillery or ABA support that you had and what support did you get along those lines?
- A. As far as support, we had two batteries of ABA's and when the ABA's come in, they dropped their load about 7 meters from where we were laying, the 2d platoon of Delta Company, and the guy on my right and the guy on my left both were hit with ABA and the guy back behind me got hit pretty bad in the face and in the leg. Then, as far as artillery support goes, we didn't get any to my knowledge. SGT Forthoythe called in artillery and they said there was too many helicopters in the air and they wouldn't get the helicopters out of the air, so as far as artillery support goes, we didn't get any. And that's what we needed.
- Q. But they really couldn't have brought in artillery without getting your own friendly position, could you?
- A. Could have brought small artillery in. Maybe the 105, the largest they could have brought in. Maybe mortar fire, but we didn't have any mortars at the time. We used to have mortars for support in Delta Company, but we changed over just before this operation.
- Q. Sir, you all didn't have any of your own mortars that accompanied you, any mortar fire at all.
- SGT Jeffery, what was the experience factor of the men in the action? How many were new men and so forth like that? In your platoon?
- A. In my platoon, the 2d platoon, we only had 2 men experienced because all the other guys have rotated which all of us is planning to rotate in January which of myself, the platoon sergeant, SGT Travino which was wounded right away, time he got here, SGT Perpetua were killed, so the only experienced guy we had that had been in a fire fight before in Vietnam or anywhere only 3 which left one after the other two were wounded--and we wounded and the other one was killed.

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But also, we had Specialist Fourth Class Carlisle, he had been around and he knew what it was all about, but he hadn't been in any fire fights before.

Q. Well, during this time that the 3d platoon was pinned down so badly, what were you all doing over in the 2d platoon?

A. Well, the 2d platoon wasn't pinned down as badly as the 3d platoon. What we were trying to do is get the snipers and machine guns out of front of us. Which we did have a little movement or freedom of movement which we could evacuate our wounded. So as we were trying to get the snipers so we could move in and get the other snipers from their flanks, see. That was the only approach you could do, was try to find a weak point in the snipers and try to move in on the weak point. That was the only hope we had. But dawn came too early and we had to evacuate the wounded, the only reason why we couldn't get the enemy out. And the enemy withdrew that night through bunkers, holes, in the ground, also they probably used two men to slip through because the 3d platoon was almost annihilate and they could walk right through almost. The second platoon, we pulled back with our wounded, took care of getting the wounded and we pulled the dead out which we never leave a dead body behind. We pulled the dead out and we formed into a perimeter, then we had to move around to another perimeter with the whole battalion that night. So what it was, it was a long night that night and so we were trying to get resupply with ammunition. So, after we got in a secured area, we secured an LZ which we had quite a few men get wounded securing this LZ because the VC there had captured weapons like M-79's, machine guns, maybe one man would stand out and shoot over in the LZ when the chopper come in and stuff like that.

Q. Did your men run out of ammunition?

A. No, everybody carried plenty of ammunition, know how to preserve it. At least that was one order we infreced. Everybody carried plenty of ammunition and don't

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just go firing at anything. So we were getting our half way resupply too, when we were under fire. The medevac would come in and pick up some American dead, they would drop off a couple boxes of ammunition. We would take that, reload our magazines and would continue fighting.

Q.?

A. I don't think it did. We had good morale and everybody always looked forward to our first action and I don't think the inexperience effected that much. If it did, it wasn't that much. All the men put out their best. As I say, most of the men we had have gone in for medals and stuff of this nature and they were new men which they really put out their best which in the first fire fight everybody shows really great morale because they haven't seen what can happen in a small fire fight of that nature which can completely annihilate one unit. If they had of been old in experience they would know more about the approach on us, because snipers of this nature, you can't approach them, you have to pull back and call in heavy artillery and stuff of that nature. That's the only way you can really....you can't charge snipers and get them because they know where you are and you don't know where they are. That's like switching from the hunter to the hunted.

Q. Well, the sniper weren't really giving you as much trouble as the machine guns were they?

A. No, the snipers, well, actually myself, I would rather come up on a machine gun because you can outflank a machine gun because snipers usually got one sniper covering the flank of another sniper and so on in a cycle of this nature. Well, if all the snipers had of been maybe in trees or buildings we could have....

Q. Were they in trees?

A. Some of them were in trees, but some of them were so dug in, that were so well camouflaged that you can't see them. Before in Ia Drang the VC had a sniper standing in front of a bush out in the open, and he was so camouflaged

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no one could see him. They wear a camouflaged ring, they got a little homemade ring that put on the front and back and stick weeds in them. Looks just like a bush or tree. You could walk all over them sometimes and never know they were there.

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25 December 1966 A/1/12 at their company CF presently located on the eastern side of Highway 506.

CPT SWANSON - I will be talking to CPT Phillip Flake and LT Steven Stout and LT Robert Robbins.

CPT Blake, if you can just take the action when you all first got involved, where you were when you got the call, how soon thereafter were you on the ground in the area and how you deployed, just take it chronologically as best as you can remember it. I'll ask you questions as we go along.

A. I'll refer to this map and give you a little background. To start out with, we were over here in the Kim Son Valley. We had gone in there the afternoon before and the company was spread out along the valley here in an effort to stir up activity in this valley that is labeled 2 and hopefully drive any VC or NVA down in the valley 1 where B Company was set up. As a result of this, we were split. I had the 1st and 3d platoons way down here in the tip of Kim Son and the 4th platoon was up at our LZ from the day before which was right in here and the 2d platoon was over in here. We had gone into these positions the night before as ambush positions. So early in the afternoon we were alerted that we were going to be picked up and make an air assault. I decided on the order of the pickup to be the 3d platoon, then the 1st platoon, the two that I had with me, and then the 2d platoon and the 4th. That was the order that was used. I and LT Stout went with the 3d platoon and we flew back up the valley, up the Kim Son, came around past Tony and started into 506 Valley.

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1. What time was this?

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1. This was about 1400.
2. 1400 when you got the call?
1. When we got picked up. I guess we waited about 30 to 45 minutes, the time we got the call and we got picked up. And we started down into the 506, there was an air strike going on and we circled a couple of times and it continued, so rather than expend more fuel, they took us back here to Pony and we sat down. At that time I got a quick briefing to what was going on and where we were going.
2. Who gave you that briefing?
1. That was SGT Ketchen, operations sergeant, came out to the chopper and pooped me up. So, we took off again, went back down into the Kim Son and....I mean the 506 valley....I remember circled around this little knob here and came in this way and landed about in here.
2. That would be 830...
1. Well, roughly this crosshair there. By that time it was I guess about 1500. Charlie Company and Delta Company were already on the ground. I had talked to the Charlie Company Commander, CPT Houston, got a further briefing from Sideshow 3, our S-3 over the radio who told me to proceed northeast, hit the road, and then cross the road, and we would start sweeping southeast down the road with my company on the left side and Charlie Company on the right side. We landed right about in here.
2. Ok. Now, where was Charlie and Delta Company?
1. We were there at the LZ. We had not started moving either. I was told to move off first.
2. That was right here, huh?
1. It was somewhere in there. It was in either in here or perhaps up in here. I don't think it was this far, though, but it may have been. It may have been up in this clearing up here.
2. Ok. Charlie and Delta Company were securing the LZ for you all?

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A. Well, they had just moved in and they were preparing to move out too. I was to move first and I moved off with my 3d platoon northeast and we had walked just about 100 - 120 meters when we crossed the road and as soon as we crossed the road, I swung the 3d platoon up on line and we crossed and we wheeled and started going...started getting on line to start our sweep southeast on the left hand side of the road. Just as soon as we crossed the road I guess going in about 30 meters on the other side of the road when we made contact. There was at least one, I think two, automatic weapons.

Q. This was the first contact you all had. You didn't have any when you came into the LZ, moved up northeast, crossed the road and then after you had turned around, you started getting the fire or were you still moving northeast?

A. Well, we had just crossed the road, we had moved northeast across the road, then turned to our right very slightly. Just as we were turning to the right on the northeast side of the road, we made contact. There was a little creek down in there. We had just gone past the house, a little creek down on that side of the road and they were deployed on the other side of that creek.

Voices in background - That was 10 to 12 minutes after we hit the LZ. We hit the LZ, talked to Charlie Company a minute, then about actually 10 minutes later after we had hit the LZ, we made contact with the enemy.

Q. OK. What formation were you in when you moved from the LZ up to the road? What was your security on your flank and your point security?

A. The movement to the road was in a, roughly a spread column, and as soon as we crossed the road, the platoon started deploying on line, so we were pretty much on line when we made contact.

Q. Now, where was the firing coming from?

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- Q. Directly to our front.
- A. Directly to your front.
- Q. Right.
- Q. You say they were automatic weapons.
- A. I believe there were two automatic weapons...well, I know there was one because we killed one machine gunner and took his weapon.
- Q. And this was on the eastern side of the road?
- A. Yea.
- Q. Were there any snipers in trees or were they just in bunkered positions in the ground?
- A. They were dug in. There weren't any in trees. We saw their positions later after the battle and they were well dug in.
- Q. Just carry it on after you made contact, how did you deploy and what did you do?
- A. Well, the 3d platoon started deploying and fighting with that force there, and...
- Q. Now, where were they located in the formation?
- A. That was the only platoon in there. Just one platoon. The others hadn't joined yet. While they were clearing that position, the 1st platoon joined which was about, I don't know, 15 or 20 ~~metere~~ minutes later I guess. They joined, I put them on the 3d platoon's left and we went around farther to the right until we were facing generally to the southeast and we started moving down along the road, with our right flank on the road, right flank of the 3d platoon on the road, and the 1st platoon to the left of the 3d platoon.
- Q. Why was the 3d platoon behind? They just had not come in the LZ yet? Is that....
- A. The 1st platoon.
- Q. The 1st platoon.
- A. The 1st platoon was lifted after the 3d. They had 6 choppers, and they lifted a platoon at a time. So, as soon as they joined, I put them on the left and we started pushing down the road, encounters

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Q. Let's go back to this resistance again. Did you completely overrun this initial fire of these positions?

A. Eventually, I feel they broke contact, withdrew farther on down the road. I think we pushed them out of there and they started falling back and as they fell back, we followed them.

Q. Did they fall back toward where the main part of the houses were of the village? Like regroup with other members? What did you think when they pulled away?

A. I thought, as they normally do, they fight a little rear guard action and then break contact and try and make it. But they were fighting, I feel, a delaying action. They fought there and then they pulled back and later on we hit a larger body and I think an even more ~~big~~ dug in force.

Q. Now let's carry it on down from when you hit them.

A. Well, we started moving on down the road then with the 3d on the right and the 1st on the left and had sporadic firing along the way and I guess we moved another 100 meters, wouldn't you say?

voice in background- A hundred meters.

A. And kept pushing and they apparently kept falling back. There were scattered houses all along. The houses really don't figure into the action at all. They weren't deployed in or around the houses. They didn't use them as part of their defense. About the time that we hit, what I feel, their main line of resistance, LT Robinson's platoon joined us, the 2d platoon, and I brought them up on the right of the 3d platoon. We were supposed to be in contact with Charlie Company which was supposed to have been on the right side of the road; however, ~~it was~~ there was a gap there.

Q. How large of a gap?

A. Well, I don't know. I think it was during this part I was still with the 3d platoon, but I know there was a gap so when ~~he~~ put him on the right

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of the 3d platoon which was also on the right side of the road, and that was the posture that we fought in going from the left to right, the 1st, 3d, and actually the 3d was ~~straddling~~ straddling the road by this time, and then the 2d. Meanwhile the 4th platoon was landed and they started moving.....

Q. This was all the same LZ?

A. Yes, the same general LZ; a series of little rice paddies. The 4th platoon landed and they started moving off the LZ with Delta Company which I think had two platoons in it. They had, and this is second hand experience as I get it, they had just left the LZ when they made heavy contact.

Q. Who were they?

A. Delta Company and the 4th platoon.

Q. Your 4th platoon?

A. My 4th platoon; they were fighting with Delta Company.

Q. Do you know the relationship between your platoon and the two platoons of Delta platoon as far as when you were on line? Do you know that, LT Robinson?

A. Right. When I first came up behind the 3d platoon and CPT Blake deployed me to the right of the 3d platoon, I moved around to the right and I got around him, 4th platoon was on my right along with Delta Company. The 4th platoon pulled back to set up their mortars and they pulled back and let us fall in the gap that they pulled out of and I looked to my right and there was Delta Company.

Q. Were you actually married up with them or how far.....

A. I was actually married up with them.

Q. So we had actually from the road all the way....

A. All the way around, and Delta Company informed me that they were linked up with Charlie Company on their right.

Q. About what time was this?

A. This was about 1600.

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voice in background - I think about the time we got in there solid was 1600.

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Q. You all were still not heavily engaged?

A. Oh yea, we were heavily engaged.

Q. You were heavily engaged at this time. Well, I'm trying to get the 4th platoon's movement with Delta's two platoons and when you came heavily engaged, how that worked in.

A. Well, the tempo increased from the time the 3d platoon made that initial contact. There was a little, not ~~low~~, but the tempo decreased from that time until we moved with the 3d and 1st about a hundred meters farther on down the road. They were falling back until we got to that point which was about the time the 2d platoon joined us and the tempo steadily increased. We were in heavy contact at that time.

Q. Were you moving or were you continuing forward or pretty much stymied?

A.8 Well, we continued forward until just a little bit after the 2d platoon joined us and then we came into heavy contact. I couldn't move him around to the right because he had friendlies on his right. I tried to maneuver the 1st platoon around to the left and he was in extremely heavy contact and couldn't disengage himself.

Q. The 1st platoon?

A. The 1st platoon which was on the left flank. So we called for ARA; we got some fine ARA support. LT Stout brought it right in I think as close as 30 - 40 meters and I feel that did them a lot of damage, and we kept fighting, pushing against them but not really gaining any ground.

Q. There were entrenched in bunkers?

A. Right.

Q. You weren't going over them and continuing on?

A. No, but we were in steady contact and my main concern at this point was to get everybody tied in so that our flanks were firmly....the flanks of each platoon were firmly tied in and that we were tied in on the right of the company with the

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friendly unit to our right.

Q. Which was...?

A. Well, it was supposed to have been Charlie Company, but actually it was Delta Company...was moved up in there to fill a gap. So Delta Company ended up on LT Robins's RIGHT, and about the same time the 4th platoon made it over to where I was and they came up with Delta Company and then I pulled them back behind the three rifle platoons and had them set up their mortar up.

Q. Then did they bring in mortar fire on these positions?

A. No, we couldn't call mortar fire in because we were getting ARA at that time.

(The air was full of choppers and we couldn't call in mortar fire. As a matter of fact, we couldn't call in artillery either.

unidentified voice - On the initial contact I had artillery support to our front come in.

But at that time the air became more and more filled with helicopters and you just consequently had to cease all tow types of support and that's ~~was~~ when we got the ARA ships in there. That's when we called in the ARA ships for fire support to our front.

Q. Now, at this time was Delta Company hit yet? LT Robins, you were probably over there because I understand they were hit all at once.

A. Just as I was coming around was when they got hit the hardest. My 4th platoon was on the right and as they saw me moving up, they started moving back so they could get in position with the mortars behind the three rifle platoons. As they were pulling back, they began getting hit also. They were losing men too, so I started filling the gaps. I sent a machine gunner down to Delta Company that helped suppress some of this fire that they were receiving, but by the time he

(got to Delta Company they had taken quite a few casualties and one of the platoons' leaders came down and told me he was down to about half his platoon. So I sent another squad down to help reinforce him down on the right and evidently, about

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this time the ARA's started coming in and the fire started decreasing a little but Delta Company had taken quite a bit of casualties just as I moved up there.

Q. I've gotten the impression from talking to people that a great deal of the ~~losses~~ losses were taken in an ~~initial~~ initial burst of fire. Did you all have this? It sounds like you all were engaged all along. Did you come up on the positions and all of a sudden they opened up on you?

Q. Well, of course our first time back was with the 3d platoon and I really don't know who initiated the fire. We killed one of them almost immediately and we took one WIA almost immediately. Things were happening pretty fast. We later got one KIA and just a few minutes after that in the 3d platoon--I think we killed two of them there--we got one machine gunner and got his machine gun. I think what happened to Delta Company after...and I walked back over the next day to where they had been...that they started walking off the LZ and the terrain was extremely flat around; there wasn't an inch of cover anywhere and they made contact. They made it with a force that was very well dug in and good cover, good concealment, excellent fields of fire and had all the advantages. They were out in the open; they didn't have any cover and that's why they took several casualties right off the bat. Well, to continue the activities of the day, by the time we got our flanks tied in within the company we were tied in, the platoons were all tied in and we were getting our casualties evacuated. The fire started to decrease to our front. We continued reorganizing, making sure we were in solid, called ~~in~~ ^{more} ARA in but all the time the fire seemed to be decreasing. About this time it was starting to get, light was failing and I had my flanks tied in.

Q. With whom?

A. With Delta Company.

Q. On your right?

A. On the right. We didn't have anybody on our left, (so I started bending the 1st

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platoon back to the left to make sure our left flank was protected because we didn't have anybody on the left and I think at this time the battalion was in this formation that they remained in most of the night and it was sort of a fish hook.

Q. Somebody draw a picture.

A. What we had was a road....the road runs....we are going back from the time we crossed the road now. Had this skirmish here where we took two casualties and I'm sure we got two of them. After this skirmish is when the 1st platoon joined us. They came, I am sure, the same way we came in. Came right up to our rear so I moved the 3d platoon over parallel with the road starting down this direction and brought the 1st platoon over on their left, and we started going down in generally a skirmish line like this and going about another 100 meters we made extremely heavy contact about in here. This is where the real fight took place.

Q. Right in here?

A. Right. The 1st and 3d or more of them ^{fought,} ~~brought,~~ I think, and LT Robins. The 4th platoon got into a good fight with Delta Company coming off the LZ but after ~~that got~~ they got into us, they were put behind the rifle platoons.

Q. Once the 4th platoon was there, the 2d platoon was right here, weren't they?

A. OK. Well, at this point is about where the 2d platoon joined us or somewhere on route, I'm not real sure. I think he went straight east. He came in here and I put him, about this time, in the heat of battle the 3d platoon in maneuvering and so forth had slipped on across the road so they were about like this, most of them on the right side of the road; I think almost all of them. The 1st platoon about in here and I put the 2d platoon up on the right about like this. Actually, they were more like this because the enemy was right in here and I was trying to edge people around them ~~on the left~~

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Q. Can you draw in the position of the 4th platoon and the platoons of Delta Company?

A. Well, the 4th platoon also came east, I think, and these distances are not quite representative, but they also came east. I think they initially were on your right flank, weren't they?

unidentified voice - They landed after I did, but I saw Delta Company moving down and Delta Company moved due south. They moved south, southeast down here. The 1st platoon evidently moved with them. I didn't see the 4th platoon; I saw Delta Company. But I saw the 4th platoon after I got up on line with the other two platoons.

Q. You joined in with Delta....

~~MEANS~~ ^{CPT BLAKE} Well, Delta was over in here, right?

un'd'fd voice - Right over in there. The 4th platoon in between.

~~MEANS~~ ^{CPT BLAKE} - In the back of it. ~~They~~ They were almost parallel with the road. The 4th platoon with them and I just moved the 4th platoon back over into here and set up there. So this is "D" Company. Charlie's Company, I don't know whether they were right on their flank or whether there was a gap, but they were somewhere in here.

Q. Now, how far from the road was this? Were they? We're trying to pin it down on the map.

A. They were about, I'm not real sure because I ~~don't~~ didn't see them that night, but from what I saw the next morning they were about 100 to 150 meters in from the road.

Q. So all the enemy, I mean, I know they got hit hard here and you all got hit hard here in this posture right along like that.

A. Right.

Q. Now, while you were engaged, I know it's hard to hear when other companies are also receiving fire, but did you hear ~~any~~ ^{CONFIDENTIAL} amount of fire from one of

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these other companies elsewhere. I mean, could you hear the battle going on elsewhere?

A.8 No, there was fire going on all to our right. You couldn't tell specifically where it was coming from. I wasn't too concerned about it at the moment. My attention was directed to my front so I knew about where they were and once I got somebody on my right flank, I was feeling pretty good.

Q. Now, what was Bravo 1/12 doing?

A. Bravo, as we were, was on another operation and I don't believe they got in until just before dark that night.

Q. Where did they come in in relation to you all?

A. I think they came in on the same LZ, but I think they were moved down in...I don't know whether they went in on Charlie Company's left or right, Do you?

unidentified voice - Went to their right.

Q. Bravo 1/12 went to Charlie Company's right.

~~CPT BLAKE~~ - That's right. That's what I thought. They went down in here.

und'fd voice - I remember when Bravo came in on the road down here because I used the same ships that they came in on the evacuation wounded out on, and they were just behind my position over here and the ships just picked up and dropped right here about 50 meters behind me.

Q. And they moved down to the right flank of Charlie Company?

und'fd voice - I wouldn't say it was Charlie Company, but they moved to the right.

~~CPT BLAKE~~ - I think they were put on the right of Charlie Company.

Q. Now we're back in the evening and what happened as dusk started to settle and darkness came?

~~CPT BLAKE~~ - Well, as it started to get dark, I asked for instructions and was told to hold my position and consolidate and make sure I was tied in, which we did, and

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I bent the 2d platoon like this and I bent the 1st platoon back and he was like this, and I had the 4th platoon giving us a little rear security.

Q. Were you still married in with the companies on your right flank?

A. By this time Delta Company was still with us, right? But I don't know about Charlie. Delta had received quite a few casualties and they were there. They were on the right flank of the 2d platoon. Charlie Company, I think, I think there were gaps along in here.

unidentified voice - And ~~when~~ when he moved my platoon back around here, Delta Company moved on down to the right flank; they found out they were supposed to be on Charlie Company's left, so they pulled out again and went around and ~~like~~ linked up with Charlie Company around here.

CPT BLAKE

~~██████████~~ - Really, there just weren't enough people in this sector in here, and as a result of that this D Company 1/8, which was attached and had been in a blocking position way to our southeast, was ordered to move^B north, which they did, and came generally parallel on the road, came in through our lines that night after dark.

Q. About what time did they come through your lines?

A. Well, that was about 2200 I guess, the time that they finally got in. We talked to them all the way up the road making sure that....

8 Q. Did they have any contact coming up the road at all?

A. None. Which indicates that either they let them go through because they were trying to get out or else they had already slipped out just as soon as it got dark.

Q. So Bravo 1/8 actually came up right through the area....

A. ...Where we had fought. Exactly through where the enemy had been that afternoon.

Q. And they received nothing at all?

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A. Nothing. They came through us and we guided them out here and they went in between us and B Company. Now right here it gets confusing.

Q. Between us and who?

A. B Company. I don't know where C Company was at this time, but I know they went in a gap that was between us and B Company.

Q. And you don't know where C Company was?

A. No, I really don't. I think what had happened was they had pulled them back a little bit. C Company only had two platoons in there too, and both of them were hit pretty hard; one in particular. So I think B actually replaced C Company and they pulled C Company back in more or less a reserve position with B Company up there.

8 Q. B 1/8?

A. Well, this is our B Company, then B 1/8 went in right in here because they were... on light dawn the next morning they were on our right flank.

Q. Now, your whole left flank, the eastern part of this road was just left open?

op Blake

A. Wide open. There was nobody on my left at all.

Q. Now, ~~who~~ how far was it from here down to here? Was anybody blocking the southern part of the road?

A. No. B Company 1/8 had been down here but they had been, oh, I think a thousand meters or so south. Maybe even farther. I don't know specifically where they were but they were out of the afternoon's activities completely.

Q. B 1/8?

A. Right.

Q. What do you know about Charlie 1/8 and their movement to the area?

A. Really nothing. Our monitor transmissions, but I couldn't tell where they were.

Q. Do you know...did they have...well, we do know they made an initial sighting about 1000 hours that morning and they moved during the afternoon toward the

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position where you all were. Did they have much contact at all?

A. I know where they were because when I first went in, they were right over here on this little knob. I think they moved in over here and probably eventually got in on our B Company's right.

Q. Do you know if they had any contact in moving to the area where you all were?

A. Yes, I think they did; light contact, I think, I'm not real sure.

unidentified voice - I remember specifically that night when we started firing illuminations, dusk came in, the battalion commander called for illumination, we fired illumination until they got a ship up that could deliver it. And I remember them requesting specifically to cut off the illumination because they wanted to evacuate their casualties because they were pinned down under heavy fire.

Q. About what time was this?

A. I couldn't say for sure. It was rather confusing to pinpoint at times after dusk because everything was happening quite fast.

Q. You say you did get a flare ship up above you?

A. Yes, we did.

Q. What was the weather like? Was it effective?

A. The illumination was quite effective all night long. We used a 155 outfit until there was a ship available and we had illumination throughout the night up there all the time.

Q. I understand it was foggy during the night at one point. When did the fog start coming in?

A. It's very difficult to say because I couldn't pinpoint ~~at~~ the time.

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unidentified voice - With the 2d platoon coming in here, I came in with the 4th platoon to my right and to the right of them, Delta Company. As soon as I got on line, the 4th platoon pulled back to set up their mortars in the rear and I moved a squad over to the area they pulled out of because they had very few men. Then Delta Company to my right began receiving heavy casualties and the 4th platoon pulling out began receiving heavy casualties. Evidently, all the fire was directed towards Delta Company on my right and the 3d and 1st platoons on my left and I was caught in the middle with just light fire. A couple of snipers in the trees there I actually saw; put a couple M79 rounds up in the trees and that decreased the fire. It kept on going like that.

Q. Did you get those snipers in the trees?

A. und'fd voice - My platoon sergeant said he saw one of them fall; I didn't see any fall, but we didn't receive any more fire from up there, the rest of it was ground fire from machine gun positions that were over there.

CPT BLAKE

-/ I think another significant thing was that right in front of you it was ~~real~~ real heavy and thick in there, so they didn't have anymore field of fire than you did right in there.

und'fd voice - Right.

CPT BLAKE

* They were directing their fire like that and like that.

Q. During that night, CPT Blake, did any of the enemy try to exfiltrate your area at all? Did you have any contact that night at all?

CPT BLAKE

A. A little fire late that night, really nothing at all.

Q. Did you hear major contact in the ready units around the perimeter there?

A. No, not major contact. I think there was a little...I remember hearing Charlie

CPT BLAKE

1/8, they were trying to clean out the bunkers somewhere. I just monitored this on the radio. I don't know where they were. I remember it was after dark and I was listening to this on the radio and they were talking to Sideshow 6

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about cleaning out some bunkers. They were down somewhere to our southwest with I think there was also an Apache team in there. Perhaps they were still trying to make their way east to get in to our position into the main battalion position here. But I really don't know specifically where they were.

Q. So the night was uneventful as far as you all?

A. Yea, after we got B Company 1/8 through our lines which was a touchy proposition, got them over there, we sent a patrol out to police up some bodies that were over in this general area--one of ours and several from Delta ~~Company~~ Company, we brought them into our perimeter.

Q. What ~~time~~ time was this?

A. This was after B Company came through. It was about 2300 or midnight. We had ~~an~~ a little LZ right in here and we evacuated the bodies from there.

Q. Evidently, a medevac ship went down on the eastern side of the road. Do you know where that was in relationship to where you were?

A. I haven't the faintest idea. A medevac ship came in on that first drawing, if you'll look where the 3d platoon made contact, a medevac ship came in and picked up our ^{one} WIA and one KIA right in near the road right in there, while that position was still being cleared.

Q. Now, what was your mission the next morning and what were your actions the next morning?

A. The next morning we were told to start...the next morning we evacuated the dead that we had pulled back into our lines that night and got our resupply and got ready to move out. We moved out about the middle of the day and started moving south down the road and spent the afternoon clearing the area, we were moving on both sides of the road, searching...correction...we did make a maneuver that morning. We moved--I forgot about this--we moved from this location, we got B Company 1/8 on our right and we moved east. We cleared the area, the wooded area

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in between the road and the open rice paddy field.

Q.8 How far was that off the road to the east?

A. Well, we moved, lets see, I'll show you on the map. Right about in here; we moved about three or four hundred meters off the road until we got into this open area here, this open rice paddy here.

Q. To the east?

A. To the east. We swept through that area, had B Company on our right, and we searched all the way through some positions. We found one body, one NVA body and that was it. Then we turned around and came back to our position here and got ready to move out that afternoon, which we did, we moved south. We swept on both sides of the road. By this time, B Company 1/8 had gone someplace else. We were moving by ourself moving south and we swept to an area about in here. We spent the night there.

Q. What did you find on this sweep, I mean, that gave you some idea of what enemy was there, how large a force, what these entrenched positions were like?

A. We were pretty sure that they had moved out. We were just checking the area to see if we could find any dead or wounded or any equipment that they had left or anything at all, just to make sure that the area was clear.

Q. Did you have any contact at all going through?

A. None whatsoever.

Q. Was there hazards there, the area heavily tunneled at all?

A. Well, not tunneled, but excellent positions. We looked at their positions; they had them dug in extremely well, they all had good fields of fire, cleverly camouflaged and they were in there real tight.

Q. Did you get any general overall picture of how they were deployed and where their attention was directed?

A. Oh, it's hard to tell. They had holes all over the place. There were a lot of them just running up and down the road. Because, a matter of fact, all the way

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down, even south where the main battle had taken place, there were holes along the road, and of course there were holes on both sides of the road. They were employed, well, they had holes on both sides of the road, there were holes all along in here.

- Q. ~~But~~, was there any...did it look like there ~~was~~^{WAS} anything in particular they were trying to protect?
- A. No, I think they had probably moved down there to get close to food, close to the rice source. There were a lot of houses up and down the highway there, the road and I'm sure they dug those positions merely to defend their positions there while they were gathering food.
- Q. Right. Do you think this is why they were down there, getting rice? Gathering food?
- A. Probably, because I don't think they were moving. The holes were ~~fairly~~ fairly fresh and they hadn't been there...they weren't ~~permanently~~ permanently living there. In other words, I think they had moved in maybe a day or two before and prepared the place, they were probably in the process of gathering their food when they were discovered.
- Q. What equipment did you capture in the police-up the next morning?
- A. Well, besides personal equipment, we didn't find any commo equipment, but we had captured the day before, three weapons. One was a light machine gun, one was a rifle, and one was an M16. There was not an M16 that had been found during that battle because this was one that we took off a dead VC...NVA. It was one that they had for some time. And, also, we know that we were being fired upon by several automatic weapons, so I think they were well armed.
- Q. CPT Blake, what was your estimate to where the enemy went and ~~about~~ about what time they moved out?

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A. Well, they started breaking contact as soon as it got dark, and I was pretty sure at the time that they had just moved southeast because that sector was open, east and southeast was open. Since then, since the battle, we had been moving around this area, we talked to a lot of people, we had an interpreter with us, and we're pretty sure now that they moved both east and southeast. As a matter of fact, we were over in this next draw from the main valley a couple of days ago and the people told us over there that the night of that battle, in ~~other~~ other words, the night of the afternoon of that battle, many NVA soldiers came through there carrying many dead and wounded. As a matter of fact, they said one of their wounded died over there and they buried him and two others over there ~~where~~ where we were a few days ago. We couldn't find them but they said they came through there with quite a few dead and wounded.

Q. Actually, this was northeast of the area of contact, wasn't it?

A.9 This valley that I'm talking about now, yes it is, it is northeast. It's just about over in here. We're in this one now. They could have easily slipped out anywhere to the east or southeast and then from there they could have gone anywhere they wanted to. But I'm sure they ~~had~~ headed generally to the east headed for these mountains up in here, and there's probably some still up in there. We came in here two days ago and wounded and captured an NVA lieutenant right here; got him right here.

Q. Was he in one of these units you all encountered that day?

A. He claimed that he was a training officer and that he hadn't been in the battle. I don't know. He ~~said~~ said that he wasn't in the battle. He knew about it.

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8 Q. CPT Blake, now that you've gone through how your company moved and everything, what do you think we've learned or could have done better or what is your reflection after it's all over now?

A. Well, I think ~~we~~ we really re-learned some things we've always known, that is, in order to get this guy you've got to plug every gap because he will fight as hard as he can to delay you until it gets dark so that he could slip away. He is a master at slipping away and if there's any hole whatsoever, he'll find it and he'll get out. He put up an extremely stiff resistance, he had good positions, and he had plenty ammunition. He fought extremely well and really hard until it got dark, then he made it out of the area and he got out ~~in~~ on our open side which was to the east. Of course, we had a disadvantage right from the start in that we found him too late in the day. ^{MAYBE} We didn't have enough time to position people by air all the way around him. Darkness just came ~~on~~ too fast and ~~they~~ there wasn't ~~enough~~ enough time and there weren't enough choppers to move everybody in. I think ^{if} ~~we had had~~ ~~more~~ would have had more time and maybe some more lift and we could have put a company over here on the east, which would have been to my left, we would have had him.

Q. CPT Blake, from the time you all came into the action until it was all over that night through the next day, what were your losses as far as KIA and WIA and equipment, if any?

A. We didn't lose any equipment. We policed everything up. We had a total of 6 KIA and 16 WIA. *A/1/12*

Q. Can you get any pattern, I mean, what do you attribute to the number of WIA Except that there was heavy fire? Was there anything that.....

A. Well, most of our losses were taken from their automatic weapons in efforts in courageous and small unit and individual efforts to take out their automatic weapons. Our losses out of the 4th platoon came in their action while moving

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off the LZ with Delta Company. We lost our 4th platoon sergeant, and took several wounded too.

- Q. Were most of your losses in the initial burst of fire or was it, you know, how were they spread out as far as time goes?
- A. Well, besides those I just mentioned, we lost...we had one WIA in the initial, very initial contact that we made with the 3d platoon and just a few minutes later we took our first KIA. From then on the casualties were just incurred throughout the action.
- Q. Let me go back to one question again. I may have asked about this, just forgotten, after that initial contact, you moved south and you had sporadic contact all along the way. Then, did it slowly build up or did it hit you all at once, the automatic weapons?
- A. Well, ^{THEY HAD} ~~we~~ automatic weapons in the initial fight we had with the 3d platoon and then, as I say, contact lightened momentarily, but gradually increased as we moved south and I was trying to push them and try and feel out their flanks, see where their flanks were so that I could shift somebody left and get around them and I was pretty busily engaged trying to do that. Casualties were being taken all along.
- Q. And you didn't see the....could you see the flashes from the weapons or could you see the enemy positions where they were firing from?
- A. In a few instances, yes.
- Q. But in most you could not?
- A. Well, I was not in a position where I had at all times direct observation on where they were firing from. At times when I was moving close to points of contact, I could see some fire, but they were pretty well concealed.

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Interview at LZ No Name

CPT BENSON CO B 1/12

Q. CPT Benson, when did hear of the action that started that battle and where were you and how were your companies deployed?

CPT BENSON - We got word of it about 1530 or 1600...1530 is more close to it...and the company was enroute to an ambush position about 20 k's to the west in which two platoons were operating in the valley and the two platoons I was with in the Kim Son Valley...the two platoons I was with was on the high ground going into an ambush position.

Q.?

A. Yes, for the night. We were going in for the night. Actually, for a two day period was the particular plan and we almost there. Since we were alerted I couldn't get the two platoons I was with to a suitable LZ for about 40 to 60 minutes because of the terrain. So it meant that I had to commit my 1st and 3d platoons which were already in the low ground at which I gave them an order to move to a suitable LZ whereby we would join with them. And my 3d went first followed by my 1st platoon. This was about...they went about 1615, the 1st platoon, and as I got to the LZ with my 2d platoon, which was third in order of movement, my 1st platoon was lifting off and I went in with my 3d platoon...excuse me...~~my~~ 2d platoon. I would say that I landed on the LZ, if you can call it that, at about 1710 with three platoons closed and all that remained for me to close was the other platoon which was waiting for pickup.

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Q. When the first two platoons landed, did they have any contact at all?

A. Yes, the 3d platoon was the first in and they were under fire.

Q. How ~~heavy~~ heavy? What type of weapons?

A. Well, it was automatic and semi-automatic.

Q. Right on the LZ?

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A. It was right on the flank of Silver Falcon, C Company, and adjacent to us was

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on their right flank facing the south, so it would be on our eastern flank, and they were committed and put OPCON to C Company to move on their right flank. I was not aware of this but by virture of my ~~not~~ being without commo, this is what happened, the 1st platoon also upon landing was in contact. And when I got there, the same LZ, all platoons went in generally the same area. And we were in the vicinity of Alpha Company also which was, I think, I'm not sure on this, to the east of C Company, to the east and to the rear. And, if I recall correctly, there were about 6 to 8 wounded from A Company about 50 meters from us which no one could get to so we left our aid man there and a radio.

Q. From Alpha Company?

A. They were from Alpha Company these particular individuals. And that's about the extent as far as time wise when we got there and how we got there. We knew nothing of details until I actually landed and talked to the battalion commander.

Q. What did he tell you?

A. Well, that particular time Major Biari with a platoon from C Company had just been in a very fierce fire fight. Major Biari just got wounded; he was on the ground, and this was located to the south and east from where I landed about 800 to 1000 meters. My particular mission was to get there the fastest way I could and relieve them, by attacking if necessary, or however I could. So we got the company in a....

Q. How far was the company from the town or hamlet should I say, where the really heavy contact was coming from? What I'm trying to ^{see} ~~ask~~ is ~~the~~ you ~~had~~ had fire when you hit the LZ, how far was this fire ~~far~~ out from the main action that was going on?

A. Well, it was hard to tell where the main action because fire was coming, it appeared to me, from the east and from the southeast. Because we ~~were~~ were getting fire, as I say, when we landed on the LZ although I don't know to this day the specific location of where we landed.

Well, it's not that I didn't know where
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I was, it's for the purpose of preciseness, I didn't know the exact location of where we were. I knew generally because as we came in we saw fire by...well, the first indication was tracers...so I had an idea by virtue of having my map out knew where I landed, I knew I was near 506 Highway, I knew within 500 meters where we had landed. Once we were given the mission to move, to reinforce Major Biari, ^{just wounded} it was done all by direction on radio and by ^{power} techniques and signals. I was given a briefing as to where Pistol Belt was, which was C Company 1/8. So the first indication I got was to get an orientation where the rest of the companies were in relation to me. I knew C Company 1/12 where they were because I had comms, of course, with my 3d platoon, LT Crimmins, and asked him to fire a flare which gave me an indication of the extreme western flank of both C and A Companies, and I knew generally where E Company 1/8 was by virtue of their firing. And my mission was to push towards C 1/8 and rejoin with the platoon, I think it's the 3d platoon of C Company 1/12, to relieve and reinforce the position there since a rather large fire fight took place there in which Major Biari, the S-3, was wounded and that particular platoon took quite a beating; they were almost overrun, so I understand.

Q. This was about 800 to ~~1~~ a thousand meters, were you.....?

A. By virtue of our walking it, 5 to 800 meters would be more precise. So, we got the company in a attack formation with two platoons leading, two platoons trailing, and started pushing for that particular location, Always keeping C 1/8 to my right front as a guiding mark and by virtue of Major Biari giving me directions in the form of flares or radio, inasmuch as I was reconning by fire the entire distance, because we were occasionally getting fired upon.

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Q. How much fire did you get on your movement in?

A. We got sporadic fire. Primarily, I feel, because the time of day I think Char was trying to get the hell out of there and he wanted no additional major contact to pin him down, so in my push forward my two lead platoons....

Q. About what time was this?

A. This was about 1800.

Q. It's getting dark now?

A. It's getting dark now, it was just starting to get dark, and I gave missions to my two lead platoons to recon by fire up to their front, primarily because sniper fire was coming from trees and they were further instructed to keep their fire high to preclude from hitting friendlies in that particular area.

Q. So the fire that you had when they came into the LZ was not really enough to hold you up.

A. Negative. We were under fire, I think, by groups of two's and three's. In my particular case when I landed, the water all in the rice paddy was being kicked up and you could actually see tracers going over your head. But by the time my last platoon got in, which was the 4th platoon, the fire settled down to the extent where we could form and reorganize and start pushing to the southeast. When we finally got to Major Biari's position, of course there was quite a few wounded laying around, the position was only defended by a platoon that just had been hit pretty hard, so we immediately went into a perimeter.

Q. Was it dark out?

A. It was dark when we arrived there. And we were getting fire from within the perimeter and from the periphery of where we set up a perimeter. As a matter of fact, 10 minutes after I had been there we tried to get in a medevac and he

FAILED no further than 50 minutes from where I set up the CP and immediately upon landing all hell broke loose and I would estimate no more than 60 meters from the

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CP there must have been ^{AT LEAST} a squad and they opened up on the helicopter and there was quite a fire fight right there.

Q. Had they been there or had they pulled out?

A. All indications to me was that they had been there, and to further give an indication that they had been there all this time.....

Q. They were not firing?

A. They were not firing when I moved in, but when the helicopter came in, they immediately opened fire and the medevac ship took quite a few hits.

Q. Is this the one that was downed?

A. No, this was not...to my knowledge it was not the one that was downed. I told him that we had received fire from that particular portion of the LZ and that if it started to fire again, which way for him to flake and get out of there, which he did, believe me, ~~immediately~~ right away. And it wasn't ten minutes after this that 3 feet from my 3d platoon leader's CP, we captured the only two prisoners taken during that time which they had a 57 recoilless rifle in the hole with them.

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Q. Now, tell me about the position. It was 3 feet...

A. It was about 6 feet

Q. 6 feet, OK, was it....

A. It was a bunker...it was a hole. A typical fortified hole in bushes and in the hole were two NVA in uniform...

Q. What type of uniforms?

A. Khaki uniform, and they also had a 57 recoilless rifle. I believe we got out of that same hole a ChiCom carbine and an AK that which we turned in.

Q.?

A. If I recall right, there was about 4 to 6 rounds laying...we got out of the hole with it. This was only a matter of feet from my platoon leader's position.

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- Q. But you hadn't heard of...I mean...obviously you hadn't heard of the fire that night.
- A. Negative. Negative. They had not fired. Of course, we immediately after we got in the perimeter, started searching the area and the platoon leader found this.
- Q. Now, tell me about the disposition of the other friendly troops on your left and right. How far were they from you and so forth?
- A. OK. After things had quieted down, everybody started finding out where everybody was.
- Q. What time did it start quieting down?
- A.9 About 2000.
- Q. The heavy contact. You still had sporadic fire?
- A. We still...we had sporadic fire, actually, until...I can recall sniper fire, things up until 0200 in the morning. But the last major contact I had which involved quite a bit of firing was when the helicopter landed; and I say this by virtue of we actually had him fixed and knew where he was, so we returned fire and we didn't have a heck of a lot of trouble from that little.....
- Q. What was the result of that? Did you kill ~~me~~ all of them or eh.....
- 9 A. We don't know, and I didn't want to push too far in that direction because there were two other companies in that direction and I was afraid of fires being delivered on them. Now, from where I was located, distance-wise I'm pretty sure, on ~~the~~ two, Canteen Cup, which is Bravo 1/8, was located to my northeast about 150 meters after he finally got into position. And....
- Q. Where did he come from?
- A. I don't know where he came from. Alpha Company 1/12 was about 300 meters to my northeast which meant that in a distance of 300 meters...or 350 meters...350 being the extreme, to my northeast was A Company on line oriented to the southeast and Canteen Cup, or B 1/12,..1/8...between A Company and myself to fill in that gap,

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then myself, of course, and then to my southwest, I would estimate at a distance of about 400 meters was C Company 1/8. Now, A Company was so disposed so as looking to the southeast, I believe their right flank was on the road, and B Company 1/8 was on the road with their left flank facing to the southeast almost physically tied in with me, if not physically by fire.

Q. Do you know if you were physically tied in trying to at...were there any holes that the enemy could go through?

A. I personally don't think so because after C...rather B...1/8, which is Canteen Cup, finally got in, we did make physical contact, but by virtue of trying we decided not to tie in because of fires. In other words, I felt that between him and I... in fact, inadvertently, someone fired an M79 from my position...although we don't think it was from our position...and the round lit in Canteen Cup and wounded 6 of his personnel. That's how close we were.

Q. And how close was Charlie 1/12 from you? You say about 500 meters?

A. Charlie 1/8 .

Q. OK, Charlie 1/8. How far was he from you?

A. I would estimate by fire and the next morning by virtue of sweeping, I would estimate about 4 to 500 meters to my southwest.

Q. Now, were was Charlie 1/12?

A. Charlie 1/12 was to the north us us, their CP was, but a platoon was with me. And....

Q.?

A. Well, the platoon was there by virtue of their previous contact, and later that night, about 2100, the remainder of C Company pushed down and closed with me so that I had what was left of Delta Company, two platoons, plus two platoons of C Company, under my control. The CP of C Company, as you know, was to the north; and they had pushed down and joined me to secure the LZ that night or the position

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~~the present~~ Major Biari was in. So that by 2200 I had physically under my control my entire company, plus two platoons of Delta Company, and plus two platoons of Charlie Company, if I'm not mistaken. Yes, I know I had.

Q.?

A. Yes, well, I don't know them by number, I had LT Edmondson's platoon and SGT Jackson platoon. The two platoons from Delta Company was LT Feiner, was the mortar platoon and the AT platoon.

Q. What time was ~~this~~ this, that all this finally...

A. About 2200 when all these units were with me.

Q. How far were you from the Highway 506 to your east?

A. It would be to my east. To my east I would estimate...it's a pretty good estimate based on the next morning I swept through it...only about 2 to 300 meters. 2 to 300 meters.

Q. Did your company or the platoons under your control encounter any heavy attempt to exfiltrate that night through your positions?

A. Negative. Negative. Negative.

Q. Do you know...OK, I guess you don't know about the other companies.

Q. Do you know how wide the hole was on the eastern flank where we had no friendly troops?

A. On the eastern flank?

CPT Sykes Q. On the eastern flank.

A. No, I think the only ~~answer is that is~~ one to answer that is one, Colonel Edgars or CPT Blake, in speaking of the eastern flank. Conveniently or inconveniently, I was in the middle because I had friendly elements on both flanks, although the gap on my western flank was greater than on my eastern. The eastern flank, I felt, was tied in pretty well by virtue of....

Q. What do you mean the eastern flank was tied in pretty well?

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A.8 Well, I had immediately adjacent...

Q. Your...your...

A. On mine, yes.

Q. What type of casualties did you take, if any, on your movement from the LZ and so forth that night?

A. Well, fortunately, B Company did not take a single casualty either wounded or killed or missing. And it was miraculous to me because upon landing the amount of fire we were getting at the LZ and the amount of fire going on around us enroute to relieve this platoon from C Company and the battalion S-3, mostly on our left or on the east that we did not get in a fire fight. Now, whether this was attributed to the time we arrived or the fact that we did move fast and we were ~~reconn~~ reconning by fire, with the two lead platoons to our front, is just something no one will ever know.

8 Q. When you moved down to your position, did you come over bunkered areas? Did you move over old enemy positions that may have been out on the perimeter?

A. I didn't notice any positions until we physically started going into this area we relieved. My only thought, at that particular time, was getting to relieve this particular platoon because I knew by monitoring battalion a push, that they were under heavy contact and Major Biari in addition was a personal friend, so, my only thought was getting there the fastest way we could and I didn't pay too much attention to land or terrain except for navigational purposes.

Q.about the weather that night and how effected Spooky was once he was up? Was he right over you?

A. Well, I don't know if it was Spooky or who, I do know that illumination was firing southeast, almost all night.

Q. How far from you?

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- A. Well, the illumination was landing periodically right on the periphery of my perimeter, which would be in the area of my 3d platoon and about 200 meters to the southeast of that, all night. And I don't know, as I say, whether this was Spooky or who or moonshine; I knew it was illumination, and one of my means of identifying exactly where I was, was getting hold of Tiger 17, the battalion artillery liaison officer, and getting a replot from where those illumination rounds were landing, by virtue of getting a replot then I knew where I was precisely. I couldn't give you the coordinates now. I was only interested in case I needed artillery. So the weather, if I recall correctly, was scattered rain showers all through the day. The LZ we went into was about calf high in water. The night, fortunately it did not rain that I can recall of, and I was up until about 5 o'clock, there was low ground fog and aside from that it was a pretty good night. It was depending on where you were. As customary in this particular vicinity, it would hang in some places for no apparent reason and in our particular area I don't ever recall us being fogged in. I could see fog by virtue of the illumination rounds. There may have been an overcast that night because I do recall illumination breaking through clouds. You could see when it would open and you could see the glow of it but you wouldn't get the full effect of the illumination until it came underneath the cloud cover.
- Q. Did you use your mortars at all?
- A. Negative.
- Q. Why?
- A. Because I didn't have them with me. I was on another mission and was dragged into this...not dragged into it but brought into it...and the particular mission I had required four (rifle maneuver) platoons to establish ambushes. So my mortar was at Hammond, and my mortar platoon, as is used about 80% of the time, was used as a rifle platoon. Although you'll note on the diagram there, I did not use them in the perimeter because I wanted something of a reserve, so the mortar

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platoon was kept in the center with the CP with the additional mission of reaction force reserve in the event we were hit. And they also did quite a bit of work caring for the wounded, getting out the seriously wounded when the medevac did come in and getting out the dead and wounded when they finally got in.

- Q. Did the medevac come in that time they were hit so badly or did they go off and come back in later on?
- A. No, I called for a medevac and we brought them in. I told them we had been receiving fire from the ~~the~~ northeastern corner of the perimeter and that it and if upon landing he was to receive fire, since he was landing on the heading of almost due west, that if he received fire, to break to the south; and the first time he came in there was a hell of a fire fight, if I remember correctly,...
- Q. And that's when that squad was there.
- A. Yes, that's when I had the platoon from C Company out there securing it, and there was a hell of a fire fight, in fact, it sounded like the world was coming to an end. And he immediately broke and circled for about 20 minutes and we put M79 and machine gun fire into that northeastern corner of that perimeter and brought him in again.
- Q. Did they receive fire again when ~~you brought~~ they came in this time?
- A. No, this time he did not. However, when the second medevac came in, which was about 15 minutes later, upon landing he received fire and the only casualty to get out of there was Major Biari. They just put him on the ship when we started getting fired on again.
- Q. The same area?
- A. No...Yes, from the same area, and some artillery went off and the pilot, I think, thought that we were under attack, and I think he prematurely took off, but after what they had been through that night I don't blame them a bit. So the only... we were going to put Major Biari plus about ~~of the~~ bodies on there, which we

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did not. We ended up keeping the bodies all night and didn't get them out until late the next afternoon.

- Q/ Wounded men?
- A. No, we got all the wounded out. The only thing we didn't get out was the American killed.
- Q. Now, where was the artillery....was there any artillery hitting around your positions or in the hamlet right in front of you?
- A. They were firing interdicting fires trying to get routes of egress, which were primarily to the south and southeast. Yes, there were firing.
- Q. Were they firing in the area where you thought the enemy was?
- A. No, they...well, they weren't firing in my area because they knew I was there. Most of the artillery which I knew, which I recall being fired, was predominantly to the southeast, south and I am not sure, but when you ask CPT Ogg of C 1/8, I think they were firing some artillery in support of him. Because he was in, to a degree somewhat, all by his lonesome.
- Q. How many helicopters were in the air? Were there a great deal of helicopters in the air over the....?
- A/ When I initially landed, yes. There were quite a few helicopters, but by the time I started moving it started getting dark, and of course, the only helicopters up were those ARA ships which were needed and primarily medevac. But, as I say, I got there around 1700 and yes, there were quite a few helicopters; lift ships, the Cav Troop, and I don't know what else. I just recall that there being a....
- Q. What types of enemy equipment did you police up to give you an indication of what size element was there? Commo wire, switchboards, anything like that?
- A. No, we didn't encounter any of that. We encountered primarily...the largest thing we encountered was 57 ^{MAI 7E} which normally is not organic to a rifle company, which is the first indication of a battalion size force or as a minimum, a reinforced company, reinforced by some....

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Q. You only found that one?

A. We only found that one. And that's the only thing we encountered in the immediate area. Because, as I say, I got to that position to relieve at dark and my mission was to secure it and prevent ^{it from being run over again,} and of course, to tie in with the other two companies on my northeast and form a block.

Q. Now, what happened the next morning? What did you all do the next morning?

A. Well, the next morning in conjunction with B 1/8 on my left...on my extreme left ~~XX~~ A 1/12, we were to sweep to the east across the highway to the river and across the river in an attempt to police up any bodies or in an attempt to clear out any remaining PAVN units, which we did. We got as far as the river and then swept back. We received absolutely no fire the next ~~2~~ morning. We did see signs of blood, we did see fortified positions; however, the fortified positions, I ~~felt~~ felt, were those you normally find in a village. Primarily in the houses, underneath the houses, cave complexes, which I feel are used primarily by the civilians to protect themselves against air strikes and things of this nature, but which are, granted, used by the VC when they are in the villages. And this is about the extent of it.

Q. Did you find a lot of firing positions in the bushes themselves?

A. No. No unusual amount. I just recall ~~in~~ seeing in several burned down houses little complexes underneath, and, infact, I recall going to one house which was completely demolished and about 12 civilians came from a hole underneath it. How the hell they survived that I'll never know. And we policed them up and sent them back to the CP area.

Q. Did you have time to see if the whole village was tunneled and tunnels from hootch to hootch and all like that?

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- A. No, we did not.
- Q. But there were caves all through?
- A. Yes, there were. I think this is pretty common in this particular, though, because I can probably take you right over here and show you a couple holes, so I don't think it's anything unusual. Whether or not...we didn't go back and sweep to the northwest where Delta Company had received their contact and take a real good look at that, we were primarily oriented in sweeping to the south, southeast, or primarily to the east to push up against those draws, so, I don't feel we encountered anything significant as far as trench systems or anything of this nature, not in that particular area we swept.
- Q. How long do you think they had been there?
- A. I have no idea.
- Q. Did you get a field force, during your sweep the next morning, the width of that hole between A/1/12 and whoever was down in the south?
- A. Yes, this is why I say previously I think it was about 400 meters.
- Q. That hole on the eastern flank?
- A. Yes. On the eastern ~~flank~~ flank? No, Negative. I have no feel for that whatsoever. That particular hole, no. I was speaking of ~~myself~~ the hole between myself and C Company 1/8, which is on the southwest. I think that was about.....
- Q. That was pretty much open, though, that hole between you and C 1/8?
- A. Yes it was.
- Q. Just to talking to people after the action, when and how do you think the enemy moved out?
- A. Well, I think was he solved that he was trying to be encircled he immediately tried to break contact. I think Delta Company's two platoons ran head-on into them and they had no choice but to fight them. I think about the time I got there the enemy was trying to withdraw and I think primarily, particularly based

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on subsequent operations further to the south, that he did withdraw to the south and probably to the east; and he may have ~~was~~ went up into the draws of the western side, but I think his main effort was south and southeast.

Q. Now, in your sweeps through the area in the subsequent days you all stayed in that general vicinity, what intelligence, if any, did you gain from the local populace that may have seen this?

A. Well, in my case it was not so much from the local populace because I didn't have an interpreter the greatest part of the time. ~~There~~^{It} was just the sporadic running into groups of 3, 4, 5, and 7. I can recall 3 days after this running into 7 of them. Almost no more than a thousand meters from the very place the battle took place.

Q. In what direction?

A. To the southwest in a village complex. Whether or not they were remnants of that particular element that was engaged or local VC, I don't know.

Q. Did you kill any of them?

A. In that particular case, no we did not. However, we did get two packs out of it which were NVA packs and had poncho's in them, rice, and green uniforms.

Q. Green Uniforms?

A. Green uniforms. Now, whether or not, as I say, these were remnants of this particular force or not, I don't know.

Q. Looking back at ~~HIWOSIGHT~~ now, is there anything that you feel could have been changed or somewhat altered in order to trap them in the vise or in the encirclement or anything you ~~can~~ could have done to get them?

A. Well, the biggest thing, I feel, is, and you probably got this out of quite a few others, is the committing of forces ~~PIECE - MEAL~~ and trying to attack a well*fortified ~~ENEMY~~ piece-meal. It wasn't apparent to me, but I got the distinct opinion that by the time there was enough force in there to deal with them, they were so intermingled

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and committed to heavy contact that it was very very dangerous to use artillery and this battalion here says it's based on ~~the~~ it's battle at Hoa Hoi, whereby we were ~~not~~ committed piece-meal, ~~with~~ we had sufficient lift to get company-size units in and one body and rather than a company landing and immediately trying to go in, we brought on all four sides and we pounded it with artillery, and the next morning we went in. Well, this did not take place this time. Units were committed and when they were committed, they immediately were heavily engaged and pursued, and as a result, units were not in any configuration which would lend itself to heavy artillery support and was very limited as far as ARA. In fact, I understand ARA took its toll of friendly casualties, no problem there, but/virtue of contact being so tight. So the difference here is as opposed to Hoa Hoi from my experience, limited as it may be, is (1) in Hoa Hoi we committed units as a unit rather than platoons followed by platoons. So as when a company landed, a company had enough fighting force to hold its own and block effectively, and in a matter of three hours in Hoa Hoi, we had 3 rifle companies around the village whereas in a matter of 3 hours here we were counting platoons. When one platoon would land, one platoon would get chewed up. As a result, it was throwing meat to the dogs. And this is attributed primarily the amount of lift available. There's no choice. In my case, in my company I was lifted by platoons, so I had no choice but to go by platoon and if things would have worked differently, if one of my platoons would have landed, he would have been committed. Then, if another platoon of mine would have been landed and committed, then, of course, I would have been in contact without being able to maneuver. So that's the biggest difference as far as I'm concerned. Piece-meal committment and not trying to encircle and block, although I'm sure...I mean/.....

Q. Do you feel there was enough time? Was it too late in the day to really establish an encirclement?

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A. I can't say because all I know is what took place by the time I got there.

Q. You got there awfully late.

A. I got there about 1715. And I understand contact started about noon. I don't know.

Well, the two schools of thoughts are in relationship to the employment of artillery as far as using it to maneuver ~~it~~ against the enemy, particularly in Vietnam and fighting a well-concealed fortified enemy, one school of thought by many commanders is to use only artillery as to suppress the enemy but primarily employ maneuver against them. By that I mean that once contact is made, rather than delay pursuit, to immediately start maneuvering against them with ground forces ~~it~~ so that you can destroy them. This in my opinion is fine if you meet charlie in an engagement when he is not in an organized well fortified position. I say this because artillery will then only slow you and prevent you from maneuvering against a disorganized and in some cases confuse enemy. However, when charlie is in a fortified, well defended position and he chooses to fight, he chooses to do so only because he has advantage of terrain and is prepared to fight you. So, if you maneuver in this situation, I feel, you're going to take an extremely unduly amount of casualties, friendly, and your only course then is to pull back and bombard it and get them out of the holes or bury them in the holes and then going in and get them. Small arms fire when you're maneuvering against a fortified bunker system is ineffective. The apertures in his bunkers are no more than 12 inches long and 3 inches high. Firing at 200 meters to try and ~~eliminate~~ ^{eliminate} him in these bunkers is almost in effect a miracle or somewhat of a stroke of genius to do. In addition, the way charlie organizes his bunker system in a fortified village is such that he has each bunker covered by fire. So when you assault one bunker, you're running into another bunker system which is to his left or right and mutually supporting him. So you may be maneuvering ~~adequately~~ ^{adequately} just like they do at Benning, however, the amount of casualties you're going to take for the effort you will eventually gain is not acceptable in my opinion. So the

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only recourse is to pull back, bombard it, then go in, and if you get fire the second time, pull back again. Charlie's going to be there. He's in those holes and he's not going to come out unless you get him out.

Q. And we were too close at the time to bring in artillery.

a. Well, my understanding is when charlie opened up on Delta Company, it was at such close range that the platoon was automatically pinned down. So, any maneuvering on the part of that platoon was almost suicide.

CPT PAUL G. VILLANAUGO CO B/1/8

B/1/8

Q.9 CPT Villanaugo, would you tell us where you were when you got the order to move and what your mission was and how soon it was before you were picked up and just carry on a chronologically as you can.

A.

CPT VILLANAUGO - We had just come in to the Bong Son area the day before. I think it was the 16th and our mission was to secure ~~the~~ ^{out} battalion CP located at LZ Gavin. The day that this action occurred was the day after we arrived, the 17th I believe, I had one platoon out about 1500 meters making a reconnaissance. When we got the word that one of our companies with 1/12 Charlie Company had made heavy contact and that we were being committed. My company was ~~brigade~~ brigade reaction force and I had one platoon on a 15 minute alert, the rest of the company a half hour alert. Within about 30 minutes.....

Q. When did you get the word?

A. We got the word, I can't remember the time, this was I believe somewhere around 10:30. I can't remember the actual time.

Q. Was this before or after lunch?

A. It was before lunch. I ~~remember~~ remember eating lunch that night, and they picked us up, they sent 4 ships, I think ~~at~~ ^{at} were from 1/9, and they picked up the first

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load which was my second platoon and CP group. We flew from Gavin north and we went to the south of 506 Valley and we orbited...there's a French fork over this entrance right here, there's a French fork right up over here on this high ground, a triangular shaped fork and we orbited over this area, I don't know how long it was, almost up to an hour....

Q. About what time was this, do you know?

A. This would have been about 11 to 12 o'clock. At this time I could see the air strikes coming in, skyraiders, Go-Go ships coming in and the ARA ships blasting the area.

Q. Were they firing into the area now? They were firing into the area now.

A. Right.

Q. Were you monitored to hear any of the radio transmissions on the ground and what companies were there and who was engaged and so forth?

A. Nealon was 1/12 and there was a lot of spaces on the air at that time. The only station that I had communications with was ~~the~~ with the Sideshow 3 or the S-3 of the 1/12. I didn't know where he was located at. I later found out that he was on the ground with their Charlie Company. And he told me that they were trying to find an LZ to put us down; they would orbit until they found the LZ. One time we made one pass, we came into the valley, we made one pass on the eastern portion of the valley generally 3 to 4 thousand meters from the LZ.

Q. What direction? Southeast?

A. South, southeast from where the fighting was going on. They actually prepped the LZ with ARA and ~~they~~ then they changed and cruised around for 15 more minutes in which time they finally brought us in to the LZ where we landed. We landed from west to east. Let's see...I don't have the coordinates right in here.

CPT SYKES - I have them in mine.

A. OK, right here at this location. As soon as we got in...

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Q. About what time was that you were on the ground?

A. I estimate it around...somewhere around 1300 hrs. We got in, the ships told us that they were going back to refuel and they would pick up the rest of my company that was still located at Gavin. I didn't know at the time, but the lead ship received four hits from automatic weapons fire. Once we got on the ground we made no contact.

Q. You had no contact once you got on the ground?

A. No contact on the ground. I received my instructions to block to the north, so with 4 ships I had...that's 24 people including my RTO's and FO's and that's how much it took to secure the LZ. But we secured the LZ...I figure about an hour before the rest of my company joined us on the ground, but they started pouring in. Once they started coming it was a pretty steady flow. Once I closed in on the ground we monitored the message saying that they had spotted a column ● of VC moving southwest of this valley west of our location.

Q.9 Is this west of the Chieu Tan contact?

A. This ~~is~~ is southwest of where the contact was and the area we were moving through was west of my location. I received instructions to move east through the 506 road and block in this position.

Q. Who gave you these instructions?

A. These were given to me by the S-3 of the 1/12, Major Biari. I moved into this area right here in this village.

Q.9 OK, now how long did it take you to go from your LZ once your troops were on the ground.....

OK, I realize the time is short. How long did it take you to get to the road, to move up the road, what type of contact did you have and where did you establish your position that night?

A. When we got the order to move off the road, we moved in this direction, ~~we~~ got into this village, we got two VC in that area and we set up in here. And they remained...

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...they told us to remain in position until about 1830. At 1830 I got the word to move north and occupy a position between their Alpha and Bravo Company 1/12. We started moving at about 7 o'clock and we received several rounds of automatic weapons fire, grenades on the road and we linked up with their A Company, we moved into position between their A and B Company at 3 o'clock. We received one M-79 round and small arms fire.

- Q. You moved right through the enemy positions. Did you receive any type of fire at all? And did the enemy try to exfiltrate while you were moving up north?
- A. We didn't receive any accurate fire while we were moving through these areas and we had no contact with the enemy as such as far as seeing them. All the firing we received was within 400 meters of the friendly positions and we were moving in to link up with them.
- Q. Fire from friendly positions?
- A. I wouldn't know. I think some of it was friendly, some of it by enemy positions.
- Q. But when you moved up along that eastern flank, the enemy was not trying to leave... exfiltrate the village at the time?
- A. We had no contact with the enemy whatsoever, physical contact, we did not see any "charlies" around that road or in that area. I moved my two platoons on either side of the road and the rest of the company on the road trailing, and there was no contact with enemy positions; we did not hit any enemy positions as such.
- Q. How far were your platoons off the road? I mean, how far did they extend off the road?
- A. Anywhere between 25 to 50 meters, that's about it. It was a pretty dark night.
- Q. That night did any enemy try to exfiltrate through your position where you were?
- A. Negative. (See note)
- Q. Did you physically link up with the companies on either side of you?
- A. Couldn't physically link up with them because they were in two perimeters; however, I went through one company position and ended up about 100 meters from the other company's position. My position, which is in my perimeter, was about 150 to 200

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meters from either one of the other two.

Q. So you were right in the middle covering each other by fire, but you were not physically married up.

A. No, we were not physically married up. It was impossible. How can you link up two perimeters?

Q. About what time was it after you moved up north along the road and reached the friendly positions which you went through, about what time was this, was it dark?

A. ~~Wednesday~~ When we moved out, we got the word to move out at 1830, we had two choppers that had been shot down. They were right inside our position along the road. I left one platoon in there securing the area, started moving out at approximately 1900 hours. The two choppers were pulled out by Chinooks and about 2000 hours that other platoon linked up with me. We continued out move, and I believe it was about 2400 hours by the time we linked up with their A Company.

Q. About how far did you move along the road?

A. We moved between 3 to 4 kilometers up the road. See the map. Actually, the distance we moved was about 12 to 1500 meters in which time we linked up with A Company 1/12, they were on a high ground straddling the road. We moved into their position, my mission had been given to me to link up with them and occupy a position to the west of them. ~~I...~~ moving up the road I got a pretty good fix of Bravo Company's location.

Q. Bravo which? Bravo...

A. 1/12. Because we received fire near their position. They were off to the side of the road. I took two casualties at that time. One was an M-79 grenade. And we could hear American voices...yea...this time I contacted Major Biari again and he... I told him where I thought he was. He fired a flare, confirmed that I was off to his left.

Q. About how far are you from Major Biari at this time?

A. This would have been about 400 meters. They were up on high ground to our left.

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We continued on and went on for about 400 meters...not even that much...less than 400 meters and we noticed...we thought we saw movement up on the road. So at this time I called the CO, A Company and asked him if he had people on the road and he said yes. When I was coming up the road I thought it was in front of his position and he had a man go over there with a flashlight with a red filter. He gave me a recognition signal; I acknowledged and we came into his position.

Q. Did you have any trouble getting into position? I mean, did those troops fire thinking you were the enemy/ since you were coming right over their position?

A. None whatsoever. ~~Exhibit~~ Our linkup was real smooth with them. They knew we were coming and we stopped about...we were about 75 to 100 meters in front of them when we were in the shadows off to the side of the road in the bushes. We could see they had a position off to the side of the road; later found out it was a machine gun position. There was no fire exchanged in this situation. Once we got in there I tried to contact Major Biari; found out he was being medevac 'd. Next instructions I got I got from Colonel Eggers, the battalion commander in which

I was instructed to move from there and link between A Company and B Company and close off a gap. I told him that this other company was not too far from where...these two companies were not that far away from each other. Actually, one was in front of the other. I already said go ahead and link up. At this time I found out that I was trying to link up between two perimeters. And I still haven't ~~found~~ figured out how to link up between two perimeters. So I moved south from the right flank or the edge of A Company, moved generally southeast and then east. ~~By~~ this time I had contact with both the company commanders. We spotted a ship come in...actually, flares were coming in, he ~~gave~~ gave me his position with relationship to the flares, so I started moving into this area.

Q. Now, who is he? Who are you referring to now?

A. ~~Alpha~~ BRAVO Company. That's Captain Benson, a good friend of mine.

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Q. OK. Now, how far were you from Captain Benson at this time?

A. When we finally stopped, I didn't know exactly how far we were. I figure anywhere from 200 to 300 meters. Then I saw a ship come in, a resupply or medevac ship come in to his position. He said that he was in a perimeter; I said I'm going to set up a ~~perimeter~~ ^{RIGHT} perimeter where I'm at. This time I ran into some American bodies. We set up our perimeter in between two hedgerows there was these two VC positions in the area and there were a total of 9 bodies right in front of these two positions.

Q. Friendly bodies in front of two positions?

A. Friendly bodies.

Q. What type of enemy positions were they, machine gun or?

A. I don't know. It could have been an automatic weapon or semi automatic. It was no bunker; just a spider hole.

Q. OK. What did you do the next morning?

A. The next morning we participated in a sweep to the east and later they brought us back in and cancelled the sweep and we got information that night to set up an ambush between that position and Pony.

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506 Valley action

LT Feiner

CPT SYKES LT Feiner, what I want to get from you is information regarding the action that 1/12 had in the 506 valley on 17 December, ~~say~~ you were the platoon leader of the 3d platoon, Delta Company 1/12, and would you relate as best as you can remember when you got the order to move into the 506 Valley, where you were, how you actually came in, the number of choppers, and how your squads were deployed and what problems did you encounter and so forth, just take it right from the beginning as much in detail as you can remember.

A. Well, on the afternoon of the 17th about...somewhere between 12 and 1 we were on a sweep down near PHU NINH (2) which is about 3 clicks directly south of where LZ Bird was. We got a call to find an LZ and prepare for an extraction because somebody had made contact.

Q. Did you know at this time where the contact had been made?

A. No sir.

Q.?

A. Well, we had 2 platoons, one was down in the valley where the Soui Ran is and my platoon and company headquarters were down near Phu Ninh (2) on a search and destroy. The 3d platoon was at LZ Pony; they were the battalion recon platoon. We got the order to find an LZ and prepare for extraction. We set on the LZ for two hours approximately and we never got any word of where we were going or what kind of contact.

Q. You mean you sat on the PZ?

A. Right.

Q. For about 2 hours? About what time were you notified and what time were you actually picked up?

A. Between 12 and 1 and we were picked up close to 3 o'clock. When we came in, my

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platoon went out first, the other platoon, 2d platoon, was picked up also about the same time.

Q. There at the same PZ?

A. No, they were about 2 clicks to our east in the other valley making a search and destroy there.

Q. Who's platoon was that?

A. LT Pendel's platoon.

Q. Pendel?

A. Pendel, yes sir. We moved my platoon out first, we had 7 ships which included my platoon company headquarters. We came into the ground within about 200 meters away from where we made our initial contact. Charlie Company was also brought in the same LZ and ^{ALFA} Bravo Company was also brought in the same LZ. Charlie came in just after us and ^{ALFA} Bravo came in just before us.
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Q. Three of the companies came in on the same LZ?

A. Right.

Q. Are you sure about this?

A. Yes sir. When we got on the ground, we received some small arms fire; automatic weapons.

Q. Well, now when you got off the choppers, did all the choppers land about the same time?

A. They landed...it was a 5-ship LZ...so 5 came down, my platoon took from 12 to 3, the direction we came in, we came in choppers heading east. We got on the ground we were OPCON to Charlie Company.

Q. How many platoons of Delta Company were involved that day?

A. 2 platoons.

Q. Were they both OPCON to Charlie Company?

A. Well, the whole company, what was left of Delta was OPCON to Charlie Company.

Q. And how many platoons did Charlie ~~company have~~ **CONFIDENTIAL**

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A. I believe they had 3...2 with them, one was on the other side of the village, sep

Q. What do you mean by the other side?

A. Well, I don't know whether they swept around, but they had been on...oh, I'd say 500 meters to our east in the area where we finally ended up setting up late that night. The other platoon, Charlie Company, was back at one of the other LZ's, I believe it was Bird. When we came in there, we were OPCON to Charlie Company and we got the order to get on line and sweep through the area.

Q. Now, let me back up again. You landed before Charlie Company, first of the Delta Company platoon?

A. That's right. Yes sir.

Q. And then you secured the LZ while they came in?

A. Right sir.

Q. And then do you remember the order the platoons of Charlie Company came in?

A. No sir. We pulled over and secured part of the area. It was kind of a combination; some from Charlie Company came in with us and everybody was coming in about the same time. And we were OPCON to Charlie Company and at that time we were told to get on line and we would pull a sweep.

Q. Are these all the platoons?

A. This is all the platoons that Charlie Company had with them and my 2. Bravo Company came in to our left on the sweep, in other words, I had ^{ALFA} Bravo on our left and Charlie on our right and we were in the base. We moved up to....

Q. Let me stop you again. Do you know what ^{ALFA} Bravo Company was doing, what they had done before you had got there? Had they already moved out or were they waiting for you?

A. They waited for us to get there, I believe, now I'm not sure. But we came across them and they...what we did we moved up to Highway 506, headed down it and then Charlie Company...just before we came into a village area...they swept toward the south on line with their 2 platoons and my...or Delta Company's 2 platoons,

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headed south with them.

Q. When you say on line, Do you mean platoons on line, squads on line, everybody on line? Define what you mean.

A. We were in a file formation.

Q. Who was in file formation?

A. Charlie Company and our Company.

Q. What do you mean by file formation?

A. One man behind the other.

Q. The whole company?

A. Right. Initially moving down the road we were in a file.

Q. Your were moving down the road?

A. Right. We got there and we headed south. In other words, the whole thing just turned, one man would peel off this way. So we still were in a file, two companies plus Bravo Company was the same way, in a file formation. When we through open hedgerow areas, I lost contact with the 2d platoon which was behind me. I held up to...wait until they close with me and I lost contact with Charlie Company.

Q. Now, why did you lose contact first?

A. Well, it was a crisscross type thing. Everybody was on the ground on line and they slowed down behind me so I held until they closed on me. The order was, my platoon, the headquarters and the 2d platoon.

Q. Do you remember who was ahead of you?

A. Charlie Company, 4th platoon I believe, I'm not positive.

Q. But the 4 or 5 platoons were on...in a file, single file, man behind a man.

A. Yes sir.

Q. Moving down the road. OK. And then how far did you go in that formation?

A. We moved I'd say 100 meters from the LZ and then we cut south, still in file...

Q. Which way 100 meters?

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- A. East. And then we cut south and I say we may have moved another 100 meters before I received contact.
- Q. OK. It was before this, though, that you had lost contact with Charlie Company when you had to wait.
- A. Right. I hesitated for my 2d platoon to catch up. They caught up and I lost contact with the rear file, Charlie Company. So I moved forward in the same direction...
- Q. Still in file?
- A. Still in file and we moved up, one of my people from my 1st squad which I was in the middle of turned to me and said there's a VC over laying toward his left, which would be to the east. We were right fairly close to a hedgerow and I started through the hedgerow and that's when they opened fire from a bunker, on to my point squad.
- Q. Where were you in the order of march? How were your squads arranged in the order of march?
- A. I had them arranged, 1st, 2d, 3d squad, company headquarters was with the 1st squad. I think I had two people from the 1st squad was behind my headquarters, so I was more or less in the middle of the 1st squad.
- Q. OK. And that was the first...lead element?
- A. Right.
- Q. That's where your platoon headquarters and your company headquarters...?
- A. My platoon headquarters was there. Company headquarters was back behind my first squad. We moved down, they received fire from one bunker; automatic weapons fire.
- Q. How far was that before they opened up?
- A. We were within I'd say 10 to 15 feet. *No fire by first*
- Q. 10 to 15 feet? What were the results?
- A. When they opened fire, they killed my point man...
- Q. What was his name?

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 Name: J.S.
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 Squad: 1st

A. Hueing. PFC Hueing. They killed the squad leader, SGT Cook and they hit the man who was just behind the point, Corporal Deedon.

Q. Wounded him?

A. Wounded him and then they killed him later while he was laying there.

Q. How much later?

A. Within the next two or three minutes. They realized he was alive and then they cut down on him with the AK again. They were the first three hit and behind them were the machine gunner, PFC Hatersly, he stayed out there in the middle of the open area. We had an open area with a heavy hedgerow on both sides and we were right in the middle of the open area. It was a square type thing.

CPT SYKES - I'll have you draw a map later.

A. We got pinned down there and we received just the fire from the bunker.

Q. How many enemy opened up?

A. One position opened up. As far as they could tell, there was one AK in the bunker.

Q. One AK.

A. Once we were pinned down we received sniper fire from the trees. I don't know how many snipers were up there, but we received heavy sniper fire.

Q. As soon as this man opened up and you saw your point man was killed and the next man was killed, what happened? Were you still in a file when they opened up?

A. We were still in file when they opened up.

Q. At this time before they opened up, was anybody else in contact? Did hear fire around?

A. Nobody else was in contact.

Q. You had the initial contact in the beginning?

A. That's right and we were hit, the only squad I had in contact was the 1st squad; 2d and 3d had no contact. The 2d platoon behind me shortly after I was hit within a minute or two they received contact under heavy fire.

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- Q. Where did their fire come from?
- A. The same...their left flank or to the east.
- Q. Farther down,..
- A. Behind us, about 75 or 100 meters behind us.
- Q. So, actually the enemy was opening up on the front of your file and in the rear of your file? There wasn't any fire in the middle?
- A. There was no fire in the middle. Later I found out why there was no fire in the middle. The enemy had their bunkers in an "L" shaped...one covering the other. One was here firing out into the open area, he had a supporting bunker to his... in the case of the one that hit me, to his north...or to his southeast which...
- Q. In the same hedgerow?
- A. There was a hedgerow...the one bunker that opened fire next to me was right in the hedgerow, the other one was down, it was a hedgerow like this coming up...
- Q. Perpendicular to that one?
- A. Perpendicular to the other one and they both could mutually support the other. They initially got hit shortly after I got hit, the 2d platoon got hit under heavy contact, at that time I only had the 1st squad in contact from, as far as I can tell, one bunker.
- Q. As soon as this fire came, could you tell where it was coming from? Could you see the muzzle flashes?
- A. No, we took anywhere from 3 to 5 minutes to realize where it was coming from because we were on top, within as I said, fairly close when we initially got contact, and the bunker was right at the edge of the open area in the hedgerow, it was right in the hedgerow itself. The hedgerow wasn't more than two to three feet high and most of our initial rounds went overtop the bunker. The only way we finally were able to see where the bunker was, was I noticed smoke coming off the weapon when it fired.

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Q. Did you have a chance to later look at this position?

A. I saw quite a few of the positions.

Q. Did they all have overhead cover and firing apertures or what were they like?

A. Most of them were just a foxhole in the ground with palms and grass over the top, all of them laid over the top, no overhead cover. They, as I said before, were interlaced mutually supporting and then each bunker had a series of snipers in the heavy palm trees behind them, so what they initially did in my case and in the other cases the 2d platoon, was to pin us down with the opening fire from the bunker, keep us down there and pick us off with snipers.

Q. Were there a lot of snipers in the trees?

A. There were quite a few snipers in the trees.

Q. How well camouflaged were they?

A. The only way we could...we would spray the trees just to shoot at them and this did cut down on the sniper fire.

Q. Could you estimate how many were up there as far as your particular area was concerned?

A. No.

Q. Were they all to the south of you? Were some of them behind you?

A. All of them were either to the...in my initial contact were to the south and some to the southeast from the location of my first squad. What we found the next day when we went through, each bunker was interlocking and there was a whole 360 degree perimeter.

Q. 360 degrees around?

A. Right. It was interlocking bunkers all the way.

Q. Was this around the entire village?

A. This was around the village, right.

Q. How big was that area?

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- A. Oh, maybe 200 meters.
- Q. 200 meters in circumference or in diameter?
- A. I'd say in diameter. About 200 meters.
- Q. Well, was there only one ring?
- A. Well, as I say, one was the outside ring and the other was the inner ring which was a supporting type thing. Each bunker was mutually supporting the other one. They were fairly close together, within 15, 20, maybe 30 meters of each other.
- Q. And this went around the entire village?
- A. The entire village. Some of the bunkers we found had overhead cover and fire apertures but quite a few of them had nothing but palms, grass and things overtop.
- Q. Were all of the positions in hedgerows?
- A. Most of them were right in the hedgerow heavily concealed. When I had initial contact, all I had was fire from one bunker and the 2d platoon said they had heavy contact so I maneuvered my 3d squad, which was my rear squad, back to try to lift some of the fire off the 2d platoon. The company commander, which was our XO at the time....
- Q. What was his name?
- A. LT Cox. He moved back with my 3d squad.
- Q. Was he traveling with the 3d squad?
- A. He was back right behind the 3d squad on the initial contact. He came up to me and saw what I had going and then I said go ahead and use the 3d squad and maneuver back and try to lift fire from the 2d platoon.
- Q. OK. Who was the 3d squad leader, do you remember?
- A. SGT Sims.
- Q. Did you give him the order to move back to....
- A. I also had my platoon sergeant back with the 3d squad, and called them and told them to move and shift back and try to lift ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ fire off the 2d platoon.

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- Q. Who actually did you talk to, do you remember?
- A. The platoon sergeant.
- Q. What was his name?
- A. SGT Ernest.
- Q. Ernest?
- A. Right. That's the last I saw of that squad. ^{Found most of them in one bunker.} Five of them were killed, the platoon sergeant, the company commander was killed in the same area.
- Q. The company commander or the XO?
- A. He was the XO, the company commander. We found them in that same general area. They had a 90mm that they were going after the bunker with, and I lost 5 of them at that location, all of them were killed. The squad leader came out alive and one of the other people in the squad was wounded.
- Q. So everybody was killed except the squad leader and one other man in the squad?
- A. Right.
- Q. Do you know what went on there?
- A. No, it's hazy even writing awards for these people; there was nobody there...also in the same area there was a platoon sergeant from ^AB Company that was killed.
- Q. In the same area?
- A. The same area and what had happened was that we weren't carrying 90mm recoilless's. They went down to ^AB Company and borrowed the 90 from them. They came back with it to try to wipe out the bunker.
- Q. Was there just one bunker there?
- A. Again, I'm not sure. This was over most where the 2d platoon was. It was right at the 2d platoon's flank.
- Q. OK, what happened with the 2d platoon? How did they fair? fare?
- A. The 2d platoon, they had a lot wounded. They had 2 KIA's, the platoon sergeant and one other man.

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- Q. Do you remember his name, the platoon sergeant?
- A. SGT Perpetua.
- Q. SGT Perpetua?
- A. SGT Perpetua. And they had heavy casualties; most of them came from one bunker.
the bunker was on the opposite side of the hedgerow. The only ^{place} they could go through was to break in the hedgerow, and as soon as they broke through it they got cut down. This is where SGT Travino got hit. He came through the break in the hedgerow and he got hit.
- Q. And there was another hedgerow beyond that...
- A. Right. Where they were set up in the bunker.
- Q. And they were set up in the bunker in that one and they got them as they came through the opening. About how far was that?
- A. I'm not sure.
- Q. Do you remember how many men went through? Were all the men killed in the path...
- A. No, the only one they...SGT Perpetua got killed, nobody really knows how. He had 11 holes in his helmet and all down through his chest where he must have gone for the bunker and on top of it, but he had...they don't even know if he fired his shotgun.
- Q. Was he close to the bunker when he was found?
- A. Fairly close to the bunker.
- Q. So he had actually come through the break in the hedgerow.
- A. He may have been farther to the rear and hit another bunker, but this is where SGT Travino was hit, up near the 1st squad area, he came through the hedgerow and got hit. Now, the medic tried to get to him and the medic got hit coming through the break in the....
- Q. Do you remember the medic's name?
- A. Beatencamp, Spec 4
- Q. Beatencamp?

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- A. And he just got back. LT ^{Primmer} was on one side of the hedgerow from what he told me and he tried to get up, there was barb wire running across. I think it was just boundary wire that he apparently had up around the house and the property there.
- Q. You didn't think it was tactical wire at all?
- A. NO. And they tried to cut that wire and he got two strands cut and a bullet went through his helmet and knocked his helmet off. He got kind of mad about that and he got a machine gun and jumped up with that and fired about 2 rounds and it jammed, so he was more or less pinned down...
- Q. He didn't have an M16?
- A. He had his M16, but he got a machine gun from one of his machine gunners that was hit. He got pinned down with his platoon, the same as I did, we didn't move forward from the initial contact because we couldn't. As I said, I maneuvered my 3d squad back to lift fire on them and they got tied up with this one bunker where I lost, I believe it was 5 of them, including the platoon sergeant. The XO was hit in that area too.
- Q. OK, let me ask you, I know you don't know much what happened back there. Did they have a chance to put up any type of a fight at all or were they killed just right off the bat?
- A. I don't know. I know they sent to ^{Alpha} Bravo Company to get a 90mm.
- Q. Who went to get it, do you know?
- A. I don't even know that. I know they sent...they found the 90 and the crew had been hit along with the platoon sergeant, Bravo Company. It was Bravo and my 2d platoon were pretty tied in together back there and I sent them back and that's the last I saw of them.
- Q. They got the 90s from ^{Alpha} Bravo Company?
- A. Right.

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Q. Why didn't you all have any 90's?

A. Well, we had just converted to a rifle company concept. Before that we had been a combat support company with the 106 platoon, anti-tank platoon, mortar platoon and a recon platoon and we were still running 3 squads per platoon, understrength squads and at the time we didn't have the 90's and we didn't carry them. At that time we didn't have LAW's. We still don't have 90's; we carry LAW's.

Q. When actually was this changeover?

A. Two weeks, we changed over the 28th of November, 2, maybe 3 weeks and we were short on personnel and we carried machine guns; we were unable to carry the 90 with the ammo and everything else. So we never did carry 90's; we still don't and I don't believe at that time we'd gotten our 90's from the other companies.

Q. But they went and picked up one 90 or two 90's?

A. I believe it was one.

Q. One? Did they use it at all?

A. I don't know. There in this area of this bunker, they were about 7 to 8 bodies.

Q. Enemy bodies?

A. Our bodies.

CPT SYKES - Our bodies.

A. I didn't see a charlie all day. Nobody in my platoon saw a VC all day except one, they saw one, the machine gunner saw one.

Q. You say you saw one body of an enemy all day long?

A. I saw a live one; we didn't see any...we found...throughout the whole area we found 17...15 or 17 VC.

Q. Dead?

A. Dead. First I had one man that was wounded, medevac'd...well, I'll go back over that. After I moved my 3d squad back, my 2d squad still wasn't in contact, so I maneuvered them to the left to flank the bunker that was pinning us down.

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- A. They were inside the ring. As I said before, right on their perimeter. Just the outside of it they threw a grenade in one hole and killed 3 "charlies". Another hole, charlie threw out a bag of something; we thought it was a satchel charge and it wasn't. They threw a grenade in there and I think they got one in there.
- Q. This was right on the line?
- A. Right on the line; they were just inside it, where they were set up.
- Q. OK. What happened next morning?
- A. The next morning we went out and got all our bodies collected and got those out and then we were attached to Bravo Company. What was left of Charlie and Delta were attached to Bravo and we made a sweep down the 506 Valley.
- Q. Did you sweep through that area of the fight at all?
- A. No. We swept out from it because we had been in there all night and they went through picking up bodies. They went through this way, we saw where the bunkers were set up...
- Q. That was at night, right?
- A. No, the next morning. We didn't go out that night at all. We found 2 or 3 bodies that night; one of the other companies picked them up.
- Q. Enemy bodies?
- A. No, ours. The next morning we went out and swept the whole area and got all of our dead out of there.
- Q. Were any men mangled...not mangled...but were any men cut up pretty badly...I mean vic ously by the enemy....?
- A. No. Like I say, the 2d squad layed there and got searched, the one that was alive said they searched the bodies, they took some weapons, not many.
- Q. Do you know how much you all lost?
- A. I think we lost four M79's and a few M16's. I don't know the exact count on them.

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But nobody was mutilated.

- Q. But the next 2 days or so you swept south down the 506 Valley?
- A. We swept south down the 506 Valley all the way to the end of it and had no contact.
- Q. Did you find anything of intelligence value at all?
- A. We found...the first night we set up, we had gone 1,000 meters, maybe farther, just off down to the other map sheet, and we sent an ambush out and they sprung it; they had some people coming down the road. The next morning we went out and found two VC suspects, one had been hit with claymore in the leg, not bad. You could see where pellets hit him in the leg. That was about all; no fire.
- Q. What do you think happened after this heavy contact? Evidently there was a pretty large force there, what happened?
- A. I believe what they probably did was break up into small units, small groups and went to the west, the high ground on the west because I know the next...not the next day, the day after the next...
- Q. To the west or to the east?
- A. West, down into....I'll show you on this map...over in here, high ground to the west because I know we were down in here, it might have been in here, had to have a heavy airstrike and heavy artillery and we had set up a blocking force there. It might have been here. And we got pulled out, Delta Co got pulled out back to Pony. That was on the 20th or 21st.
- Q. Who was on the...was anybody over on the eastern side there in the fight at all?
- A. I think there was a unit from 1/8, Canteen. Cup and Pistol Belt were in there. One was 1/8 and one 2/8.
- Q. They didn't stay there, though, they...
- A. That night they set up in a "L" type, Alpha Co, Charlie and Delta were here; Bravo was something like this and Canteen Cup or Pistol Belt or both of them were set up like this. That's the kind of area they had set up, it was set up in a half moon

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"L" shaped, three different locations. There was no way you could cover the area closed off.

Q. You say there's no way, I mean, 5 companies could have, couldn't they?

A. Well, between Delta and Charlie we had 60 people. Bravo had about 120 in there, but to do that I don't believe you can set up an island type concept; a company here, a platoon here, a platoon here 200 meters away. The only way you're going to close anything off is 2-man positions...

Q. Were you at Hoa Hoi at all?

A. No, I wasn't. Like I say, we were combat support company, we were on one of the LZ's during Hoa Hoi.

Q. Because this is the action that it's been compared with. The same battalion, if you see what I mean.

A. Right.

Q. After you were picked up that morning from your search and clear in the Kim Son Valley, what were you told while you were in the air, did you know anything about where you were going...

A. All we were told was that somebody had made contact and they sent us in. They didn't say who made contact, what contact and we didn't receive any coordinates of where we were going.

Q. For all you knew, you could have been going down to the Soui Ca?

A. Anyplace. I didn't know where we were going and we had only been out in that area operating for about.... we moved out from LZ Meade on the 15th...no, the afternoon of the 16th we moved out from LZ Meade. So we had only been in the area about a day. Nobody was too familiar with the area at all.

Q. Did you try to find out?

A. I tried to plot as well as I could on the map as I flew and could spot things, but...

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Q. Did you try to find out over the radio, could you find out over the radio?

A. I called because I was only on company net and they didn't know either because I had been with the company headquarters when I was extracted and they didn't know where we were either. I think I found out the next morning ^{by} the map just about where we were.

Q. Did you try to find out where you were...I mean, did you know...

A. I believe he called and try to find out a location; we never did get one.

Q. So, actually, when you came in on the ground you didn't know where the hell you were.

A. We didn't know where we were. Like I say, with the artillery FO, he tried to follow it coming in on the map; called for smoke and couldn't see it, so ...

Q. That's really a bitch, isn't it?

Let's go back with it and find out what was going on, you know, as far as the command level was going. Colone Eggers was above the air during most of the....I'm sure you didn't have contact with him.

A. No.

Q. Major Biari got down on the ground, was he in your area at all?

A. Shortly after we made contact he came along up from where the 2d platoon was, into my area where Charlie Company was.

Q. He was on the ground and he came from the 2d platoon?

A. Right. From the area that I come in from. He asked me where Charlie Company was; I told him someplace on the other side of the hedgerow to my right flank, he better sweep around back because I got a machine gun sitting there in the open area and he went through the open area after Charlie Company.

Q. Then what happened?

A. That's the last I saw of him. That night he had been hit. He was with one of the platoons when he was hit and medevac'd him that night.

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Q. Do you know in what area he was hit? Up in your area at all?

A. No, I think he was hit over near this village we went through that night. He was hit with one of the platoons in Charlie company.

Q. You keep talking about this village where you were at night. Were there any hootches or huts around where you initially had that contact?

A. They were all actually to the front of me where the enemy was. They were set up actually around the outskirts of the village. When we were over here, it was this same village, we were on the outskirts on the other side of the village. We had been hit on this side, the north side of the village, we moved just on the edge of the village to the south and there were houses in there. The next morning one old man came walking out of one of the houses and we picked up some civilian persons and we picked up one 57 recoilless team, VC.

Q. Where did you pick them up?

A. Bravo Company picked them up and took their weapon.

Q. Was this the next morning?

A. I think this was that night they first went in there. I saw two civilians down there that I had run into before down near LZ Crystal in October when I was on a sweep with the ARVN's and we came into one village and there was this old man; we found a VC flag in his house and he was there in that area the next morning.

Q. How did you recognize him?

A. When I saw him, I remembered him and I remember one woman there with a child.

Q. You just happened to recognize him?

A. Right, I knew them both. The ARVN's were pretty severe on the old man when they found the flag in his house and this woman was one of the first that they had ran into in the morning and they slapped her around quite a bit and I happened to remember both of them.

Q. Did you go into the hootches at all? Were ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Was the area tunneled?

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- A. There were tunnels, almost all the hootches have their own bunker, but not a real big tunnel system. Like most of the hootches have a bunker.
- Q. Were they tunnels connected from hootch to hootch or....?
- A. As far as we found, no. Nothing real long,
- Q. Were the bunkers in the hedgerow tunneled from bunker to bunker?
- A. They were just a regular...a lot of them were just a square hole in the ground with overhead camouflage and nothing more.
- Q. They were NVA though.
- A. Hell, I didn't see anything. But nobody in Delta Company could account the next morning for any kills.
- Q. Other than those two....
- A. I didn't find ^{out} until Christmas because those were the two people that got medevac'd and they said they killed 2 of them that they carried away and the machine gunner said he killed one. Nobody else could account for a kill.
- Q. Can you tell a little more about what 1SGT Helgason did. You say he got the Silver Star? Can you elaborate a little bit?
- A. Right. Well, in ^{the} initial contact he moved down with me and stayed with me most of the day. As I said before, he tied us in with Charlie Company and then came back with me, moved up and down the line...
- Q. Did he do anything in the afternoon that was particularly heroic because I know...
- A. He was up front with me most of the time and, except for the going out which was to tie in with Charlie Company because he moved across an open area under enemy fire.
- Q. Did he pull any bodies back or anything like that?
- A. That night he went out with the medical shock team and led the search which picked up a few wounded, one of them was this RTO that I had in my second squad, Noone,

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that if it hadn't been for him and found him in the search, he would have died because they never would have found him until the next morning. And he was with the medical shock team all that night and then went around the next day and policed up a lot of the bodies we had out there.

- Q. Can you tell me about Specialist Anderson, your medic, what he did in particular?
- A. Well, on the initial contact as soon as he knew somebody was hit, he went forward up to the front of the 1st squad where I had 3 people hit. He tried...one person was hit through the upper shoulder, down through the lung and came out the side...
- Q. Do you remember who that was?
- A. Ewing. He tried to patch him; he was having trouble breathing. He gave him mouth to mouth resuscitation.
- Q. Fire was going on all around him?
- A. He was out under enemy fire; he was hit across the hand when he was doing this work with and he crossed the finger and he pulled back. He went out again to some of the wounded.
- Q. Was this later in the afternoon?
- A. Later in the afternoon. Even when the medevacs came in he went there with me to provide cover when I went out and brought Ewing back and he moved up with me and helped me bring him back. That night when we were on the LZ, when the fire opened up and we were guiding medevacs in, we had a few people hit in Charlie Co. he crawled across the LZ, patched them up, and got one of them on the medevac and then he went...
- Q. Is that also under enemy fire?
- A. This was under enemy fire. This is when I was guiding the ship in and the AK's

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opened up. Also...

Q. Did the AK's hit somebody?

A. I think it was a grenade that hit somebody.

Q. Baetrew?

A. Baetrew. And after the medevac's were in the resupply ship, he took care of some of the minor wounded and finally about 1 o'clock at night he paid some attention to his hand where he had been hit.

Q. Was his hand a very serious wound at all?

A. He got it across the knuckles, broke the knuckle.

Q. Broke the knuckle?

A. Right. Not very serious; painfull.

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VALLEY

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JAN 1968
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ET SHOPP on 506 Valley talking to Captain ~~EGG~~, company commander of Charlie Company, 1st 8th.

A. We went in by hooks at LZ Pony, I guess (ASIDE - What time was it, about 1400?) at 1400 hours, and we got a light briefing from Major Bierly, S-3, to secure Pony with two platoons, and conduct a reconnaissance in force of 506 Valley with two platoons, one on the west side and one on the east side of the road. And I questioned his concept of sending two platoons into an area where they didn't have any knowledge of any enemy activity. I suggested taking my entire company into the area. He said, no, a reconnaissance in force, if there was a platoon in there, would be an adequate force. As it turned out that wasn't true. These two platoons moved ~~off~~ ^{out} together about 1500, 2000 meters off Pony where they stayed that night. Then on the 17th Sergeant Carmichael's ^{3rd} platoon moved across the road ~~across~~ ^{across} the stream. His mission was to search out this draw for activity and ~~first~~ ^{first} platoon ~~himself~~ off Pony generally following this ridge line here, sweep out this draw, then come back and work ~~backwards~~ out the village area. About 0900 in the morning ~~he~~ got a call from 16 that he made contact here on this ridge. I had an H-13 standing by because I wanted to go up airborne that morning anyway to observe these platoons and give them any assistance I could, and it developed that they ran into the 18th Regimental CP at that location. They picked up a switch board. They killed two or three. They didn't get a body count there. They knew they had killed, but we had three men that were later wounded in that fight. But when we got the switch board, I called ^{LTC Eggars} Colonel ~~Agers~~ who was at Bird ~~for~~ ^{for} orbiting in that vicinity, and told him that I wanted to air assault my entire company into an area east of here to ~~assist~~ assist my first platoon. And his S-3 came on the air, Major Bierly. He says, OK, we'll give you your three platoons plus one platoon from Charlie, ^{2nd platoon} 1st of the 12th off of Bird. And I had to leave one platoon here to secure ^{Four Th} Pony. And I ^{picked} ~~prepped~~ ^{an} ~~the~~ LZ from an H-13 on the west side of the stream somewhere in here, coordinated the platoons there, 827797. Sunk an LZ in there and they had gun ship take it in. The first platoon that went in was the ^{2d} platoon, Charlie Company, 1st of the 12th went in ~~they~~ secured it. The next platoon to come in was my third platoon that was ~~picked~~ ^{picked} up here, then my second platoon, which was

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on a patrolling mission, I picked them up and brought them in, and then who was left (KIND OF AN ASIDE). Then I went back and got my CP Group and brought them on in to So I had three platoons of my company, plus one platoon of Charlie, 1st of the 12th.

Q. So what time did all of you close on that location?

A. About 11. About 1100, before noon.

Q. What contact did they have up until that time?

A. Well, they had had sporadic contact up in here, and as we moved up to disengage them, they had put a blue platoon in, 1st of the 9th, in this area, and they had made contact. Colonel ^{Eggan} ~~Agers~~ told me to get to a PZ so that I could be committed, but I was already in contact here, and he couldn't break it. So we took three platoons up there to disengage that platoon.

Q. They had been engaged all this time?

A. Right. They had been engaged up there.

Q. Came in to the LZ and moved up on the ridge with them?

A. Right. Right. We disengaged them, brought them down, medevaced their wounded, and they had one prisoner we took out, ^{plus} ~~and~~ some captured equipment. And they told me to seal off rather than go into this area where the contact was being made, seal off this area.

U SPKR: Captain Houston was a good friend of mine, I had one of his platoons, and I talked with him on the radio about his contact. I asked Colonel ^{Eggan} ~~Agers~~, and Major Bierly twice to move me immediately up into this area to get into the fight because we were in a good position. We had a whole company. We had control of our situation, and we could move immediately. And he told us no, he wanted ~~us~~ to seal off the mouth of this southwest draw across here, which we did, and that's a pretty big chunk. It took us a long time to move, about 2 hours. Then I asked him again to let me move to this location. And they said, OK, start moving up there. And we move generally paralleling these little trails which are not on the map. Kind of wide open in here. We closed into this area, (ASIDE - about what?) it was just starting to get dark. (U SPKR: ABOUT 1700). We ran into an enemy force in here about 1700. His platoon ran into them first. We had three platoons on line. Then we had Charlie, 1st of the ~~12th~~ reserve. We made pretty good contact

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never
 there. Charlie was dug in in his holes and bunkers. He apparently suspected ~~that~~
 Americans moving in this direction because we caught them off guard. We killed the
 their holes, and they may, of course, have been trying to get away from this contact here.
 We ran into them, I guess for about an hour and a half we killed them in their holes. ~~A~~
 we realized there was an American element just on the other side of these Charlies. The
 happened to be two blue platoons, and ~~one~~^{3rd} platoon of the 2d of the 8th, A Company, 2d of
 the 8th had been air assaulted in. They had been air assaulted in, had been given no
 mission, any explanation of what was going on, and we picked them up and it ended up we
 had four platoons attached to us. The two blue platoons were attached to them, ~~plus A~~^{3A 5/8}
~~Company, 2d of the 8th.~~ We had one killed in this fight and nine wounded here. There were
 hedge rows, they were dug in beautifully. They were like an I formation. The blues
 were over here in a perimeter about a hundred meters on the other side of the Charlie,
 and we were about 25 meters from the Charlies. We were firing into the blues, and the
 blues coming in to us, as well as the Charlie. I don't think the 1st of the 12th really
 knew where everybody was because they didn't know, Bravo Company we had placed ~~our~~
 on our ~~Bravo Company~~ Bravo Company when they moved up the road, and the blues were firing on us, and
 I kept telling them there is an Army unit there, and they said there is no American unit
 near us. So we started ~~to~~ to move again. We moved again and we got hit. We got
 hit by both, the blues hit us and Charlie hit us. So we just stayed there ~~that~~^{that}
 night, and during the night we killed about three Charlies with our Starlight Scopes.
 They had come up to get the equipment, some equipment off the battle zone there, and we
 killed them with the Starlight Scopes. Nothing much happened that night. They threw
 hand grenades into the perimeter and all that.

- Q. Describe in more detail if you can how close you were to the blues, for one thing, and they described it was force moved in between you that night.
- A. The Charlies?
- Q. Right. That both of you were shooting into them and finally had to give it up when you realized that

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A. There were Charlies. They had not moved in there. They were there and they moved night. The next morning we married up with the blues. We picked up the blues. We secured their two MIA's or KIA's, picked them up. That night the only activity, we had pinpointed targets, we had fired on Charlie with our Starlights, because the fire wasn't well aimed was going into the blues, and the M-79's. They were shooting M-79's at us, and the mutual agreement ~~XXXXXXXX~~ between ~~XXXXXXXX~~ the blues ~~XXXX~~ and us that we finally worked out ranges for that night, because the 1st of the 12th didn't know where we were, and they didn't know where the blues were. In addition, ~~XXXX~~ they didn't know where that platoon of A Company, 2d of the 8th was. So we picked them up and they were attached to us. They were right on the partition.

Q. Which direction were they from you, straight west, northwest, or . . . ?

A. They were north-northeast. . . (GARBLED - CAN'T UNDERSTAND) . . .

Q. They had one platoon, 3d platoon, A Company 2d of the 8th . . .

A. Yes, we picked them up and those three platoons were attached to us. We controlled them. Nothing happened the rest of that night. Charlie probably got out back down the 506 road. There was nobody blocking it.

Q. What about that night? How close did you get to, it should have been Charlie, 1st of the 12th?

A. We didn't get to them. We couldn't get to them because (GARBLED - SEVERAL DIFFERENT SPEAKERS ALL SPEAKING AT ONCE) . . . (U SPKR: The closest we ever got was . . . laying off on our left flank, trying to cover them. They got to within about 200 meters, and then they pulled back and joined us. They were getting sniper fire and were taking fire from their own units, so they came back and joined us) . . . (ORIGINAL SPEAKER -) - The units that tried to move at night would get hell from Charlie, and from the other units that didn't have a fix on ~~XXXX~~ where the other units were, were getting hit.

Q. How was your company employed that night. Where were the ~~XXXX~~ platoons?

A. We had a kind of a rectangular perimeter. We had our second platoon facing to the north, third platoon facing to the west. . . . Yes, second platoon was ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ north, first platoon was facing east, and Charlie, 1st of ~~XXXX~~ 12th was facing south. It was kind of a

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square formation. Right in front of us about 10 or 25 meters from us, the Charlies an "L" shaped formation with the long part of the "L" directly, running parallel with second platoon, and with the bottom part of the "L" going around our perimeter, facing the second platoon there. We were right on their positions, and, like I say, they didn't see us coming. We couldn't get any artillery. All the artillery was They didn't know it until we were right on top of them. We caught a couple of them napping in their holes, . . . (MUMBLED * CAN'T UNDERSTAND, hda)

Q. Did they noticeably break contact that night? If so, what time?

A. Midnight.

Q. Midnight?

A. Right. About midnight to 1:00. ~~THEY WERE~~ After that they threw hand grenades into our perimeter that didn't explode. And also the Charlie's had M-79's and the blues were still shooting M-79's at us, and they were hitting near our perimeter. I think around midnight we got our last sighting on the Starlights, and a shot knocked one of them down. After that there was no

Q. Do you remember who you talked to who was in charge of the 1st of the 9th?

A. ~~XX~~ . . . Lieutenant Roberts . . .

Q. One of them was Lieutenant Featherstone.

A. . . . he was platoon leader of the blues. I don't remember the other one's name.

U SPKR: One of them was big tall, heavysset. Then there was another tall robust . . .

~~XXXXX~~ (U SPKR: Lieutenant Roberts)

Q. Do you remember any of the conversations you had with them as you were trying to get in closer to them?

A. We talked on the radio to find out who ~~XXXX~~ they were because I saw a ship, a helicopter, a medevac land there, and I knew that there was an American unit. And I didn't know where the blues were. As a matter of fact, I thought it was the CB for the 1st of the 12th, is what I thought it was. So I called them and asked Colonel ^{Eggers} ~~Agers~~ if a medevac had landed in his location and he said, no. So I said a ship, a medevac, has just landed.

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about a hundred and fifty meters to my northeast. There is a friendly unit there and they are firing on my position, and they said there were no friendly units where I was, me. Finally they said there is a blue unit in the ~~the~~ neighborhood. So we called them on the radio, on the battalion frequency and asked them to shoot a flare up. So they shot a flare, and we could hear it go off, and knew it was them. And about that time we had our own medevac ship come in, which they saw it land, and after that we wanted to move to them, but we got up and tried to move one more time, but the Charlies were still between us, and we couldn't move without taking a lot of casualties, so ~~they~~ we stayed there that night, and closed on them the next morning.

Q. Do you happen to know if all the companies were working on one command push? were all working

A. We ~~all~~ ~~on~~ a battalion command push. There was this side show. Of course, each company had its own company push that it worked on too. So the next day ~~they~~ ~~we~~ ~~married~~ ~~up~~ we married up. We pushed through and married up with the blues, plus the platoon from the 2d of the 8th. Evacuated their KIA's, and some of their WIA's, and all their equipment, and we set up a mutual perimeter. . . . and he brought in a gun ship for me to go over and talk to Colonel ~~Wyers~~ ^{Eggers} at a briefing he had, and he told us what the missions were, and how many they had killed that night. We had killed 10 in there. He told us we were all going to move up in blocking positions up in the mountains, and my first platoon stayed in the valley here and ambushed for the next two or three days. In that little operation in there Charlie Company killed 30 Charlie. We had lost one killed, and We kill a lot more with artillery in this valley, deep draw. We spotted them in here, their like (?), we placed artillery, shooting (ASIDE - What do you call it?) . . .(?) and they were killing these Charlies in there with artillery. We had 155's, 105's, and 8 inch fire from both Bird and Pony, and I think from Uplift. The Division . . . from Uplift fired in here, and they killed a lot of them. E

Q. Did you have any contact or conversations with Bravo, 1st of the 8th during . . . ?

A. Yes, he was concerned about, he called me on the radio and said he was, he had received fire from me as he was moving because I had just acknowledged ^{to} the battalion that I was, had been in contact. He was moving up the road, and his instructions were not too specific

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AK's. There was a machine gun nest, and about two more in another position that we armed with AK47's, and this is the time that we ~~had~~ realized we had been cut-off because when we turned around to try to back out and re-establish contact, we started receiving fire from behind us.

Q. How close were you to those positions that you knocked out?

A. I was about 10 feet from the one I grenaded, and maybe 10 to 15 meters from the one with the two AK's in it. You could not see it. They were dug into the hedgerows. They were some of them were perfect field fortifications, as far as camouflage and cover, that I have ever run across.

Q. How were you able to get your grenades in there?

A. What happened on that was when I went running up there to see what they were hollering about, they had me drop, and at this time they raised the lid of the spider hole, and then popped out where this light machine gun of some kind began to fire. When he popped out, I threw a grenade in, because the spider hole cover was off. They didn't have good overhead cover, but as far as their camouflage, and as far as reticulating supporting hole small holes, they weren't big, ~~xxx~~ There was no fresh soil visible. They were fresh hole that they had camouflaged around. At this time we pulled back along a small trail running through there and, as I say, tried to withdraw back to re-establish contact with the third platoon. We could not, so we pulled up into a small perimeter right there. At this time I learned over the radio that Lieutenant Rudd had been hit in the leg, and that Captain Hurston had been wounded by a grenade fragment. Both of them continued to fire. Lieutenant Rudd continued to direct the control of this platoon, which was not moving, they were pinned down, but he continued to ~~pick~~ ^{keep} them giving effective fire. Captain Hurston stayed there until late that night when things calmed down, controlling the company. I was approximately 150 meters, 100 meters, close to a hundred meters from the third platoon, almost dead center in front of them at this time. Every time they fired the rounds would come over our position. Every time we would fire, ~~it would come over our position~~ ^{vice versa.} we were careful about this. But Charlie was ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ was. He was in the trees

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and dug into the hedgerows between us, and we couldn't weed him out. We tried to move forward then, since we couldn't go back to see if we could do some more damage in there and at this time I lost PFC Carruthers, SP4 Carruthers, he just made SP4, he was killed by a sniper, one shot through the head. He never knew what hit him. SGT ^{greathouse} Grayhous, my third squad leader, was killed by automatic weapons fire, ~~HIT HIM IN THE CHEST~~ that came from the hedge. I don't believe it was the same fire from the hedgerows that got him. My second squad, which was on our right, on the other side of the beginning of the hedgerow, received fire. PFC Poland, who had only been with the company a short time, received a round from a man dug into the hedgerows. It wouldn't have been more than ten meters away from him. It went through his chest. My squad leader, Sergeant Denham, went up and pulled him back. And at this time, this is when I consolidated everything into a small hollow there that I could use for cover and just prepared to sit it out. We couldn't move. We had too many wounded and we would have taken too many more casualties if we had tried to move.

Q. Was there any ARA available to you?

A. Yes, there was, ARA was on station. We marked off the position, and the rest of Charlie and Delta Company marked theirs, and we tried to bring it in between us, but we were too close. They made two runs down through there and the ARA rockets were as close as I am to this desk in front of us, going off, and it was the same on the other side. They just were not accurate enough, selective enough to risk it. I later heard that ARA did, in fact, hit Delta Company, and inflicted several casualties on Delta Company, but they were too close to adjust tube artillery in.

Q. How did you finally get out of there then?

A. Well, I didn't get out. We stayed right there where we were, and our third platoon, and the two platoons with Delta Company stayed where they were until dark, and then at this time, there were more units, I don't know who or where they were for sure, coming into the picture all the time. And at this time Charlie decided to break contact, apparently, he just left small stay-behind sniper force. Well, at this time Bravo Company, 1st of the 12th came in and linked up with us, moved in from the west. In other words, they had gone

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around like I had, farther down, after I had gotten in there, and had been trying to link up with me for some time while it was still light, or shortly after dark. Actually I think they finally got in there about 8:30 or 9:00 that night. They finally linked up with us. At this time they secured a larger area, while I tried to get my wounded out, and consolidate my people, and get more ammunition. We were down to five magazines of M-16 ammunition, and six .45 rounds, at this time. I only had 15 men that were capable of firing. And we redistributed the ammunition, and got more ammunition in. At this same time them, Delta Company and the other platoon of Charlie Company, moved in and linked up with us. Alpha Company, over next to the road, went into their own perimeter position, and I believe that part of the first ^{1/3} brigade moved up and finally linked up with them.

- Q. How much trouble did you have linking up with Bravo Company, 1st of the 12th when they moved in by dark?
- A. Very little. We knew where they were from shortly before dark because of their firing over there. I don't believe they actually became engaged, except by sniper fire. But when they would receive a round they would cut loose, and we knew where they were all the time, had direct radio contact with them. After it got dark, we didn't have any pyrotechniques there, but they had hand flares, and when we couldn't position them by sound, we would request a flare. They would pop it and we could locate them then, and talk them on in to our position. ~~They were linked up with Delta~~
- Q. What time was it when your position was linked up with Delta and Charlie?
- A. They moved into the perimeter that Bravo Company secured, probably 15 or 20 minutes after we linked up with Bravo Company. In other words, as soon as it got dark the main force, Charlie's main force moved out of the area. He left enough snipers behind to make it harassing, leave us really unsure of what was there, but his main body moved out, and we had no difficulty linking up.
- Q. What happened that night, anything ?
- A. Sporadic sniper fire. We cleared as many of the bunkered positions in the immediate area as we could find. We captured, Bravo Company, captured a definite NVA, and several

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civilians, women, old men and small children, which we saved and evacuated to the rear for interrogation the next morning.

Q. Where did you get the civilians?

A. The civilians were in rather large ~~bunkers~~ deep bunkers. They were very deep and very ~~well~~ well made. So apparently, when it became apparent there was going to be a fight there, they just moved into these already prepared bunkers and stayed there. And we flushed some of them out that night, and we found even more the next morning. Of course, immediately at first light all of the forces moved out and screened the entire area, and found relatively little.

Q. What happened to Major Bierry? Do you know him? Anything about that?

A. Major Bierry, when we made the move across the open field, when we first started receiving fire, I don't know where he came from, what had happened. I understand, from what I heard ~~later~~ later, he had landed when Captain Houston had been hit to help direct Charlie Company. He appeared out of nowhere in our rear, armed with a .45, and went tearing across the field with us, and what he was doing there, I don't know. I still don't know.

Q. This was after you were more or less isolated?

A. This, we had lost contact with the third platoon on our left flank, but before we were cut off and while we were still moving into the area, he appeared in the rear of our formation and moved up with me into the village. He was wounded in the side right after we, our forward movement stopped. And apparently, I thought he was only hit once in the shoulder, and later when we were in our perimeter, it developed that he had been hit in the shoulder and side, whether it was two separate wounds, I don't know, or whether he incurred them at the same time. Well, we split the use of my radio, is what it amounts to. I had one radio operational with me, and when not in contact on our company, then he would use the radio and we ^{were} was in contact with Charlie Charlie and all the company commanders, and actually, it was a unique position for him. He was right in the middle of it, and could tell where everybody was by the firing, could tell what Charlie was doing, as well as any of us knew, and so provided really exceptional coordination for the whole thing. When we linked up that night we were using the battalion net, and we talked

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everybody in, we knew at the time where everybody was.

Q. He was by himself when he linked up with you?

A. ~~Well, as I understand it, like I say, it was really hard to figure out. Everybody was~~

Well, as I understand it, as near as I can figure out, like I say, there is a lot about this that I don't know. He just materialized behind me. From talking to people, when we started to flank in, he left Captain Houston, behind the 1st (?) platoon, trying to get to me. And what he was going to tell me, I don't know, or what he was going to do I don't know, he never said, and I could only feel sorry (?) for him, but right after we started moving in is when we got split up by the terrain, before we started receiving heavy fire, and he came up on the rear of the platoon and moved ~~XXX~~ up through it, and went on into the village with us. At this time we started receiving fire, and I could really care less what he was doing, I had my hands full trying to control the platoon. And once we got surrounded, then I had my own worries with my wounded, and he was on the air quite a bit trying to coordinate, and we never really talked about it. He was evacuated immediately that night.

Q. What did you do the next morning then?

A. The next morning, Charlie Company, our two platoons, and Delta Company secured this same area, back where all our casualties had been the night before. We evacuated all our dead hauled out equipment, and intelligence items, captured weapons, and received resupply then. Initially we had been, while the rest of the units went out on the sweep, as soon as they completed the sweep then they came back in, and we broke down the issue of ammunition. We had received some ammunition the night before

Q. What was the total casualties your platoon took?

A. I took six killed and four wounded.

Q. And then what was your strength?

A. My strength when I ~~XXXX~~ went into the fight was 25. I came out with 15.

Q. OK, ~~XXXX~~ *Terminated is* the conversation with Lieutenant Edmensen, who was the platoon leader, first platoon, Charlie, 1st of the 12th in the

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1. We were moving through dense underbrush that was over our heads. I would say visibility to our front was 10 to 15 feet, real thick, our people had to fight their way through it. I had a point man and two flank men in my squad and one man was about 10 meters out in front of the rest of the troops, the two flank men were about 10 to 15 meters on either side. They were the ones that initially made the contact with the what we thought at the time must have been a machine gun, a heavy caliber type weapon.
2. Did they see them at all or did they just open up?
3. We couldn't see them through the dense underbrush. They just opened up. Also, we were receiving sniper fire and quite a bit of small arms. This pinned my lead squad down and I had three squads with me, the two other squads I took with me and we started to maneuver around on the left flank and try and come up on the flank of this enemy these enemy positions. We moved about 30 meters to the west and ran into a trail, moving generally north and south. We got on the west side of the trail, started moving north, were attempting to come up on the flank. At this time my point squad with a point man and a man on the west flank ran head on into a machine gun bunker on the trail. Also, the flank ran into a bunker directly in front of him approximately 10 or 15 meters to the west of this bunker on the trail. There were machine guns in both those bunkers. There was also another bunker on the trail facing, covering north. The bunker we ran into on that trail was covering south. These bunkers were back to back on the trail, one pointing north and one south. We received a hell of a lot of fire from that position. From that position we knew there were three machine guns, one facing north, one facing south, and another one facing south, both of the ones facing south firing at us and then we later determined there was a whole line of bunkers in this hedgerow running generally east and west directly facing us. The next morning we counted some 20 bunkers ~~xxx~~ 10 meters apart, real well camouflaged in this hedgerow, very deep with over-

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head cover, the whole works, and we received fire from at least 10 or 15 weapons directly into us there. We reached this one area on the trail where it suddenly opened up to a very open area there prior to running into this hedgerow. I had two men wounded at that point, my point and flank man were both wounded and both went down 10 feet in front of the opening to this bunker on the trail. They were able to kill one of the men, there were two men in the bunker, were able to kill one of them before going down. I pulled this lead squad back and we organized about 30 meters south of this hedgerow and I attempted to get my first squad that was pinned down to my east, I tried to get them to rejoin me; however, at this point he had 1 MIA out in the fairly open area and they couldn't get to him. So, they tried to extract him for about half an hour there, and finally weren't able to do so. My platoon sergeant returned back to their position and they got up close enough to the MIA to determine that he had been killed. So we left him where he was and pulled that squad back to rejoin my other two squads. On the way back the first squad ran into heavy automatic and small arms fire trying to return to us. Apparently, the VC had moved out of their bunkers or we were so close to their bunkers they could spot us. So they started receiving fire from 10 or 15 weapons, possibly a machine gun, but quite a bit of automatic weapons in there. After about a half hour, they were able to fight their way back to the other squads. We consolidated then in a position approximately 30 to 35 meters south of this east-west hedgerow where all the bunkers were. For the next 45 minutes we attempted to extract my two MIA. We finally able to send three men up through a thick hedgerow up to where these two men were laying. They were able to knock out both bunkers that were on the trail and while H-13's from A troop circled above and kept the heads down of all the rest of these bunkers by firing directly down in them and throwing hand grenades down. Did a real fine job of keeping the rest of the VC's heads down. We were able to pull these MIA back to our position. We determined at that time that

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one was killed and one was seriously WIA'd and he died shortly thereafter. At that time Apache 6 told me to move further south to another LZ and I would consolidate that position where I would be rejoined by Apache blues. This I did and as soon as I got back, I moved back approximately another 30 meters from the position I was just in just when Lawmower 36 was air lifted in to me. Lawmower 36 came in.. I don't believe he received any fire on the way in, although the ships may have received some fire on the way out.

Q. You were back securing the LZ for their entrance and exit. About what time would you say they got in? About 1830?

A. Lawmower 36 got in to us about I'd say 1745. We had just got in to secure the area when he came in, and shortly thereafter Apache blues linked up with us, so this happened within a period of about 15 minutes, so by 1800 all three platoons are in the LZ and we had it pretty well secured. Shortly thereafter I called Apache 6 to tell him that I had two KIA's in the LZ and couldn't get a ship in to extract them. I believe the...a lift ship at that time came in, he received....

U SPKR---About this time when he called for the KIA's to be extracted, my ship which was in the area, we attempted to come in to pick up the KIA's and we took heavy automatic weapons fire from the northwest. This was after the resupply. Let's back off here just a minute. OK. Earlier we attempted to resupply, it was about 1800, shortly after we got into the LZ the people were short on water and hand grenades about this time. We attempted to resupply. We had a B model from C troop come in. They came down to hover and took an intense amount of automatic weapons fire as they came into the LZ, wounded all 4 crew members on the aircraft and they pulled out and were unable to affect a resupply. It was getting almost dark about this time, dusk, and about this time we got the word of the KIA's they would like to get extracted. We started an approach into the area and we didn't get any further than 200 feet on final when.....

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U SPEER - Well, what I was doing, you were pretty intent on what was going on with you people there, but I was coming around the LZ in a fairly slow turn in the northwest area and I was coming around to approach it from the south. Just as I was in a pretty slow turn I had noticed I'd say 6 weapons shooting right up at us.

Q. This is LT Ware?

A. Right. Now, we had some rockets on there so we dumped the nose and shot them on the position. At that time our lift was coming into the area and just covered them to come in. I think everyone of them that took hits, not very much.

U SPEER -- Along about dusk, 1830 or so, the whole sky lit up and there was a period where there appeared to be a half a dozen weapons and they were firing a burst of.... you can sit there and talk about it, it seemed like a long time, but I would say really in a pessimistic evaluation of it, it was at least 45 seconds of continuous automatic weapons fire as they attempted to generally sweep the area with anti-aircraft fire.

Q. Just like a mad minute in the air?

A. Just about. Just like out of 12 o'clock High, it looked like. Of course, this again was dark and the tracers were becoming more apparent than ever. In fact, I would like to go back and pick up a couple of things that happened along there. I think the people really deserve mention of. Along about 1500 or so in the afternoon, or it might have been later, 1600 or so, (while the lancer element was in heavy contact, had a medevac ship go down just to the east of the area in an open rice field completely unprotected, they had four WIA's on board and 3 crew members. I diverted the gunship that was flying chase on me. He went over and covered ~~him~~ them and BA Charlie, the squadron maintenance officer came in and....

Q. What's his name sir?

A. It was CPT Sellers, Phil Sellers. He came in cold as hell, nothing around him, just that open rice field and went in there to CONFIDENTIAL le out and he rigged the ship and they came in with a "chinook" and pulled it out. Also going on

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simultaneous about this time, LT Simons on one of our scout ships who had been hovering over the position where the Lancer White element was taking fire, tried to extract them. He took some hits in his aircraft and it determined to be knocked out, the wiring in the aircraft--he lost his radios and ruptured an oil line, this was determined afterwards, it was dripping on the hot manifold so it looked like he was really on fire. Anyway, he flew around for 5 minutes, we were trying to get him down--he really used his head. It was C/1/8, I believe, that moved out of the LZ, no it was E/1/8, that moved down to the road, moved east from the LZ and about this time they hit the road, we flew around to the south of these people and he set himself down on the road right about the time they hit. We again landed and talked to the company commander and he told us he wanted to get him to move north up on this road, up by Bravo 6 into the main battle area. The company commander left the platoon there to secure the aircraft and he started his movement north. Along about this time when we moved, about dusk, H-13 ~~in~~ ^{was} along side the road and one of the lift ships that lifted in the 3d platoon of A/2/8 took hits coming out of the LZ and he went down on the road right next to him. So we had two ships down there. Then again, PA ~~CPT~~ Charlie and CPT Sellers came in and rigged both ships and extracted them out of the area.

Q. About what time was the extraction, do you remember?

A. They came out about 1830, just about dark, just about the time everything else was happening. The only other thing, as I say, it was getting dark and we had attempted to resupply and hadn't been able to, my main concern then became linking up, I had our 3 platoons, composit company down there, linked up with the other elements of the 1/12. And we saw C/1/8 and we could see them moving along towards our position. We talked to the company commander trying to affect a link-up before dark. As I say, this may be where some of the confusion comes in. The last time I saw him he was a good 800 meters from the area, and our units had made radio

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he didn't know exactly where he was going, ~~XX~~ and he was going to marry up with A Co . . . (?), and Bravo Company which was, let's see, Captain Blake had Alpha Company, (U SPKR - Benson?), Captain Benson, is that John Bird? He was John Bird in Bravo Company, and that he had married up with one of the companies, and that he was told he had to move through them, across their flank and marry up with another company. So he moved through there, this is about midnight now, or thereafter, and he got fire from that company. Bravo Company fired on him, killed one of his men and wounded four or five with M-79's, and he was reluctant to move any further, and finally he ran between, between the two companies he ran across about 20 bodies, American bodies in this area, and told who ~~XXXX~~ they were, and I think Captain Blake said they were his, and he was sending a recovery party down there that night to get them and pull them out.

- Q. What was your overall impression of the battle as far as the way it was conducted?
- A. I thought it was extremely poor. They didn't know what was in the Valley. My company was the only company that was committed as a unit, fought as a unit, to my knowledge, throughout the whole fight. I didn't want to send those two platoons in there, because couldn't really effectively get reinforcements to them because I was tied down to a security mission here, but as luck would have it, that day I did get a platoon from Char 1st of the 12th and ~~XXXXXXXX~~ ^{got} ~~then~~ permission to take my whole company in here and pick up my other platoon.
- Q. How much of a time lapse was there when your first platoon made contact and then when you had your whole company on the ground there?
- A. I would say an hour and a half.
- Q. Before you had to get other units (SOME DOUBT IF THIS IS ACTUAL QUESTION - OR WHO QUESTI
- A. Not really for the platoon because the platoon I got it, but I heard they were in contact I went up with an H-13 and got a read-out, and adjusted fire, because the fire coming from Pony, over this ridge line, he couldn't get it in there exactly where he wanted it, so I went back and told him, ~~that~~ after talking with him on the air that I wanted to get TAC Air airborne, and they wouldn't let me have TAC Air. They said, no, you don't need it. This was their S-3 Air, and I told ~~them~~ I'll want it, you get it. So final

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they agreed to get TAC Air, and they used TAC Air all throughout the ~~engagement~~ ^{day here} on ground. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ (U SPKR: Over on that ridge line, on the ~~east~~ ^{west} side, too.)

ORTG SPKR: Here? U SPKR: Right in here. O SPKR: Oh, yes, right in here.

Q. What time was that?

A. About 14 or 1500.

Q. By then, though, you had already crossed this stream and were moving . . . ?

A. Right. (U SPKR: We were in this area, but we hadn't gone across the stream).

Q. But then the artillery was brought in on the ridge?

A. Yes, he did. LT Potter (FARLEY ?) got an FO with him. I sent both my FO's out, and he brought the artillery in. It was significant that we got our company there, we could fight as a company, and we were the only company on the ground, ^{at that time} in the valley at that ~~time~~ had a sense of direction and knew where we were going. And it's the only time that day that an LZ was prepped, to my knowledge.

Q. I think Bravo company had one prepped, but that was a funny deal too. They prepped it, and flew around for 15 minutes, and then went into another LZ, I think.

A.

~~XXXXXX~~: That's Bravo, 1st of the 8th? All these other companies were put in by platoons, and they had gone in within sight of the perimeter of the Charlies and set up, cause wherever the contact is made they try to put the companies in as close as they could to it, but we could have done the same thing over here, but we didn't. We put in there where we could get on the ground and organize and move out, like the First Sergeant said, when you get on a hot LZ, it's like fighting in a bathtub, ^{and} ~~when~~ there is no need for it. This contact wasn't heavy, but what gave it away is that he recovered a switchboard. So he wasn't getting a lot of fire ~~like you~~ that you would get from WM company or something like that, but the fact that he recovered a switchboard, which normally you associate with a regimental CP, or a battalion CP, and as it turned out it was a regimental CP. What concerned me was that there was a large force in the area, and one platoon over there by itself was wholly inadequate, ~~XXXXXX~~ so we put the whole company in, and after that the whole thing broke in here.

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them, and finally one of them, as they set up and deployed their squads up there to poured maximum 55 into this area where they were putting up their hatches, putting up the hammocks, and so on. They could see a machine gun laying on the trail there, and they were off the trail. And when they got in there to let them have it, the "people sniffer" M-16 jammed on him. Then after a couple of cranks, he got it firing. They killed 4 or 5 in there. Now they didn't get a body count; we never took a body count. The body count ~~we took~~ we took of 10 was right up in here. In this whole fight for 506, we killed 31, I think, 31 including the fight ~~XXXXXX~~ up this draw here, and we had another fight later on over here, just before Christmas.

Q. Can you describe that "people sniffer"?

A. It's a ~~damned~~ ^{man} (?) portable. It's about 24 inches high, and about 6 inches deep, and about 12 inches across. (U SPKR: It weighs about 25 pounds. It smells (? MAYBE "filled") ammonia really. It smells sweat.) ORIG SPKR: Actually, the wind has to be right or it will pick up your own sweat. So the wind conditions have to be right to . . . enemy.

Q. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ They used it and it worked?

A. Uh huh, it got shot up too because the point man got hit after it was given to him. (U SPKR: Shot up the "people sniffer") Yes, shot up the "people sniffer". And the Starlight scopes we had out there, those were outstanding. In the whole thing, that operation, that Starlight scope mounted on the M-16 probably killed 6. The one that Gary shot out of the trees, plus 2 or 3 the second platoon killed up there.

Q. I think that will be good enough.

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the enemy or Captain Ogg. Meanwhile, Captain Houston had moved south with Rudd's platoon and they had been fiercely taken under fire, the NVA waiting once again until the Americans were at point blank range before opening up. Edmison was ordered back to help. He wound up behind the other platoon but then corrected himself and came up on the right flank to relieve the pressure.

Edmison called Rudd and told him he would push out 150 meters and then cut left to flank the enemy positions and hopefully neutralize the automatic weapons cutting them up so badly. (Map 10) They crossed a fairly open area where two men were slightly wounded by a concussion grenade. As they neared the edge of the village the firing increased a little but they kept advancing. Once inside, Hell broke loose and Edmison was taking casualties fast. The two men leading the drive into the village became pinned down when their M-16 rifles jammed up. Edmison and his RTO went running up to see what the yelling was about. Enemy fire dropped them. Lieutenant Edmison saw the lid lift off a spider hole not ten feet to his left. An enemy armed with a light machine gun came up firing. Edmison pitched a grenade in the hole, killing the Vietnamese Communist and destroying the weapon. He spotted two more NVA armed with AK-47's and shot them with his M-16. He realized he had to pull back then. The fortifications were well made, the camouflage nearly perfect. The positions were fairly new but no fresh soil indicated their presence. It was only a rare stroke of luck that he had seen the spider hole and AK position.

Edmison gave the word to pull back and re-establish contact with the company. Then he found they'd been cut off so he pulled up in a tight perimeter. He heard over the radio that Captain Houston had been wounded by a grenade fragment and that Lieutenant Rudd had been hit in the leg. Both of them continued to direct their elements. Rudd's platoon wasn't moving but he continued to direct effective fire. Captain Houston stayed until late that night, controlling his company.

Edmison was in a perimeter about 100 meters almost directly in front of third platoon. "Everytime they fired the rounds would come over our position, everytime we would fire, vice versa." They were trying to be careful amid all the confusion. Edmison decided since he couldn't pull back they would try forward again to see if they couldn't do more damage in there. Private First Class Bruce H. Crowthers was killed by a sniper, one shot through the head. He never knew what hit him. Staff Sergeant Julius Greathouse, the third squad leader, was killed by a burst coming from a hedge. Private First Class Harry T. Poland, a new man in the company, was shot in the chest by a Communist soldier not ten feet in front of him. Poland's squad leader, Staff Sergeant Edward J. Dehnert, Jr. went up and pulled him back, but Poland succumbed to his wound before he was evacuated. Edmison decided this time to consolidate in a small hollow and prepare to wait it out. They couldn't move. He had wounded to take care of and couldn't afford to lose anymore men.

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Enemy small arms fire coming from hidden defensive positions was taking a dreadful toll of American soldiers. Captain Houston elected to try ARA again, even though it would be risky. Lieutenants Edmison, Rudd, and Feiner were ordered to mark their positions using smoke grenades to guide the gun ship pilots on target. Two passes were made, running down to a narrow corridor between Rudd and Edmison. Then Feiner was called by his third and second squads. In the third squad two men were still alive. They said the ARA was awfully close. Noone, the second squad RTO, wounded and alone, said it was coming in on top of him. By mutual agreement the ARA was called off. The quarters were too close, it was too dangerous and no longer worth the risk.

In a battle some events will remain indelibly clear, others indefinitely fogged. During the time Lieutenant Edmison was moving his platoon across the open area, the first time they went into the village and before they made heavy contact, Major Bieri, the Battalion S-3, showed up running across the field after them. He had a .45 (US Army pistol) in his hand when he caught up with Edmison. The move continued without Major Bieri telling Edmison why he was there, nor did Edmison ask. Both were preoccupied and had no time for talk. When the first platoon got pinned down and found they'd lost contact

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with third, Edmison noticed Major Bieri had been wounded in their assault. He was hit in the shoulder and was later hit in the side. By then Edmison had only one PRC-25 radio that was operable so they split the use of it. Edmison stayed on his company push, coordinating with Captain Houston and Lieutenant Rudd. Major Bieri would then come up on battalion frequency to coordinate with the surrounding companies. Major Bieri played a significant part in the third phase of the battle, the perimeter after dark. He had landed when he heard that Captain Houston was wounded, but apparently, once on the ground, he found out Houston was still capably in command but not moving. Upon learning that the first platoon was going to try and roll in the flank he raced over to Edmison and was later wounded. That night he was medevac'd.

Just before dark Bravo Company 1/12 landed on the LZ north of the fighting. Captain Roy Benson, Jr. led his company south, encountering little resistance and linked up with the remnants of Houston's company. By then the remains of Delta Company had moved together with Charlie and a composite perimeter consisting of Bravo, Charlie and Delta Companies consolidated for the restless night.

As Bravo 1/12 was landing, Bravo 1/8 began its long move northward. Captain Villaronga's company had been static all afternoon south of the village in a blocking position. At 6:00 PM they were ordered north to fill the gap between A and B (plus C & D) Companies. A tense trip was made up Hiway 506, during which two downed helicopters were recovered from the road, and lifted out by Chinooks. By ten o'clock Bravo Company (1/8) had covered the 1500 meters up the hiway and was infiltrating Alpha (1/12) Company's lines and moving westward. But it was nearly three o'clock in the morning before Villaronga had established his own perimeter somewhere between Alpha and Bravo, almost right where Delta had fought so long and hard.

In the south another composite perimeter was formed from the infantry platoons of Alpha and Delta Troop 1/9, and the third platoon, A Company, 2d Battalion, 8th Cavalry, which had air assaulted around 6:30 that evening. To the west Captain Ogg's company was in a perimeter of their own. Repeated attempts to link up with the group in the north or south had failed so Ogg sat tight rather than risk anymore casualties. (Map 11)

Throughout the dark hours, (actually brightened by continuous illumination rounds that cast an eerie, spiriling, shadowy glow over all parts of the widely spread battlefield) in each perimeter, a dramatic scene was repeated time and again. Numerous men had been wounded during the brutal fighting and needed to be evacuated. Several helicopter pilots, of whom Captain Twiggs and Lieutenant Marabello of the 229th Aviation Battalion are only two, made continuous flights bringing in sorely needed supplies and carrying out the wounded. Flying conditions were the worst imaginable, a

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veritable nightmare of impossibilities but these men heroically dedicated their efforts to saving men's lives. And they did. All together seven helicopters were damaged so badly they had to be grounded for extensive repairs, mute testimony of the sacrifices made and horrors endured.

As early as 6:00 PM the NVA had begun exfiltrating the village battlefield. In small groups they slipped out according to a pre-arranged plan. Even though medevac's and resupply attempts were harassed by enemy fire, the bulk of the defenders had left the area. Later intelligence revealed they escaped generally to the east, but spread out in all directions up in the surrounding mountains.

At first light each unit began policing up their immediate area. Patrols were sent in the village to recover bodies or to locate Americans missing in action. Oddly enough, several civilians emerged from the war torn village as the Americans swept through.

For the next few days elements of the Cav chased the fleeing NVA into the mountains. Division Artillery poured artillery rounds into likely avenues of egress to interdict and harass the beaten enemy. By the 19th of December ninety-five enemy had been killed by body count, an undetermined number wounded. Three prisoners of war had been captured who revealed that it was elements of the 7th and 9th Battalions, 18th NVA Regiment who were engaged by the 1st Cav. Twenty individual weapons and three crew served weapons (57mm recoilless rifle, machine gun, 60mm mortar tube) were captured.

The price came high, especially for Delta Company 1/12. They started the day with 62 men and ended it with 35. All together 34 Cavalrymen were killed in action, another 81 wounded. Three helicopters were shot down and four more damaged by ground fire.

The conduct of the battle was hampered somewhat by chain of command difficulties. It wasn't until late in the afternoon that all responsibility was passed to Lieutenant Colonel Eggers, the CO of the 1/12. Prior to that the First of the Ninth and the First Brigade Commanders had elements working for them, which only served to decrease effective coordination. Since so many different elements were involved, effective, concise, clear communication wasn't possible. Reports passing through several hands back and forth only got more confused.

The commitment of nearly seven companies from all over the Crow's Foot in a relatively short time was just shy of remarkable, possible only because of the airmobile capability. But it wasn't good enough. Strained coordination resulted in poor scheduling; helicopters circling until TAC air ceased, platoons sitting on PZ's for one or two hours, and companies committed into Hellish battle a platoon at a time. The American Forces consistently walked right up

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to the camouflaged enemy positions, only to be decimated in the initial burst. And then the unfortunate mistake of trying to help a wounded buddy without getting the gun that got him first, was made over and over.

Many, many examples of individual heroism were performed. In the worst conditions honorable men acquitted themselves with exemplary conduct beyond the call of ordinary duty. Many soldiers were later decorated for their actions on the 17th of December.

In spite of the confusion, the adverse fighting conditions and the beating taken by part of the Cav, the enemy was defeated. The First Team proved once again it can defeat the Communists, almost regardless of the circumstances or conditions. The Battle in the 506 Valley was a hard fought victory for the First Cavalry Division.

Older men declare war. But it is youth that must fight and die. And it is youth who must inherit the tribulation, the sorrow, and the triumphs that are the aftermath of war.

Herbert C. Hoover

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James R Potergal

MONDAY DECEMBER 19, 1966 LANDING ZONE PONY
LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE D. EGGERS BATTALION COMMANDER FOR 1/12 CAV
AND CAPTAIN CHARLES SYKES, DIVISION HISTORIAN RECONSTRUCTING RECENT ACTION
INVOLVING THE 1/12th CAV IN THE HIGHWAY 506 VALLEY DECEMBER 17, 1966.

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Colonel Eggers.....

We had one entire company, B company deployed in the western end of the Kim Son and in a company ambush position. Actually they had gone in a day earlier and were to have moved into this ambush position in the west that night. I think they were in the process of reconnoitering the ambush position when this thing broke. Bravo was in the west, Alpha, Charlie, and Delta had other missions involving the various fingers of the Kim Son. Their job there was to sweep through the valleys we were checking primarily for any sign of human habitation because this entire part of the Kim Son had been declared a free-fire zone. And to our knowledge and after some thorough checking most of the civilians were out of the area so they were there looking for any remnants of those civilians and for any of the enemy who might be there for food and-so-forth. One company of the first of the eighth that we had with us which was Charlie Company, was deployed in valley 506. They actually had two platoons working southeast. One of the platoons of Charlie 1/8 ran into these fingers and a command post. Later we estimated it to be a Battalion Command Post. They had switch boards in there, various items of equipment. They hit them that morning.

Captain Sykes.....

Let me go back sir. I think we're jumping ahead of ourselves, when did you first find out about the action?

Colonel Eggers.....

I'd say the action came after this. This element did this in the morning and subsequent to this element being in here apparently some of the enemy filtered back into this village. The cav had been operating in that area and had been receiving heavy fire. At one point they deployed their blue team, I don't

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know when, whether it was the morning or the afternoon. It is the belief that I think, of both the people from the cav and myself, that some of the elements that were in this heavily wooded finger were crushed out by "C" 1/8th and went back to the village. Later we learned from prisoners that their were elements of two battalions in this village. The seventh and eighth battalions of the 18th Regiment. How many of them came out of this finger, I don't really know. Captain Sykes.....

Yes Sir, in this action, it was "C", 1/8th that saw the NVA squad with the switchboards etc.

Colonel Eggers.....

They saw the command post complex but I don't think at any time did they identify a squad. They swept through there and then at this time as this was finishing off, the fight got very heavy as far as the cav was concerned in the village. ~~Now~~ you got to check our logs and so forth for the correct time. The fight on the finger was petering out, fact I was on my way back to Hammond, to our rear area. This was some time after noon, sometime between twelve and one. While back there, Brigade got the word that this fight in the village was really getting hot. This came from the cav squad, who I believe at this time their blues employed on the ground. They were receiving heavy automatic weapons fire from the ground at their ships. Based on this we came back up to the area and started to deploy the battalion. This was based on the fact they had a fight in the village, the blue team had been committed from the cav, they were trying to develop the situation. Now I can give you our basic plan for containing this, and then we can go from there to discuss what actually happened.

Captain Sykes.....

Lets take it as chronologically as we can. First companies came in and where they went. What missions they had etc. Before we get into that, what was the weather like on this particular day? And did it affect operations at all?

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Colonel Eggers.....

Negative. The weather was sunny, clear, it had been hazy in the morning but during the initial stages of this the weather was good. It was not a factor. This is probably one of the reasons there was so darn much aircraft firing going on, had no trouble seeing them. Now to start chronologically. Here again I can not be specific on the times. By the time this fight in the village broke out.....so the first company that actually was in position and ready to be deployed was "C" 1/8th. They were located on this finger. They were moved directly to the east. Their element of the plan was to establish a blocking force, on the west side of the village. On the north side of the village we planned to deploy three companies. These companies at the time the order to deploy was given were all over in the Kim Son fingers, they were picked up. The first elements. Lets go back a minute. The three companies to be deployed on the north leading from east to west ^A company 1/12th, "C" 1/12th, and "D" company 1/12th. They were to seal off the northern part of the village. Boundary line was to be "A" company to the east, and "C" and "D" companies to the west, of highway 506. Now one point here, in as much as delta ~~company~~ consisted of only two platoons, we had them working with our "C" company. They were not attached to them but were right with them. Our main thought was we would have a fairly good strength company in "C" but for additional strength we put these two platoons of "D" with them at this time. They were landed to the north.

Captain Sykes.....

What was the approximate strength of those companies?

Colonel Eggers.....

I can't give them to you exactly but can say this and be in approximation and we can check it out later. Delta company was very light because they were just reorganized as a light rifle company they were minus their recon platoon which

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was in fact at this time a rifle platoon. These people were employed at this time in long range patrolling so delta was just re-enforcing charlie with two platoons and their strength was, I would estimate possibly 50. Now Charlie company I would say had out there on the ground had some where around 130. All of their elements there save one platoon was back at Byrd, for security. Again I would have to check those figures, I'm not at all certain right now. Alpha company probably had roughly the same strength. Now the ~~sequence~~ ^{sequence} of landing as I remember it now, we landed Charlie and Delta first. Now at the same time this was going on we had at least in our operational control, Bravo company of the 1/8th, I can't say where they came from but I think they were possibly the Brigade reaction force. They came up from the south and they were landed to the south of the village. Their mission was to move north along both sides of the road to come up to a blocking position to the south. The original plan was that the south would probably be the most likely area through which the enemy would try to withdraw. So we had landed them far enough south so they could establish a blocking position across the road. (We thought at that time that "A", C, AND D companies to the north could push the enemy to the south into that block.) As it turned out of course, they did not do that so we later moved B 1/8th up to the north. The final element of the plan was to move our B company 1/8th land them in the rice paddies to the east of the village and they would align themselves from north to south parallel to the highway, completing the encirclement. Now here is what happened as I see it now. Going back to C 1/8th. They pushed through from the west in towards the village. They had extremely heavy going, the terrain was difficult. They did not encounter intense enemy opposition. But it did take them a long time to get through because of the terrain. They were proceeding then from west to east. "A", "C", and "D" landed to the north and without opposition. As they approached the village from the north they ran into

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extremely heavy fire. The bulk of this fire came from concealed positions and the enemy did not engage our elements by fire until they were extremely close. In cases as close as ten meters. They had moved three to four hundred meters before encountering any resistance. Then they were actually pinned down by heavy fire. "C" & "D" took the greatest casualties. While this was going on "B" 1/8th was continuing to land their elements to the south, I think a lift of only about four birds. It took them quite a while to land and deploy. At this time our last company to be picked up was Bravo. I got a call from the CO of Charlie company indicating he had been pinned down. We were attempting to put artillery fire in there. Because of the fact there was a cav platoon on the ground that artillery fire was not cleared. We were afraid we would hit them. They were deployed on a line to the west. By this time the enemy, the cavalry platoon that was there and our people were real close. ~~WAAA~~ We were able to clear the way for an ARA flight coming from the east to the west. That was an outstanding job of shooting by the ARA ships. In conjunction with that firing I changed our basic plan relative to our "B" 1/12th. Rather than to have them land to the east of the road I had them deployed into the same LZ as A, C, & D. Their mission was to then move around that flank and maneuver around the fire that was pinning the three companies down. This they did. Because B was so far away, there was a time lapse, but I can't guess how long it was from the take off to the final landing of the company. They checked in with the "C" company elements and then maneuvered around to the west, to link up with one element of "C" that had gone forward. That element was actually beyond one line of these bunkers. The firing by ARA was between our front line and this one platoon. Both elements were identified by smoke. They linked up and sealed that portion off. At the time of the maneuver, it was close to six pm. It was getting dark and I decided

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I better get down there, visibility was limited and I could do nothing further from the air. It was automatic weapons fire that caused the bulk of our casualties. The range was extremely close, I saw some of the bodies and they were thoroughly clobbered. The bunkers were beneath the ground and covered with palm leaves. The enemy deliberately held their fire until our troops were at an extremely close range. I think that is what accounted for the bulk of casualties and unusually high rate of KIA's we had.

I got on the ground and had radio contact with all these elements. Charlie and Delta were moving forward trying to make further contact with the enemy. What developed as I arrived our units joined up forming a semi-circle. At this time it was completely dark out. At this time we had in addition to our own battalion, B & C 1/8th, and a platoon from 2/8th. So what developed then as we pieced it together over the radio we had our three companies with three platoons behind them. C 1/8th ran across an entrenchment and it got hairy. I told them to remain where they were because I didn't want them coming into our rear. The three companies of 1/12th were beginning to establish a perimeter. C 1/8th CO did what I would call an outstanding job. He knew these people were there. The next day he found 8 or 10 bodies. They held fast and stayed there through-out the night. We were so close we could hear each other talking. I didn't get into the air again until the following morning when we prepared for the final phase of this. My original intention was that B 1/8th would come down the road, we had given them the order to move from the original blocking position and to link up with us. However they couldn't in the dark. They came in contact with A company and then I deployed them to the southwest. They did an excellent job of moving and in order to do this they had to coordinate with our A company and the other elements. We now had a blocking force sitting up from the northeast to the southwest. There was a slight gap and I'm certain that the enemy got out through here to the east and southwest. We had made voice contact and were set for the night, it was sometime after 2200.

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We were no longer engaged with the enemy. The major engagement ended shortly before I got on the ground, around 1800. D,C,&A companies were the three most severely hit companies, all of which landed to the north of the village. The bulk of the fighting took place in those three companies and I can not say what size of force attacked them. Obviously this Apache Blue team to the west was in heavy contact through out most of the afternoon. These are basically the position that we held through out the night and the weather was a factor. It became very foggy. So much so that it took an extremely fine piece of flying by the medical evacuation teams and the lift elements that brought in re-supply that night. The lift people did a tremendous job. We had four ships come in for re-supply at night. Through the night we maintained this grouping of units with no movement what-so-ever. No enemy contact. There was sporadic firing but very little of it and most of it ceased to first light. ~~None~~ This firing was done by our people. The fog was heavy up until 0900 hours. Prior to 0900 hours there was enough visibility on the ground so that we could physically link all the elements. The plan was to then conduct a search operation to the east. We were going through the village where the fighting had taken place. We moved in a line of companies from north to south and found some additional bunkers which were destroyed and picked up a few civilians in the area. And then we returned to the position to which we had left. All of this was accomplished before noon. We found no enemy in the village but received some reports of snipers in the trees however they were not confirmed. We had no enemy contact what-so-ever. Prisoners that we took in the battle said that the enemy force began moving to the east as early as 1600 that night taking with them the bodies of the killed but we did not observe any of this movement. They estimated that 40 to 50 had been killed in each of the two enemy battalions that we had engaged. I am inclined to believe that this information is correct. We talked to some villagers to the south that said small groups of from 10 to 20 people moved through the

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villages this morning ~~but~~ and that they thought these groups were still in the villages but we checked and found no one. Two prisoners said during interrogation that two battalions were involved, the 7th and 8th. The Assistant Adjutant of one of these elements said he estimated there were 800 enemy in the area at the height of the engagement. There was an estimate that one of these elements had been in this village 3 to 4 days. We had information from some of the villagers to the south of where the action took place that some of the people had come up from the south and the east. What their mission was, I don't know. We used continuous illumination through out the night and despite the heavy fog, it was as bright as the middle of the day. We did pick up some uniforms, we did just get some NVA uniforms to the north of here. Just how old they are, this I don't know. As far as the weapons that we took, I don't have the complete count although we did make a rough estimate. We did take the time to police up all the equipment. It has since been sent to Hammond and I'm certain it is being segregated and counted. I do know we got both individual and I think a few automatic weapons. I did have a report that we did get one 57mm recoilless rifle. Equipment and uniforms, I have no figures because we got it out of here as quickly as we could because we had to move on. The most violent part of the action and the most costly action was accomplished in a matter of minutes. Certainly within less than an hour and I think it will be possible to get others to confirm that this was a short and violent action. We may have saved some lives if we had used more artillery but it was just too close to call in artillery. Of course artillery wouldn't have helped those who fell in the initial burst of fire. I think the thing that helped the most was when we deployed this other company to the west and behind the enemy. I don't know at what point the FO's called for artillery fire or if they even had time to do this. Knowing that that element was down there, the cav and I'm sure I would have done the same thing, would not clear artillery because they had their men right in the

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middle. That is something that should be looked into, As for lessons learned on the fire support, we might look into the timing in the deployment. I think we moved them up as fast as we could. It seemed as though everybody was involved in getting the troops in and on the ground. I think they did an excellent job in getting the men in because you have to remember some of these elements were out in platoon size groups. To settle these men in a company and then lift them out I think we did a fine job,. Our deployment lasted most of the afternoon, back and forth. All this time, the cav aircraft and the cav platoon were continuously engaged with the people in the village. In order to find out if we could have done this faster you will have to talk to the lift folks. I feel we had enough forces, we just ran out of daylight and couldn't position our men the way we would have wanted.

Captain Sykes.....

Thank you very much sir, I appreciate your time and efforts and am certain this will be very helpful....

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1st C 1/12

Edmison

LT SCHORP: This will be a combination of the 506 Valley, talking to Lieutenant Edmison's platoon was ~~XXX~~ leader of . . .

V SPHR: Of the 1st platoon, Charlie Company, 1st of the 12th.

LT SCHORP: OK, first of all do you remember what time it was when you got the word to go to LZ to be extracted?

- A. ~~NEXX~~ We had moved, that morning we were in Valley 4 and received the word that somebody was in contact and we would be picked up. This was right after, it was about 12:45 when we got this word.
- Q. OK, how many people were with you in Valley 4? How many platoons?
- A. In Valley 4 only my platoon was operating. We were on an extended patrol ~~XXXXXXXX~~, with (UNINTELLIGIBLE) the mission by concealment as much as possible, ambushing ~~V~~ slowly move up there, recon the area, and if possible to pick up any movement in the valley area.
- Q. Do you recall where the other platoons of Charlie Company were at that time?
- A. At that time the company headquarters was on LZ Bird. The third platoon, Lieutenant ~~Ruop's~~ ⁵ ~~Luop's~~ platoon, was in Valley ⁵ with the same mission that I had in Valley 4. The fourth platoon, under Lieutenant Wallace, was on LZ Bird as a security platoon. And our second platoon was ONCOM to battalion on a Eagle Flight mission.
- Q. How long did it take the chaps to get there once, OK, you say about 12:45 or so they called you and told you to move to an LZ. How long was it before you got to an LZ or PZ?
- A. We found a suitable pickup zone ~~XXXXXX~~ about 25 minutes later, secured it, and radioed back our location. And from the time we reached the pickup zone it was approximately an hour, maybe an hour and ten minutes before we were extracted.
- Q. OK, then you were picked up and you were taken over to the LZ that 1st of the 12th used. It was all the same LZ, right?
- A. Right. Now all of us came into the center.
- Q. Who was there from 1st of the 12th when you got there?
- A. When I landed Delta Company was securing the LZ. Our third platoon had just preceded me into the LZ, and our Company Headquarters, Captain Houston, the medics and radio operators

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were there on the LZ. I was told at that time, briefly oriented on the map, and that that we had contact in the area. At this time TAC Air was pounding the village and we had moved up and become engaged, heavily engaged there. I was told that Delta Company was open to us. They were on our left, and Alpha Company was up along the highway somewhere. I was also told that Charlie, 1st of the 8th, was on our right over towards the hills on our right, and Captain Houston had my platoon move out to the right for approximately a 150 meters to 200 meters trying to link up with them. We never found them. They were in . . .

- Q. Take it from when you came into the LZ and describe in ~~XXXX~~ as much detail just exactly what you did then.
- A. We came into the LZ and I had my platoon disperse around the edge of the LZ. We had an SOP. At this time we had no security for the LZ. It was a secure LZ when we came in, so I had them split, we had it divided from 10 to 2, 2 to 6, and from 6 to 10 with my three squads in a, this was SOP whenever we went into a LZ, whether it was secured or not. We moved off in this order so that everybody knew where to go. At this time I went over and reported to Captain Houston, who was at that time talking to Lieutenant Rudd, and he oriented us on the map, showed us where we were, and very briefly, actually all we knew is that there was a VC force in the village, and we had no idea how large. He showed me where Delta Company was going to move, where our sector was, put me on the right, and moved me out trying to establish contact with Charlie, 1st of the 8th. As I say, I moved approximately 200 meters out to the right, and never made contact.
- Q. So you were the lead element of your company?
- A. At that time. And at this time he had he turn around and close back up. We were pretty badly extended at that time. And we then moved forward into the village. I was more or less in reserve because by the time I had turned around and got back, I was, I would say 50 or 60 meters behind the two platoons from Delta Company, and our platoon, and I was on the right flank.
- Q. Did you have any contact going out or coming back?
- A. Negative. No contact whatsoever. Now then, as the company, Delta

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Company, two platoons from Delta Company, and our platoon moved forward. This was they became heavily engaged in the hedgerow, and were receiving a lot of fire and were pinned down and could not move. I was still on the right, came back up and was on line but was not receiving any fire, so I was completely on the right of them. At this time Captain Houston called me and told me ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ to go down, swing around on line, on the right flank, go down for approximately a hundred or a hundred and fifty meters, hook my mission was to try to get ~~XXX~~ in there and neutralize some of these automatic weapons that were cutting us up so bad. So we coordinated with the third platoon on our ^{left} ~~right~~, ~~I~~ ~~reached~~ ~~our~~ ~~left~~, and started to move. We were going to try to roll up the flanks.

Q. The third platoon was engaged at that time?

A. Yes, they were engaged at that time, on line, and we were going to try to roll up their flank as we came ~~XXX~~ around, and it didn't work due to the terrain, the hedgerows, and the nature of ^{contact} ~~contact~~(?). They developed a gap between my left flank, and third platoon's right flank. We continued; we went across an approximately 100 meter open field with only light sporadic firing, moved into the village, into the few houses that were there, and continued on down. Then we started receiving quite heavy fire, and this is when we suffered most of our casualties. We thought that we had gotten what we were after, but apparently what had happened, I don't know whether it was preplanned or whether we surprised them. Anyway, Charlie let us get ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ into it, and pulled back, but then they discovered that we only had one platoon, and that we were not connected on the flank and drove in between us, or else had been laying all in between us, I really can't say. So they had us separated, and came in behind us, and we were surrounded right there in the ~~village~~ village. Now, on the way in, as we moved across the open field, a Chicom grenade went off. This injured two men lightly. In other words, they were still capable of fighting. These were the first two casualties that we had. We moved on up, and at this time, two of the men who were leading our drive into the village became pinned down, and both had jammed weapons. At this time, myself, and my BTO, we went forward, and we got this machine gun, threw a grenade into it, and I got two more that were armed with

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the machine element, was utilized as this. At 1210 we received a request from the 1 troop commander for a platoon in quadra position force. They were launched at 1250 hours from this area and it was the 2d platoon of Belts platoon, their lanceer white element.

- Q. Do you know where this reaction platoon was to go in and how far it would be from the blue team was already on the ground and in contact?
- A. No, not from our blue platoon, we don't refer to those people or blue team. The 1 troop commander was in charge of his element on the ground in coordination with the 2-3 of 1/10 and the 1/12 commander and I do not know the exact location where he had intended to put them on the ground. His initial request was to move them and they were going to put them in the vicinity of Pony until such a time as they decided exactly where they were going to put them. This time I checked with the 2-3 of the 1 troop and asked him if he desired or if they desired air strikes and we laid on an immediate air strike at this time through the brigade HQ for the 1 troop in this area of operation. We received the word at 1300 hours that the immediate air strike had been requested and also the A-1 was in route to the 1 troop commander either on his FM or UHF frequency. This was approximately 1300 hours.
- Q. How much contact with the platoons did you have throughout the afternoon and what was their posture for the night if you know and when were they brought back to your control? Just follow it up from the ground as much as you know.
- A. Well, we will assure that the platoon from Lanceer from D troop took off from this location, came under the control of the 1 troop commander who was in the area. The 1 troop commander maintained continuous contact between himself and his executive officer from aircraft in the air right over his elements on the ground throughout the entire day. He also maintained contact with the 1/10 and also with the quadra commander. He maintained contact back here with the brigade, so, up until the time that they were converted the following day, they were in our hands.

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ground... appropriate area.

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... In the vicinity of 020007 ... received approximately
150 rounds, ... and covered ... They took down
people under fire, killed two of them and began to ...
look into the holes in the area. I informed ... of this development
and I received a ... rather than put my rifle platoon in a blocking
position, ... the weapons fire ...
approximately 1200 to 1400 ... put the rifle platoon into a
... in coordinate position 6/2420. ...
the 1/12 diverted another company composed of two platoons of C/1/8 and A/1/12 into
the proposed I Z which was originally planned for our rifle platoon into the north
of the canyon and they assumed a blocking position. ...
at the aforementioned coordinates and they immediately begin moving to the east
and north. Moving ... the squad front, the other two squads ...
moved to a small band of ... They proceeded to ...
... and moved further to the east to a position where they were going
to turn back to the northwest and attempt to flank the position where ...
... fire. ...
they were to be ...
... just cleared. ...

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right squad... their... attention... that... out of the hole... that... squad... attacking... that... appeared... weapons... military... the... LZ, that... the... hole... position... at this time... defensive... position... the... all the...
 (The text is extremely faint and largely illegible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be a detailed report of a military operation, possibly involving a landing zone (LZ) and various squads.)

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... and began a search of the appropriate area.

- 1. ...
- 2. ...
- 3. ...

... they took automatic ... fire at 1200 hours. In the vicinity of 922797 we received approximately 150 rounds, observed our men to be down and covered ourselves. They took their people under fire, killed two of them and began to fire grenades and they went back into the holes in the area. I informed G-3 at the 1/12 of this development and I received a decision from him, rather than put my rifle platoon in a blocking position, wait them on the ground and check out the weapons fire we were receiving approximately 1200 to 1230 return to the spot. We put the rifle platoon into a

... and went on the ground at 1235 and in coordinate position 922820. In the meantime the 1/12 diverted another company composed of two platoons of C/1/8 and A/1/12 into the proposed LZ which was originally planned for our rifle platoon into the north of the canyon and they assumed a blocking position. My platoon went on the ground at the aforementioned coordinates and they immediately began moving to the east and north. Moving in a two squad front, the other two squads moving behind me, moved in a small bander composed of three or four feet. They proceeded to check out the route forward and moved further to the east to a position where they were going to turn back to the port and attempt to flank the position where the enemy was holding out with heavy fire. We were working under a heavy mortar fire when they were in a position approximately 200 meters from the enemy position. We were 200 meters out of the line, just cleared, to the east of the position where the enemy was holding out with heavy fire and we were in a position where they were going to turn back to the port and attempt to flank the position where the enemy was holding out with heavy fire.

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...the night they were in the area, ... they were ...
...right up to the enemy position which was ...
...the position and they jumped back into the position, got their weapons, and some
...shooting.

...the way in this area ...
...this was approximately 150 to 200 meters from the ...

The enemy walked right up to the enemy position ...
...right up to the edge of their ... and ... the first time they ...
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...the night. ... walked right up to the enemy. We were told by the ... that
...there was a gap in the area and that they had ... positions and
...there were ... in the area, but they were ...
...that the only way they could ... out of ...
...they ... into their holes when the point element ...
...came up out of their holes after they initially jumped into the ...
...had automatic weapons that looked to the point element... they didn't ...
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area. It wasn't just from our front, if we tried to flank to the right, or left we received automatic weapons fire.

- Q. What type of terrain were you in at the time? Was it clear ground or just explain the terrain a little bit where you were when you got hit.
- A. The terrain had coconut trees in it, palm trees, heavy hedgerows that were built up about 6 or 7 feet high and that had clearings in between them with very little vegetation.
- Q. You were actually in the opening when they opened fire?
- A. Three men were in the open, the other men came up the hedgerow and were going through the hedgerow and the men crossed the clearing into the hedgerow where the enemy initially was. We were about 10 to 15 feet from the enemy position when we received the automatic weapons fire.
- Q. After you received the fire, what did you do as well as you know? What radio transmissions did you make and how long was it before the reinforcing platoon got there and what did they do once they got there?
- A. Radio communications when you come under fire, if you don't lay down next to your radio operator, you don't have any radio communication and no one could move at this time. When the platoon leader could holler and commands to the squads, he hollered for the squads to pull back on the right while we held on the left. We stayed in position and he ordered the 1st and 3d squads to pull back and we had to get one man out who was in front of Brian who was laying on the ground-- he was dead. We received three rounds through the head. We could see...we were close enough that there was no mistake whether he was wounded or not and we held there until the other two squads come around the other side and we pulled back, brought the one man out that was in front of Brian by throwing white phosphorus grenades. We throw just about all our hand grenades in that area and they had bunkers with overhead cover and you could see where you were receiving

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the fire from. It was so thick in that area that we just threw our grenades in the area hoping they would go into the holes which you couldn't see any flesh from the weapons or any movement at all. They were that thick. I don't know if the 1st squad was on the right. The squad leaders were here. What fire they received from their flank as they started to pull back I don't know.

Q. About the time the blue team was pinned down what happened?

A. After they were pinned down, they withdrew out of the automatic weapons fire. They moved back and secured an LZ. They were unable to move in these hedgerows. I would estimate that the maximum of visibility they had at any one time was 50 meters. The hedgerows were sometimes 10 to 12 feet long other than have to clear each hedgerow as they went. The hedgerows were trenched and we could see the people moving back and forth in the trenches.

Q. What do you estimate the size of the force was?

A. This particular point where they were receiving fire we saw three people in this trench line, at this particular point our blue platoon first got their fire. They were moving back and forth and with the air strikes, artillery, ARA, and eventually A CO-CC's in there, the most effective thing they could do is the H 13's which remained in the area all the time and they would come up, almost hover over these positions and fire down into the bunkers with their door mounted machine guns and drop hand grenades down in and that was about the only effective way we had to get any of these people. The bunkers or covered foxholes went down and had a tunnel-like affair off to the side--run about 90° off to the side so a man could fire, pop down in his hole and actually fall back in a hole within the hole. You really couldn't place effective fire upon him. I could see the one man that initially took fire, he moved from his position, he was wounded in his left arm, it was bloodied and the shirt was torn, he was in bluish green khaki's, no helmet. He jumped out of this position, moved down the hedgerow, the H 13 was firing at him and we were trying to fire at him right

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down into the hedgerow and then he would move back into his position again--the trench system. While this was going on, throughout the area W 13's and our weapons ships were receiving continuous automatic weapons fire, that were locating people. We estimated at this time that mostly, from the volume of fire we were receiving, there were 2½ companies in the area. This was a hasty estimate in the heat of battle, of course. As near as we could determine, the most people they saw in a group approximately was 9. They were strung out in covered, concealed bunkers, I believe there were some people in the trees covering them. They would have a machine gun position in a dug in bunker or foxhole and around the flanks of it they would have snipers in the trees protecting them.

Q. Did you find this true when you went through with you squad, SGT Atkins?

A. Yes, it was pretty thick there. I was on the right flank of a platoon and when the point squad received the fire we were in the middle of the cleared area. It wasn't exactly clear. It was thick inside this area and we couldn't see more than 10 to 15 yards in front of us. The platoon leader told me to move up to the rear of the 2d squad so we crawled about 20 feet towards the 2d squad, word came over the radio the 2d squad was going to pull back through the first squad so the 2d squad pulled back through my squad. At this time SGT Erian was dead, I believe, and they had gotten the word to pull back. They were receiving too much automatic weapons fire from the 2d squad since we were directly behind them. After they moved out there I started to move my squad to the rear, we started to receive automatic weapons fire from the right flank. We moved on back to the pick up point where they picked up the wounded people.

Q. How much fire came from your right as you were moving back there?

A. I say that they fired for about 2 seconds, mostly automatic weapons fire.

Q. How many weapons?

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- A. I could only determine this. From the front the automatic weapons fire was coming from the right, carbine fire, I believe, was coming from the front. We moved on back to the LZ and we moved on back about 100 yards to set up a perimeter for Lancer to come in. After the Lancer came in, we got the word that we were going to go back in there and pick up our dead. So we moved out again. I broke off to the right around the same area that I was in initially and the rest of the platoon had gotten pinned down. At this time I hadn't received any fire at all. So we were continuing to crawl forward up to the hedgerow and we saw Brian laying about 15 to 20 meters on the other side of the hedgerow. About this time we started receiving carbine fire, so I had one man back off about 10 yards from the hedgerow and throw two grenades and we adjusted the grenades by looking through the hedgerow and the fire ceased. As we started out to pick him up, we received carbine fire again--single rounds. We pulled back into the hedgerow, I got two of my strongest men and we set up a base of fire around Brian. They crawled out while we were firing and pulled Brian back. As soon as we got inside the hedgerow, we stopped firing and they started firing at us again. We pulled Brian back to the LZ where he was picked up at.
- Q. Let's take it with the Lancer platoon. When you all got picked up and your deployment.
- A. They went in to the LZ that the blue platoon had moved back to, they were on the ground and all they did was assume a blocking position in that area for approximately 2 hours. During the time the two platoons were on the ground, they received sporadic sniper fire. They couldn't tell which direction the fire was coming from. At the same time they could detect no movement at all from the defensive positions of the VC, this is from the air, and so the decision was made to leave these people in this position which more or less blocked out the southwest exit from that

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particular area. As I say, there was no indication that these people were trying to exfiltrate and they were there to stay and fight. All during this weapons ships and H-13's continued to hover firing into positions. We were receiving a large volume of automatic weapons fire. We made the determination we had at least 2½ companies in the area. As soon as I had the D trooper platoon put on the ground, our lift aircraft were diverted to move B/1/8 into the area. I was given the mission of putting this unit on the ground. They were to go into a blocking position to the south of the ^{Teng Loc} (1) village which was the built up area in the direction of south southeast of the position I had the two platoons on the ground. Made contact with the charlie charlie ship from 1/12. They came and marked an LZ which was well south of the position and south of the river. The CO of 1/9 entered the area at this time, suggested it would be too long before they could cross that river and suggested that we find a position north of the river so they could get to the position without going in. My desires were to move this B/1/8 into a position where they could join up to the platoons I had on the ground; however, the CO of 1/12 decided to block the southeast exit from the area. I selected an LZ asked the 1/12 who was the charlie charlie at this time, if it was alright with him and we proceeded to put this company on the ground with 4 sorties with my aircraft.

Q. How many ships were there sir?

A. There were 4 aircraft. This was a large part of the afternoon. After this B/1/8 and we got the 1st platoon on the ground. They began receiving .50 caliber fire from the southwest corner of Teng Loc (1) village area.

Q. Was it the men who were receiving the fire or was it the ships. Could you tell this or do you know?

A. The H-13's were drawing the .50 caliber fire from the south southeast and they went in and throw smoke on the position--two skyriders.

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2. About what time was this?
3. It would be hard to put it in context. I think it would be about 1:15 - 2:00 maybe. The white birds brought in an ^{Air} strike and hit the ~~Tong-Loc~~ village from east to west. This strike lasted approximately 20 minutes and at this time Bravo 1/3 was put on the ground. It was my assumption and the OC of 1/9, that B/1/3 would move more in a northern or easterly direction towards the area of contact. I set my ship down along there, made contact with the company commander of 1/3 and tried getting him to move more to the north and east. At this time, however, he informed me that his mission was pretty solid, that he was in there to block and prevent the enemy from exfiltrating out to the south--given by the 1/12 OC. I noticed a southward movement and this I didn't think was right so I landed and made contact with him to find out what he was going to do. In actuality, they moved almost due east through the rice paddies which slowed them down considerably along with the south flank of the Tong-Loc village until they hit ⁵⁰⁶ ~~Bravo 6~~ Highway and then turned back to the north and west and made another contact with them down there later on in the afternoon. About this time the 1/12 was going to take over operational control of the area and try to make contact with them and find out actually what specific mission for my two platoons that were on the ground was. The situation was pretty hectic about this time to say the least, and I was informed that they were going to move in the area and we were going to extract my two platoons as soon as a lift became available. The fire had subsided and we had air strikes in the area, fired artillery into the area, CC-30 birds that made a pass and ARA that also made a pass. By the way, the initial machine gun position when the M-13's took the initial fire, was knocked out by ARA. The .50 caliber weapons positively located.
4. Early in the action you located.....?
5. The first weapons that were seen and the people in the area were seen by the M-13's and within about 15 minutes they knew that the fire was not small arms fire

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or even automatic. It was .30 caliber weapons. They repeatedly marked these positions and finally NVA was able to destroy one of them. All of the supporting fire was really ineffective. Even the artillery which was brought into the area was not very effective because it didn't hit right in the bunker.

- Q. To your knowledge were the .50 caliber positions on the outside like a perimeter-type posture the enemy may have been in?
- A. They seemed to be located at the junction of a hedgerow or a palm tree row and a big trail. Every big trail intersection there had a .50 caliber machine gun on it. These were generally to our north and east and one .50 caliber that we know of that fired was to our south between us and C/1/3.
- Q. Were you above the area during this time also, LT Hare?
- A. I would say most of it, yes.
- Q. Did you see much enemy movement on the ground?
- A. In the location where SGT Brian was killed was where a main trail which was running from the southwest to the northeast cut through a palm tree and through a hedgerow thicket. The two bunker placements in there were built into a trench which ran along the direction of the hedgerow.
- Q. Parallel to it?
- A. No, the trench ran through the hedgerow and the bunkers were placed in the trench and at one point the trail ran this way so that when our people moved generally up this trail, the bunker was just to the east of the trail in the hedgerow and when our people hit the ground and started to maneuver, at one point we did see this man that was wounded pick up along with another fellow and run to the east in that trench. Obviously he was running to get to a bunker. Our people were only 10 feet away, at the only time we could get into the M-16's right above us.
- Q. Oh sir, now to go back to what was going on at your position.
- A. At this time it was decided that there were too many people in there and they

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were too well dug in and the terrain of convincing we didn't have a large enough force to go in there and root the people out one by one out of these bunkers and foxholes, so I made contact with 1/12 to assume the operational control of the mission at this time. We were either going to pull our people back to where we could put more extensive fires into the area and either extract or block and as it ended up, they were left in to block and help secure the area from exfiltration during the night. At any rate, we still had SGT Brian's body left in the area and with the two platoons, at this time we attempted to maneuver back and recover SGT Brian's body. We moved the A troop rifle platoon around on the right, started the Delta platoon to the north and then swung back to the east, so in essence, we had two platoons moving through with the object of sending the Delta troop platoon around to the left rear where they could place effective fire upon the bunker position from the other side of the hedgerow and allow the A troop platoon to move in and recover the body. As they moved up along the north side of the hedgerow where A troop had originally took the fire, they moved again to one of these intersections of palm tree lines and about 5 meters away this man came up out of a hole and wounded two men from that platoon. They were lying on the ground about 5 meters from this bunker and here again he was back down in. I believe at this time they started receiving automatic weapons fire from the north or their left flank at this time, somewhere in the neighborhood of approximately four automatic weapons. They were forced to move back, they got fire from the frontal and the left, and withdraw back to secure a position and left the two men lying about 5 meters from the bunker. The rest of our particular activities during the remainder of the day was involved in trying to extract these two wounded personnel.

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They were eventually able to extract SGT Brian's body and then the D troop platoon was able to go up and recover their two wounded who eventually died, however, after we got there, one of them was dead and the other one died when we medevaced him back to the 15th Evac.

- Q. So the rest of the afternoon they were not really involved with maneuvering or with the enemy at all?
- A. They were definitely involved. They were maneuvering back into this position in which they could extract SGT Brian's body and they also got pinned down. At this time it became very evident that there was at least a force of two companies in and our air ships in the area, became evident that they were more or less oriented to the north, the major body was to the north, we, in essence, appeared to be on the southwest flank of the main position. I believe that the automatic weapon--50 caliber--further to our southwest where the general vicinity of Bravo 1/4 went in was probably a security element. Afterwards we looked in that area and it was not extensively bunkered, in fact, during all this fire fight we saw women and children, their people drying rice and carrying on their normal activities We reported this two companies oriented to the north and I believe it was at this time that 1/12 made the decision to air lift the Silver Falcon, C Company, in on the north flank.
- Q. Do you know what time this was sir? Can you give us a time trend?
- A. It was getting late in the afternoon around 1600 I would estimate somewhere in this neighborhood. They landed; they took heavy weapons fire and from what I could see from the air, they took some mighty heavy casualties over there, and again, we could see people in the bunkers in front of them, they dug in these rows of parallel palm trees--automatic weapons positions down at the base of the palm trees. We were called in and requested fire in front of them, so we made firing runs parallel to the palm trees and tried to keep a row ahead of these

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people; however, we had some people on the south flank of that particular company were able to maneuver, moved forward and we were limited to see the friendlies on the ground, so we couldn't get the fire in as close as we wanted. We had to move another palm tree line in front of them and bring fire in on them.

Q. → They got there about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, why did it take that long or to get more reinforcing troops in there?

A. Well, you have to go back to the original contact that brought us into the area, and I was up to the scout and west of the area, more due west in a ridge line where one of their units had received contact. We were going in to block, this was going on. There were several contacts going on simultaneously in the area and we were receiving fire throughout the area and at one time there was so many battles going on that I just had to carry on my own independent action down there until such a time as they could get relief in.

Q. → Why did it take so long to make an estimate of the situation and to get more companies in there?

A. The battalion was already committed, they were already fighting the battle to our west when we developed this in to their east, so in essence, they had one major battle going in the ridge line, which I believe was eventually determined to be the base of one of the battalions that was there, and the other battalion was down in the village. So in essence, the Battalion Commander was faced with the concept he had two major battles going on at the same time. He had to divert personnel from one battle to the other, and it appeared to me that it took a while to develop the situation, really to determine where the major battle was going to be. He was faced with having two battles on his hands simultaneously.

Q. The second one being up on the ridge line where C/1/8 was. They were heavily engaged up in that area?

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A. Right. I couldn't tell you how they were engaged.

(U DLITF'D SPKR) - I don't think they were heavily engaged. They were employing air strikes and heavy artillery in the area when we arrived and it didn't seem like it was heavy contact. They found several packs and that sort of thing and they thought they had something trapped up there. The battalion was initially oriented to the long ridge line to the west and I would say that was my initial reason for coming into the area, to support those people. The conduct of our normal reconnaissance of screening the periphery of the battle area and securing it and we uncovered this hornet's nest over in the village and that's why my initial platoon was put on the ground as to go over and develop that situation. The evaluation of it came mainly from the volume of the fire that we were receiving. Not from.... actually from what we could see on the ground, was 9 people in one place, was the highest number of people reported to me. I was in the area the majority of the day and the most I ever saw was three people out in front of the location where our platoon, but fire from every quadrant almost, in fact, we got over on the east side of the highway and while directing the GC-GC birds in on the fire on the village, we took fire from the east across the road up on the flank--automatic emplacements on the flank there. Evidently, another security force out.

C. Let's continue on now and pick up the two platoons later in the afternoon and what they did that night in relation to the other companies that were actually in the area.

A, At this particular time after we had extracted the dead and wounded, it was almost 1730 approaching 1800 and we were informed we were going to stay in the area and assume a part of the ring that they were trying to establish around the force. We were given an additional platoon which was the 3d platoon of A/2/8. These people had been policed up from outside the battle area. I don't remember whether they were bird or not, but they were brought to Pony. They were picked up on my left again and we inserted them...actually ~~vertical~~ back to a 3d LZ where...

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out in a little more open ground where we attempted to get a little more visibility as we moved the platoon of Lancer almost due west, it might have been a little southwest, back to this area we had selected for them to occupy their positions that night.

Q. About what time did they come in sir?

2. A. 2/8 1817 closed

A. They closed in that area about around 1600. They got there slightly before.... I mean 1730, almost 1800. We also moved the A troop platoon, got them started together, they were only about 50 meters apart in actuality, because of the hedgerow they were having an extremely difficult time maintaining contact with each other.

Q. We airlifted in 3 A/2/8 and extracted the 3 wounded and 3 KIA that Lancer had at this time, and as these ships came out of the LZ, they took fire, the first ships broke right and they took fire breaking left and in this same general area coming out before they took fire to the right. The second two ships broke to the left, they also took fire. We covering insertion and we came in to bring fire right off the right flank and we were taking fire...I would say there were 4 or 5 we could see muzzle flashes from 4 or 5 weapons--tracers right dead ahead of us.

Q. Did the platoon of 2/8 receive fire when they hit the ground, did the men receive fire at all, do you know?

A. No, the platoon from 2/8...I don't recall them receiving fire in the LZ. We did receive fire in that LZ, later on, when we attempted to resupply the people right at dusk.

Q. Do you have the coordinates of that LZ? That that platoon 2/8 went in?

A. 836797 was the general location where we put the 3d platoon of A/2/8 in and at this position we consolidated the three platoons, formed a composite company and they assumed a blocking position.

Q. In that same area? Did they move very far from that LZ?

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4. Negative, they moved into position, it was the best visibility in this area where they could observe towards the target area and also give themselves some protection through the night. Now for me, also at this time C/1/8 minus, which was also.... had the 1st platoon from A/1/12, started its movement toward the east and they made an attempt to link up with our three platoons. However, they ended up about 800 meters to the west which was as close as they got. The company C/1/8 and our 3 platoons never married up. They couldn't marry up before dark.
- Q. C/1/8 was more west of your composite company there?
- A. Right, they had assumed the blocking role that my blue platoon had been initially given up in the mouth of this valley to the west, and when the determination was made that this was the majority of where the contact was...in this area...and they started moving to the east. As I say, they spent the night about 800 meters to the north and east of where our three platoons were.
- Q. I would like to clarify this, because Colonel Edgars thought that the....your composite company and C/1/8 had voice contact that night. Were you close enough that.....
- A. That's true, we were close enough, we received automatic weapons fire from them from at least two machine guns and chunker rounds directly into our perimeter. We had a couple men slightly wounded with chunker rounds from their position and we could holler at them and tell them to stop firing, the men got excited because they were told there was a friendly unit there--not to fire. The word that I had got from the platoon leader was an enemy force had moved in between us. It was only a separation of approximately 100 meters between the two units. An enemy force, a platoon, or about 50 men or something had moved in between them, and they had no alternative, they had to open fire which we were only a hundred meters from their main line and they were trying to move out at this time and run into this platoon or automatic weapon and they were knocking it out. Which they did knock out one machine gun that night and got a couple VC's. This was after dark and we

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could holler at them and tell them to cease fire, the men were hollering it but they didn't know exactly what was going on until we told them, that an enemy force had moved in between them.

- Q. Let's take this step by step. C/1/8 moved up on your rear and why did they open fire on you, did they think you were the enemy, and when did you receive the word that there was an enemy that maneuvered between your platoon and C/1/8?
- A. Well, the company moved in there, I don't know the azimuths or directions, at night I was turned completely around, it was dusk and they company opened fire on us but not at us being the enemy. They had an enemy force between us and them that they were opening fire on. They weren't shooting at us. We were on the ground in the perimeter and they didn't know we were there and we called them on the radio and we sent up smoke and gave them directions of their position, where we were at on the radio. The platoon leader did this and we had 3 platoon leaders there from the platoons, they got together and got it ironed out with the company we were receiving fire from and told them that they would have to stop firing. We were receiving too much fire. We were in the beating zone of their machine guns as they were coming right into our perimeter, and we were on the far end away from the company that came in, and we were actually receiving all the fire, it was hitting right on the flank of our perimeter which we were receiving chunker rounds and everything in between the men.
- Q. Did you all then turn around and open on that enemy force that was between you, and what happened to that force?
- A. From what I got of the picture, the force had moved on out. We did not open fire, none of our men fired. The platoon that was attached to us, none of them fired. The platoon leaders wouldn't let them do any firing at all even if they did threaten to shoot back knowing it was our troops over there. They did not return any fire at all. Once they knew the situation, what was going on, they settled

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down, but we hadn't had time to dig in or anything when it first opened fire.

- Q. About what time was this when this force came through and about how large was it?
- A. About 1930 the white platoon leader just told me. It was just at dusk. They were trying to move out to join the main force or something. I didn't have the big picture and still don't. They were moving to the north or northwest. I don't what they were trying to do, but whatever it was they didn't do it, they couldn't get very far because they had received too much fire. When they opened up fire, we were receiving that fire. The enemy was in between us, they had to pull back and set up an area to our left flank.

U SHYER---That particular unit that he is talking about was the one that started the action originally out to the west and when it was realized that the battle was were we were, they were moved all the way and they marched along the stream beds all the way into position, and if we would have had another hour of daylight, the commander of the battalion could have been up in the air observing where the units were, then he would have known that that unit was very close to our people and with the efforts of someone it could have been brought into the area and up on line.

- Q. Do you know, LT Hare, where that enemy moved, what did they do after this?
- A. We don't know where the enemy went, I think he can tell you.
- Q. LT ^{Holland} ~~Hare~~, can you add anything here?
- A. Well, about 1500 was when the Apache blues were instructed to move generally north and north west and try and retrieve their KIA. My platoon was given the mission of moving on out on their left flank, west flank of Apache blues, and secure it. Apache blues had moved out about 50 to 75 meters, my people had moved out about the same distance when we both came under automatic weapons fire. My lead squad was pinned down and just about all of the Apache's elements were pinned down by quite a bit of fire.
- Q. What security did you have out and close were you to the enemy when you opened up?

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contact by this time, but there had been no physical link up and I was quite concerned as what eventually did happen, they wouldn't know where they were and get in a fire fight with each other. We continued moving, however, when I left the area because of fuel and darkness, as I say, about 1635 - 1640, somewhere along this line, they still had not effected link up and he had told me that he was going to have to hold up, he was afraid to try and continue his movement any further in the dark, getting his own people spread out and disoriented. As I say, the last time I had visual contact with him was about 800 meters away, so evidently he kept on moving until they got a little closer at what time they could effect a voice link up and that was all.

- Q It Holland, could you take it from when the 1/8 started moving up to you all, and about this enemy moving in between the two units?
- A. OK. Well, as I said, about 1800 my 2 platoons....I linked up and executed the LZ. Shortly thereafter, a ship, I don't know which, extracted my two KIA's. Shortly after this happened, I would say about 15 or 20 minutes, the lift ship that Major Mendenhall was talking about came in to resupply us. When this started coming in the LZ, they received fire from automatic weapons, I would say at least 6 weapons, heavy fire, from about 30 meters south of the LZ. This ship was forced to pull out of the LZ before it was able to resupply us, however, at this time we knew then that we had enemy 30 to 40 meters south of us. About this time, I believe Pistol Belt was moving towards our position. C/1/8. We could hear them firing, contacts off to the distance, we could hear the firing getting closer and closer. I'd say about 1830 or 1845 we could hear a fire fight going on not more than 150 meters south of us.
- Q. This takes us back to the discussion earlier. There was a possibility that there was actions going at the same time. How much fire was C/1/8 receiving as they moved towards you all?

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- A. I really couldn't say how much fire they were receiving. The company commander next morning said that they had killed 7 VC as they moved into the position that they eventually logged it in that night which was 100 meters south of us, so I'm sure that all the firing that we heard was when they were firing at these small packets of VC. I believe he also said he overran what he suspected was a battalion CP and I think this is where some of the firing came in.
- Q. Do you know where that was, that location?
- A. This was right in the LZ, the position that he occupied that night, only about 100 meters south of us. In any event, about 1830 his people had consolidate that position and this was after our resupply ship had been fired at. We still weren't 100% sure as to exactly where these people were, although we knew the general idea from talking to Apache 6 that we had friendlies south of us and from all the firing that was going on, we assumed this must be from getting in a fire fight with these VC in the area. Apache blue which was Alpha troop's infantry platoon, contacted Pistol Belt, C/1/8's commander, on the sideshow's frequency. We determined that we should fire, anyway, we fired small arms into the air and they fire small arms into the air and by this we established the fact that we were 100 meters apart. Shortly thereafter, they started receiving fire from this force we are talking about between our two elements.
- Q. Where did he come in from? How did he get there, do you know?
- A. The enemy force? I think he already was there. I'm not sure. He may have moved from these east-west trenches that was north of us. They may have tried to move around and out of the area. This possibly might have been where they came from. They may have already been in the area. I'm not sure which, but in any event, this is the time Pistol Belt opened fire on these enemy here and this is where we started to receive so much fire from them. We started rolling back and forth, and the fire continued, I'd say a good 30 minutes there on and off, we received fire from C/1/8

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Because they were engaging VC moving between our two positions. This is all in the dark by this time. I understand that also that G/1/3 was using starlight scopes that they had spotted the VC. They could see them moving out of the area. But as I say, I couldn't tell you whether the VC were already there or whether they were trying to infiltrate. I kind of suspect they were trying to infiltrate because it seemed to me the main line of their positions was in this east-west trench line where at least two companies were dug in.

1. So what happened during the rest of the night?

A. OK. We dug in and consolidated that position and from about 1830 until 2230 we received sporadic fire. At times the fire was intensive. We received fire from the north, we received fire from the east and west. In fact, we received fire from all four sides. The heaviest volume of fire did come from the north where there were entrenched positions were. The fire would come in waves, for say, 10 or 15 seconds a real heavy volume of fire and then it would just die out. Then we received sporadic fire from our two flanks and then sporadic fire from these VC to our south. About 2230 I would say most of the heaving firing died out and throughout the rest of the night we received sporadic sniper fire. We could identify carbines on automatic fire, single shot weapons, but after that time we didn't receive very much heavy fire, just sporadic sniper fire.

2. How about around the rest of the perimeter with the rest of the companies? Were you hearing a lot of fire from those positions?

A. OK. We could...we weren't exactly sure, we knew where Pistol Belt was, but we weren't sure where the rest of the units were in the area, although we were told that we did have 3 other companies that were in our immediate vicinity. We could hear firing going on all around us all through the night. Some were intensive fire fights, sniper fire and just a few weapons, but all through the night all around we could hear firing going on.

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- Q. Did you have any elements try to infiltrate through your position, trying to move out of the perimeter to get away?
- A. I can't say we had any VC trying to get directly through us. I'm sure they had a pretty good idea of exactly where we were, especially from where the resupply ships coming in and where the lift birds had lifted our platoon in. I think the VC had a pretty darn good idea of where our position was. I think the firing Pistol Belt did indicated that the VC didn't realize that a force had come up to our south and the VC were trying to move to our south flank to infiltrate and ran right into this Pistol Belt outfit.
- Q. What happened throughout the rest of the night and what did you all do the next morning? What was your mission the next morning, and what took place?
- A. OK. The next morning we were told that our mission was to physically link up with Charlie 1/8 and that we would be attached to him and that we would accompany him on a sweep through the area where we had been in this fight the afternoon before. At first light the Charlie 1/8 commander and a few people came into our position and told us where his main body was set up and about 0600 was when this company commander of Pistol Belt came to talk to us. I told him at that time that I had a KIA and was still out in the area where we had been fighting the day before. Also, I had a missing in action at this time. I told him that I wanted to take my people and send out a patrol and try and locate those two people and get them extracted. He told me fine, to go ahead and do this, but as soon as I returned that our 3 platoons would physically rejoin him ~~at~~ his logger position. My platoon moved about 30 meters north out of our LZ and received intensive automatic weapons and small arms fire from the same east-west trench line that we had received the fire from the afternoon before. Indicating that there were at least- least, I'd say there were at least 10 weapons firing at us. I don't know, I believe probably these.... the majority of their force had pulled out by this time, but left the security element behind.

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we were forced back into the 17. At this time we returned back to Fictel Belt location and we 7 platoons in his area. He had 4 and we had our 3 and we set up perimeter there and waited for resupply to come into us. At this time we still had had no resupply on water, chow, or ammunition, so we were waiting for this before moving on on the sweep. The reason for no resupply was the heavy ground fog that morning.

- Q. How about last night or far as the fog goes?
- A. It was fairly clear all night long and this fog settled in just about 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning, it just settled in and visibility was gone on the ground.
- Q. Did you have any Spooky or any flare chift above you to illuminate the area that night?
- A. OK. We had Spooky the Deer above us, actually, he was further north of our position but the flares he was dropping pretty well illuminated the whole area.
- Q. How much farther north of your position was he?
- A. I would say he was dropping his flares about 500 meters north of my position. We got our resupply about 0930 to 1000 the next morning, and once we got reorganized we moved out again. Our three platoons and moved out generally into the area where my WIA and MIA were. At this time we located my KIA, also located my MIA who was a WIA, was not in serious condition, he just laid low all night long and we got both of them extracted. At the same time Apache blue and Lawmover moved through this trench line, east-west trench line where the enemy had been the day before. We discovered three or four rounds of 60mm mortar, picked up about 2 dozen of these potato mashers, quite a few packs and miscellaneous equipment right around this area where the fighting was going on. Lawmover picked up 5 weapons and discovered 5 bodies in the area, and they also found 2 VC in a bunker and they killed them, got their two weapons. Just about this time Apache 6 called us up and told us that my element and Apache blue's and Lawmover would all return back to Fictel Belt's location where we were earlier in the morning and that we would be extracted at 1300

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- Q. When you went back there what exactly or so near as you can estimate was the distance between where you all were that night and where C/1/7 was and where they actually turned out to be?
- A. It actually turned out to be 100 meters. C/1/7 was just about 100 meters south of us and the enemy positions, this east-west trench line was just 75 meters north of us. For about 45 minutes the next morning we checked out all these bunkers and I counted about 25 bunkers running east to west. Their positions were in a rectangle and the 25 bunkers were on the southern portion of the rectangle. At the western most corner of the rectangle was where the Apache H-13's had located two .50 caliber. We could see where they had the thing set up, a real deep foxhole with a stand, no overhead cover on it. They had a platform in the middle of it where the gun was sitting. These positions, all of the .50 caliber did not have overhead cover, it was real well camouflaged, trees and bushes all around the thing.
- Q. When you moved back through that position to link up with L/8, C/T/8, did you where the enemy that element that had come through the night before?
- A. OK. On this, the next morning C/1/8, actually they started to move towards us and they sent a platoon north to link up with us and ran into 3 cong in a bunker and they killed them and got I believe it was 2 AK-47's and another carbine or something, but I think possibly this might have been some of the people that did fire at the ships and this may have been part of the force that had been in the area. Apparently I don't know why they were still there the next morning, whether they thought they couldn't get through or what the situation was, but anyway, on their way over to rejoin up with us, they did run into these people and knock them off.

U S E I D--a hundred meters in that terrain was just like a thousand meters in the average place
 You couldn't see in front of your face more than 15 - 20 meters at a time and the hedgerows would knock off your sense of direction. You had no idea which way you were going unless you looked at the compass all the time, and some of the hedgerows

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you couldn't get through. You had to go around them and you had to check your compass again to make sure of the direction you were going in.

7. Now back to the next morning.
8. Well, anyway, after checking out those bunkers, it was pretty obvious that there were at least two companies that had occupied this rectangular position. The bunkers were so well camouflaged in this hedgerow that you would get up within 10 or 15 feet of them before even seeing them. I know that my two people that were killed were within 5 to 10 feet of this bunker right on the trail. The VC in it just fired right straight up at them and killed them. Other than this, there's not too much I can say on that. Then we checked out those bunkers, we found no trace of any equipment or anything except right around this area where those 2 or 4 bunkers were on a trail where we received the fire and found the bodies and the weapons. One bunker, by the way, had been hit by mortar and there was a body and a weapon there. This was on the northern portion of the rectangle. I'm sure this is the position that brought Apache Blue and myself ran into. Everytime we tried to flank them we ran into more machine guns and automatic weapons, just too many of them for us.
9. So actually, that morning you were with C/1/8, you were more or less as a reaction force for the other companies that were sweeping through the area?
10. No, our mission at first was from Sideshow, was that C/1/8 and our three platoons perform a sweep through the area. The company commander there had it worked out so we had 6 platoons on line, one platoon in reserve as we moved in the area. Our 3 platoons moved out and apparently the time we moved out, he received a change of mission to hold there he was temporarily, so his elements never did or possibly one platoon may have moved out. I am not sure exactly what his actions were at that time, but I know our 3 platoons moved into that area. Primarily, our mission was to get back my KIA, our KIA'd pick up any equipment that may have been left in the area the night before, and since this **CONFIDENTIAL**, by this time Apache C

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had gotten word that we would be extracted and for us to return back to Hirtel original log position of the night before.

1. What time were you extracted and where did you go?
2. We were extracted at 1700 and we were all returned back home to Hammond.
3. Major Mendenhall, what were actual statistics of your part of the action, your losses also what you picked up from the enemy, his losses, equipment, etc.?
4. Well, I can't give you a run down on actually what they picked up, that was a combined effort with C/1/A, the police up of the battle area in the morning. I turned over control of my element there earlier that evening back to 1/12. However, that afternoon the scout ships and the ground elements accounted for 17 KIA. They counted the bodies, the majority of them coming from the scout aircraft that had been flying down with door guns down in the holes and dropping frag grenades.
 1. They were mostly in trenches and bunkers?
 2. Right. That's the only place I ever saw anybody, was in the trenchline within the hedgerow and the bunkers. They did absolutely no maneuvering other than only one instance where we saw these people change firing positions, but they would go right back in the same bunker system within the hedgerow. We took two KIA's in the rifle platoon and 7 wounded. Unfortunately, two of the wounded were friendly injuries, one of them was hit by H-13's firing down in the bunkers while they were attempting to extradite and we had a hand grenade accident which slightly wounded one of our people, he was not seriously hurt. I believe that night there was one other wounded from friendly activities, the fire they were getting from C/1/A. We had 2 KIA's, 7 people on the ground in the rifle platoon that were wounded. None of them serious with the exception of the man that took the 7.62 from the scout bird. We had four air crewmen who were wounded in action and most of their wounds were from fragmentations from the Plexiglass or bulgase, other material in the aircraft, none of them serious and they returned to duty. There were fragments, pieces of

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the aircraft, we pulled several long-range carbide cords out of the transmission and other elements, they were apparently firing by air piercing ammunition, and as it was flaking off, chipping off bits of the aircraft. I don't believe we got any of our personnel hit with direct fire in the aircraft, it was all fragmentation. Q troop, the aircraft that came in to attempt to resupply, the pilot of the aircraft did take a round, went through both legs. He had two other people in the aircraft that were hit by fragmentation pieces coming off the aircraft.

- Q. LT Holland, what were your losses.
- A. I had 3 KIA's and 5 MIA's. We lost one M-16 to the VC and we picked up a 60mm Moped, 3 60mm mortar rounds, about 2 dozen of these potato masher, miscellaneous packs and equipment, and LAW tower 36 picked up 5 weapons in the area that I believe our people Apache's aircraft, and possibly some of my people may have killed.
- Q. Were there any uniforms in the packs, khaki uniforms, PAVN uniforms or you don't know?
- A. I don't know.
- Q. OK.

WARRANT OFFICER SAMUEL A. RALISON HARRISBURG, PA.

I was the scout pilot and we had been going into the area and throwing frags into the bunkers and stuff and covering the ground troops as good as we could. All the personnel that we had seen had on khaki uniforms. They were hiding in the bunkers, a lot of them didn't have weapons. We'd fly over and we shot the M-60 into the bunkers and frag grenades in there.

- Q. You were telling us about how they were packed tightly in the bunker positions and they were pulling concealment over so you couldn't see them from the air. Explain a little about that, will you please?
- A. Well, as we were flying around we were trying to check out all the bunkers we could, the ones we could see, and the PAVN were just crammed into the bunkers, just hanging out and they had palm branches and stuff they were trying to pull over the holes to try and conceal themselves somewhat.

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2. These must have been wired out in the open rather than right in the middle of the hedgerow. How could you see them so easily?
3. Well, a lot of the bunkers from napalm and stuff, some of the foliage burnt away and some of the holes in the bunkers, I believe some that the villagers had made, earthen they were packed in those and usually the openings on those are fairly large, where they were trying to conceal themselves.
4. Major Vendenhall....
5. As I say, you look back on a lesson learned, I think there were some times we might have been too aggressive and too close to the enemy and we couldn't make maximum use of our firepower. I know, as I say, I wasn't aware of what Silver Falcon or A/1/12 was doing other than what I had observed, but there was a lot of heroics over there and these people, actually, it appeared to me to be charging these machine gun positions. They took a lot of casualties when they first got up, these people were dug in parallel, they broke through the first lines and then as I understand it, they started taking fire behind them from snipers up in the air. We were trying to work in close with them with our gunships. The people were so eager they were charging forward of their lines and actually we had moved up our fire forward, couldn't support as closely because the night flank was charging so aggressively.
6. Do you think we could have exploited the situation better if we had had security farther out in front so that we would discover them before the whole force was right on top of them?
7. No, I don't believe that. We knew where they were. We had a good idea that they were in the village. We were in a position where you just can't go in and arbitrarily shell the people, their villages, because we suspect them of being enemies. If we pinpoint fire, and we did pinpoint fire when we pinpointed target positions. You put people on the ground and a maximum of 50 meters down in the area, plus the VC were using their own tactics sensibly waiting until we got up to where they knew we were, they knew we were so close to them it couldn't bring in our heavier firepower.

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As I say, they just hide in the hedgerows, you couldn't see them until you got to them, so as I say, to find out whether they were hiding up on the hedgerows because the VC had held their fire until 5 - 10 feet away from them then they would open up. We might have been better off if we had left the one dead man there and laid back and plastered them; however, I don't think for morale sakes we can ever afford to do that in the American Army.

- Q. Would you have done, in a retrospect now, anything differently now than you did at the time?
- A. Well, I think you can always say you did things....knowing what I know of the situation, I would have like to be able just to...when I started drawing the fire from the village, it became obvious that there were some people in there rather than going in and locating exactly to make sure we weren't killing any innocent civilians. I'd like to just lay back and put a D-52 strike in there, somewhere in that neighborhood, or as much fire power as it is. Eventually we did get this firepower in but I felt that we were rather limited that we had to go in and develop the situation before we could actually start shelling villages and putting heavy firepower in. That's just the way we fight the war and that's the rules of the game here, nothing more you can do about it.

CPT SYKES - Thank you very much sir.

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